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# Digital Marketing Strategies and Models for Competitive Business

**Filipe Mota Pinto and Teresa Guarda**

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# Digital Marketing Strategies and Models for Competitive Business

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## Chapter 1

Digital Era: How Marketing Communication Develops Business Innovation –
>	*Liliana Coutinho Vitorino, ESTG, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria,*
>		*Portugal*
>	*Ana Lisboa, ESTG, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal*
>	*Raquel J. Antunes, ESTG, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal*

The explosive growth of new media and the multiple and diverse means of communications are changing consumers and brands. Digitalisation is a growing reality. As per April 2019, there were 4.437 billion internet users (around 58% of the worldwide population) and 3.499 billion active social media users. Not only is the setting changing, but also consumers' profiles and roles. Researchers have identified some emerging trends that are leading firms to change the way they communicate to consumers and develop new and innovative businesses. In this chapter, the authors present a general perspective of marketing communication and how it will affect business innovation, discuss the existing paradigm shift in marketing communication, and introduce a case study which applies some of the more recent techniques.

## Chapter 2

>	*Isabel Maria Lopes, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal*
>	*Maria Isabel Ribeiro, Instituto Politécncico de Bragança, Portugal*
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>		*Ecuador*

The advent of new technologies, the massification of internet access, the availability of personal computers in the market, and the entrance of smartphones into citizens' daily lives all have constituted a revolution that has led to a change in consumer behavior. There is no need for an empirical study, since it is enough to enter some social networks to observe that companies are using these networks as a marketing vehicle. Digital marketing constitutes a great tool to attract new clients and customers, be it by means of content or paid advertisements in browsers, blogs, videos, Instagram, etc. Hence, the aim of this study is to understand the role and importance of digital influencers in consumers' daily lives. For this, the authors developed an exploratory, quantitative, observational, and transversal study based on a non-probabilistic sample, composed of 161 individuals who integrated or interacted with someone who integrated the academic community of a higher education institution.

    *Maria Isabel Barreiro Ribeiro, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança,*
        *Portugal*
    *António José Gonçalves Fernandes, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança,*
        *Portugal*
    *Isabel Maria Lopes, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal*

This research aimed to identify the most developed themes in the field of digital marketing from 2010 to 2019. A total of 898 publications were selected from the Scopus database from the Business, Management and Accounting and Economics, Econometrics, and Finance domains. A bibliometric analysis was carried out using VOSviewer software and the term co-occurrence technique was used. Three clusters were identified. The first cluster relates digital marketing to the changes and adaptations of society and the economy since the emergence of the internet. The second cluster relates digital marketing to information technologies, e-commerce, and consumer behavior. Finally, the third cluster relates digital marketing with markets, social media, users, tourism, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

    *Rita Moura, School of Economics and Management, University of*
        *Minho, Portugal*
    *Beatriz Casais, School of Economics and Management, University of*
        *Minho, Portugal*

This chapter discusses search engine marketing (SEM) techniques that companies should implement in order to stimulate digital traffic. Those techniques include the attraction of organic traffic by search engine optimization (SEO) as well as search

engine advertising (SEA). The authors used SEM techniques to a specific case of a company with the purpose of attracting international traffic and develop external marketing. The research discusses the effectiveness of SEM techniques in the case developed through an experimental method. New insights emerged from the experiment and are presented with contributions for international managers who want to de develop international digital traffic.

**Chapter 5**

*Maria Fernanda Augusto, Universidad Peninsula de Santa Elena (UPSE), Ecuador*

Nowadays, geographic information and spatial aspects are essential elements for the definition of companies' strategies. With the use of different sources data, companies were able to obtain insights that they could not obtain without the spatial component and were able to use them to optimize their business. Then, geographic marketing presents itself as an added value for companies, one of the key factors being its role in supporting decision making. The main attributes of geographic marketing or GeoMarketing allow us to identify and present through digital maps the behavior and trends of certain variables based on characteristics of a market. The meticulous study of spatial and demographic information generated by GeoMarketing are crucial for important strategic adjustments in the business plan, such as definitions related to the location considered ideal for the business, target audience, price and growth prospects, among other factors. In this context, GeoMarketing will be introduced, exploring its scope, applicability, and relevance of its use in support of the decision-making process.

**Chapter 6**

*Andrea Sousa, Instituto Superior Miguel Torga, Portugal*
*João Fernandes Thomaz, Institute of Management and Administration of Santarém, Portugal*
*Eulália Santos, School of Technology and Management, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal*
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*Carlos Francisco Silva, Universidade Europeia, Portugal*

Employee brand effect is a process that values the management of human resources in organizations and contributes to a real and concrete diagnosis of the relational environment inside organizations by promoting internal marketing in people management. This process results from the increase of actions in the domain of interpersonal relationships, which result from the informality of social exchanges

in the organization. The present study covered 30 Portuguese organizations from the center region of Portugal in the services and industry areas that responded to a questionnaire survey measuring the process. The results show that in the industry sector there is a greater variation in the employee branding process through mentoring and helping relationships and also a greater variation in the organizational integration domain through the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, which consequently leads to the perception that employee branding effect is more positive in industry employees.

**Chapter 7**
*Filipe Mota Pinto, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal*
*Catarina Carreira Pinto, Lisbon University, Portugal*

Tourism has become one of the most active areas for digital marketing strategy development. Nowadays, almost all players have developed some kind of digital approach in order to publicise or promote their product. Trying to reach the European tourism market, the national travel and tourism authorities of small Cabo Verde have asked for a strategy based on digital media for global communication results. Their goal is to empower their touristic potential throughout social media and any others digital channels. This work presents a possible digital marketing strategy developed throughout social media dynamics generated by users´ interactions.

**Chapter 8**
*Lisa Brianne Foster, East Tennessee State University, USA*
*Robert Andrew Dunn, East Tennessee State University, USA*

Video game streaming has introduced to consumers a new method of creating branded content. Popular streaming platforms receive millions of broadcasters and viewers every month, and the current chapter examines the influence of this type user-generated content on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The goal of this study is to understand how video game streams function as a marketing tool. To investigate this, a quantitative survey was designed and measured participants' video gaming habits and their perceptions of credibility, usefulness of content, group identification, and purchase intention. Heavier gaming habits were found to be positively related to perceived credibility in a user-generated stream condition. Group identification and stream familiarity were found to be positively related to perceived credibility. These findings hold implications for using video game streams as a marketing tool, as heavier gamers were found perceive user-generated streams as a credible source of information.

*Ismail Erkan, Izmir Katip Celebi University, Turkey*
*Fulya Acikgoz, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey & Bahçeşehir*
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Digital marketing has become an important tool for businesses to reach a wider audience. Many companies, therefore, apply online ads in order to gain new customers. However, since the number of companies that try to benefit from digital marketing is very high, the online ads sector is now more competitive. Drawing consumers' attention is not easy anymore. Therefore, this study focused on the factors that make people share. For this purpose, this study conducted a survey with 253 consumers. The results show that attitudes toward online ads, search intention, and social media product browsing have positive impacts on consumers' sharing intentions. In this study, the authors also wondered, how do online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability? To understand this, this study did 15 face-to-face interviews and found that consumers prefer to share online ads with text and image rather than video ads. Easiness to share, brief information, and being understandable are the three factors that lead consumers to prefer to share text and image-based online ads.

# Preface

The society and the economy in general are constantly evolving. In each area, such as society, knowledge, technology or economics, among others, it is possible to identify relevant cycles or moments. In each of these moments or cycles, the behavior of individuals and their way of observing and experiencing will evolve significantly.

In the field of communication and relationship between people, there is a paradigm that is emerging - it is a scenario on a global scale, with communication going through multiple channels with the possibility of several senders and receivers simultaneously. In this same paradigm, the concept of collaboration, instant information and decentralized communication emerges.

If information is power, today everyone can feel powerful in the face of so many sources of information, even without knowing very well what to do with it.

The digital information supported on the Internet helped to build a new field, within the traditional marketing, which, in a short time proved to be paradigmatic. It asserted itself as one of the most relevant of the entire environment in this area.

The importance and relevance of digital marketing in the current context it is due to several factors, but especially, the rapid and growing adoption of this form of communication, both companies and their customers.

The social economy, introduced by Erik Qualman, is driven by symbolic exchanges, involvement and online reputation. These are the new success indicators to take into account in the business world.

One of the challenges for organizations in general is how to use digital marketing more effectively in business.

However, this challenge, triggers fragility and lack of preparation of the markets and the consumers themselves. They are all together learning and looking for alternatives to get the best out of the internet in the processes of communication and involvement.

Digital marketing, although it is still considered recent, has evolved frantically, leaving no alternative for companies and professionals other than developing solutions based on empirical knowledge.

On the other hand, the theoretical framework, inherited from traditional marketing, has also evolved and includes new ways of thinking and seeing it from a digital and online point of view.

Not only did marketing reinvented itself, but also the internet which is driven by improvements and new forms of use. Almost every day there are a myriad of options and alternatives for solving communication, response or interaction problems.

The proof of this constant evolution it is the Web 2.0 itself, which is more social and open to collaboration, from all sides. These new challenges of being out in the open leave researchers and companies in a constant challenging environment.

Currently, in the scope of marketing, one of the elementary and basic requirements is to have a good presence on the internet, both in the online and offline environments.

From check-in to "like", passing through some other phases, the organizations are already on digital channels, regardless of their desire. If having a website or social media presence was optional a few years ago, today it is essential.

Because it is not optional, but rather fundamental, many small and medium-sized companies are still exploring the best way to do this. However, the lack of qualified professionals, failures in academic training and the frantic pace of evolution are the big enemies. Even larger organizations, with budgets and qualified labor, are still in the process of adapting and in the midst of an investigation process.

The reason it is not the change in marketing, but rather the change in the consumer behavior. Consumers' want to dialogue and interact at the expense of being just passive recipients.

The current paradigm it is the interactive multi-format communication, responsive to user technology and contextualized in time and space. For this reason, today, one of the biggest challenges for organizations is their need to be able to articulate and adapt the online presence with their communication and marketing structure.

From the contributions contained in this work, it is possible to understand how the internet, social media, SEO, content and planning can be great allies, provided they are carried out in a strategic way. Even though it is considered a great revolution, the internet, within the scope of digital marketing, is only a new medium.

Readers will learn the best practice frameworks for developing a digital marketing strategy, plus success factors for key digital marketing techniques including marketing communication techniques, digital influencers, geographic marketing search marketing, conversion optimization and digital communications using all resources available through digital media.

This book is aimed at professionals who develop their activity in the area of digital marketing; researchers who investigate and seek to understand important aspects of markets and consumers in digital media; students who in the context of courses, classes or research projects wish to support their projects.

On the first chapter it is presented and discussed how marketing communication develop the business innovation through case studies. The explosive growth of new media and the multiple and diverse means of communications are changing consumers and brands. Digitalization is growing. Until April 2019 there were 4.437 billion internet users (around 58% of the worldwide population) and 3.499 billion active social media users (We are social, 2019). Not only is the setting changing, but also consumers' profile and roles. Researchers have identified some emerging trends that are leading firms to change the way they communicate to consumers and develop new and innovative businesses. In this chapter per the authors present a general perspective of marketing communication and how it will affect business innovation, discuss the existing paradigm shift in marketing communication and introduce a case study which applies some of the more recent techniques.

On the second chapter it is presented an exploratory study focusing on digital Influencers and follower behavior. The advent of new technologies, the massification of internet access, the availability of personal computers in the market and the entrance of smartphones into citizens' daily life, all have constituted a revolution which has led to a change in consumers' behavior. There is no need for an empirical study, since common knowledge is enough to enter into some social networks in order to observe and analyze that companies are using these networks as a marketing vehicle. Digital marketing constitutes a great tool to attract new clients and customers, be it by means of content or paid advertisements in browsers, blogs, videos, Instagram, etc. Hence, the aim of this study is to understand the role and importance of Digital Influencers in consumers' daily life. For this, we developed an exploratory, quantitative, observational and transversal study, based on a non-probabilistic sample, composed of 161 individuals who integrated or interacted with someone who integrated the academic community of a higher education institution.

On the third chapter, a bibliometric analysis, focusing on digital marketing, is based on how the Scopus database scientific publications are presented. This research aimed to identify the most developed themes in the field of digital marketing from 2010 to 2019. A total of 898 publications were selected from the Scopus database from the Business, Management and Accounting and Economics, Econometrics and Finance domains. A bibliometric analysis was carried out using VOSviewer software and the term co-occurrence technique was used. Three clusters were identified. The first cluster relates Digital Marketing to the changes and adaptations of society and the economy since the emergence of the Internet. The second, relates Digital Marketing to information technologies, e-commerce and consumer behavior. Finally, the third cluster relates Digital marketing with markets, social media, users, tourism and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the search engine marketing used to attract international digital traffic. Throughout this chapter will be evaluated the Search

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Engine Marketing (SEM) techniques that companies should implement in order to stimulate digital traffic. Those techniques include the attraction of organic traffic by Search Engine Optimization (SEO), as well as Search Engine Advertising (SEA). The authors used SEM techniques to a specific case of a company with the purpose of attracting international traffic and develop external marketing. The research discusses the effectiveness of SEM techniques in the case of a developed experimental method. New insights emerged from the experiment are presented as contributions for international managers who want to develop international digital traffic.

Chapter 5 focuses on geographic marketing in decision support process. Nowadays, geographic information and spatial aspects are essential elements for the definition of companies' strategies. With the use of different sources data, companies were able to obtain insights that they could not obtain without the spatial component and were able to use them to optimize their business. Then, geographic marketing presents itself as an added value for companies, being one of the key factors is role in supporting decision making. The main attributes of Geographic Marketing or GeoMarketing, allows to identify and present through digital maps the behavior and trends of certain variables based on characteristics of a market. The meticulous study of spatial and demographic information generated by GeoMarketing is crucial for important strategic adjustments in the business plan, such as definitions related to the location considered ideal for the business, target audience, price and growth prospects, among other factors. In this context, GeoMarketing will be introduced, exploring its scope, applicability and relevance of its use, in support of decision process.

In the sixth chapter, an internal marketing approach is developed focusing on the perception of Employee Effect and Brand in industry and services. Employee Brand Effect is a process that values the management of human resources in organizations and contributes to a real and concrete diagnosis of the relational environment inside organizations by promoting internal marketing in people management. This process results from the increase of actions in the domain of interpersonal relationships, which results from the informality of social exchanges in the organization. The present study covered 30 Portuguese organizations from the center region of Portugal in the services and industry areas that responded to a survey measuring the process. The results show that in the industry sector there is a greater variation in the employee branding process through mentoring and helping relationships and also a greater variation in the organizational integration domain through the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, which consequently leads to the perception that employee branding effect is more positive in industry employees.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to digital marketing, which presents a low-cost digital marketing proposal for Cabo Verde, as country marketing strategy. Tourism has become one of the most active areas for digital marketing strategies development.

Nowadays, almost all players have developed some kind of digital approach in order to publicize or promote their product. Pretending to reach the European tourism market, Cabo Verde's national travel and tourism authorities have asked for a strategy based on digital media for global communication results. Their main goal is to empower their touristic potential throughout social media and any others digital channel. This work presents a possible digital marketing strategy, developed throughout social media dynamics generated by users´ interaction.

Chapter 8 presents marketing to Gamers: the effects of video game streams on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Video game streaming has introduced to consumers a new method of creating branded content. Popular streaming platforms receive millions of broadcasters and viewers every month, examines the influence of this type user-generated content on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The goal of this study is to understand how video game streams function as a marketing tool. To investigate this, a quantitative survey was designed to measure participants' video gaming habits and their perceptions of credibility, usefulness of content, group identification, and purchase intention. Heavier gaming habits were found to be positively related to perceived credibility in a user-generated stream condition. Group identification and stream familiarity were found to be positively related to perceived credibility. These findings hold implications for using video game streams as a marketing tool, as heavier gamers were found perceive user-generated streams as a credible source of information.

The final chapter studies the effects of online ads on consumers' sharing intentions - what makes people share? Digital marketing has become an important tool for businesses to reach a wider audience. Many companies, therefore, apply online ads in order to gain new customers. However, since the number of companies that try to benefit from digital marketing is very high, the online ads sector is now more competitive. Drawing consumers' attention is not easy anymore. Therefore, this study focused on the factors that make people share. For this purpose, this study conducted a survey with 253 consumers. The results show that attitudes toward online ads, search intention, and social media product browsing have positive impacts on consumers' sharing intentions. In this study, we also wondered, how does online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability? To understand this, this study did 15 face-to-face interviews and found that consumers prefer to share online ads with text and image rather than video ads. Easiness to share, brief information, and being understandable are the three factors that lead consumers to prefer to share text and image-based online ads.

This book it is prepared for those who want to develop their knowledge in digital marketing strategies in general.

Indeed, along the chapters, readers will perceive different successful approaches of some digital marketing strategies and models to competitive business. Thus they

will be able to develop strong and consistent social media marketing plan: with ideas that drive brand awareness, attract loyal customers, and help researchers and professional to reach some business goals - like increasing website traffic, delivering top customer service or to understand customer behavior.

# Acknowledgment

Editing a book on digital marketing is achieved with a supporting cast of professors, researchers and also students As a hybrid part-academic and part-practitioner I am in a wonderful and unique space with access to students as well as organizations of all shapes.

Special thanks are due all reviewers who had contribute and provided a valuable influence for the success of this book.

Thanks to those behind the scenes who hold inspired me to continue with this task even at difficult circumstances. Thank you very much Linda, Catarina and Francisco, with you everything it will be possible.

# Introduction

Digital Marketing is the set of strategies aimed at promoting a brand on the internet. It differs from traditional marketing because it involves the use of different online channels and methods that allow the analysis of results in real time.

Currently, the internet is an important part of our society. It had been incorporated into our lives in such a way that it is almost impossible to do anything without it. From simple things, like getting the phone number from the restaurant at the next door, to complex things, like supporting all kind of e-commerce or e-governance that occurs all around the world. Nowadays, almost everything goes through the internet.

Actually, it is easier to one to forget his wallet than to even disconnected from his cell phone, with the internet at him fingertips. Our life is no longer the same with the internet, the same can be said of almost all kind of business models – we are running on fourth industrial revolution. The very first basically the industrial revolution that takes place over technologies.

The fact is that consumers are themselves changing and moving to more sophisticated technology-based society. Consumers engage more and more in digital media channels.

There is a great need to rethink and improve digital marketing strategies and models in order to guarantee successful business at competitive markets.

This book reflects a continuing interest from a community of digital marketing students, professors, practitioners and researchers.

*Teresa Santos Guarda*
*Universidad Peninsula de Santa Elena (UPSE), Ecuador*

# Chapter 1

# Digital Era:
## How Marketing Communication Develops Business Innovation – Case Studies

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## ABSTRACT

*The explosive growth of new media and the multiple and diverse means of communications are changing consumers and brands. Digitalisation is a growing reality. As per April 2019, there were 4.437 billion internet users (around 58% of the worldwide population) and 3.499 billion active social media users. Not only is the setting changing, but also consumers' profiles and roles. Researchers have identified some emerging trends that are leading firms to change the way they communicate to consumers and develop new and innovative businesses. In this chapter, the authors present a general perspective of marketing communication and how it will affect business innovation, discuss the existing paradigm shift in marketing communication, and introduce a case study which applies some of the more recent techniques.*

## INTRODUCTION

The explosive growth of new media and the multiple and diverse means of communications are changing consumers and brands (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005). Digitalisation is a growing reality (Vernuccio & Ceccotti, 2015). As per April 2019 there were 4.437 billion internet users (around 58% of the worldwide population) and 3.499 billion active social media users (We are social, 2019). Not only is the setting changing, but also consumers' profile and roles. Perhaps more than ever, consumers' attention is divided due to multitasking and a perpetual state of partial attention (Batra & Keller, 2016).This affects their media usage patterns and how they use the media sources to get information.

Researchers have identified some emerging trends that are leading firms to change the way they communicate to consumers and develop new and innovative businesses. One of these trends is disintermediation. Disintermediation "greatly democratises access to the means of communication and to information and knowledge through direct access to one-to-many communication channels" (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013, pp.367). Thus, the control of information that was once in the hands of a limited elite – management – is now available to many – stakeholders (Denegri-knott & Schroeder, 2006; Kerr, Mortimer, Dickinson, & Waller, 2012). The power shifted from the institutional communicator to the individual recipient, namely each customer, who becomes more and more empowered (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013).

A second major trend is the blur of communication genres (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013). Nowadays we are assisting to an interchange of practices between different communication genres, such as Public Relations (PR) and advertising. It became more common for advertising to use cause-related and cooperative programmes previously associated to PR, and to PR to use paid advertising to communicate critical messages. Similarly, we are assisting to media convergence, breaking away from the "above and below-the-line" models. Today, the message content is accessible via multiple media types and devices (Bosman, 2000).

These forces have a major impact on organisations that, rather than being static and imposing conditions, have to mould themselves to go along with and benefit from this communication revolution (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013).

In this chapter we present a general perspective of marketing communication and how it will affect business innovation, discuss the existing paradigm shift in marketing communication and introduce a case study which applies some of the more recent techniques.

# MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND BUSINESS INNOVATION

## General Marketing Communication Strategy

Every day, consumers are exposed to multiple stimuli, many of them resulting from marketing communication techniques (Oana, 2018). This is particularly true considering the current fast-changing environment (Gould, 2004), the existence of various techniques and means of communication (Keller, 2001), the growth of new electronic media (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, & Iacobucci, 1998) and the pace, span, and reach of digital communication (Kitchen & Schultz, 2003). Additionally, consumers are more demanding and may actively seek information when needed. This situation forces the integrated marketing communication (IMC) theory and practice to evolve.

IMC is an activity that facilitates the creation of profitable consumer relationships and generates product/brand or organisation value (Olimpia & Mihaela, 2015). It involves the development of a comprehensive plan in which the strategic roles of the communication disciplines (such as advertising or direct marketing) are analysed and these disciplines are combined to transmit a clear, consistent and maximum impact message (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Through effective communication channels' integration and communication messages' coordination organisations are more likely to create an unitary image of themselves, their products and brands, attract and retain consumers, and develop or improve relations with its stakeholders (Oana, 2018; Smith, 2012).

Any effective communication results from a combination between structured thinking and the needs, aspirations and attitudes of the target consumer. As such, taking into account consumer expectations enables organisations to be on-target and benefit the most from the use of IMC (Brannan, 1998; Olimpia & Mihaela, 2015).

To develop an IMC strategy, one can apply the Lasswell model, which structures it through questions such as "who says?" or "what?" (Lasswell, Lerner & Speier, 1979; Sapienza et al. 2015). Figure 1 presents the main elements to elaborate the IMC strategy based on Lasswell model:

According to Brannan (1998), the consumer must be in the centre of the strategic thinking from beginning to end. If the organisation understands consumer's wants, needs and motivation and identifies what differentiates the organisation from competitors, it more likely establishes a meaningful positioning. The segmentation of the market into smaller and homogenous audience groups allows organisations to choose the appropriate approach to each group. Hence, the main decisions of the communication manager are: a) the communication target; b) the communication objectives; c) the message; d) the communication mix; and e) the communication evaluation criteria/ indicators (Lendrevie et al., 2015).

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*Figure 1. Main elements of Communication Strategy*



## Business Innovation and Marketing Communication

Innovation is the process of transforming an idea, sketch or model into a product, service, system, process or even business that can be marketable (Bayhan, Serinkan, & Arat, 2015; Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan, 2001; Schumpeter, 1939). A business innovation involves developing new or improving existing products, technologies, processes, designs or marketing to solve problems, enhance existing features or functions, reach new customers, or satisfy existing customers in a more efficient manner, and ultimately increase profits (Gümü & Gülnihal, 2015; Ward, 2019). With this in mind, business innovation is not just to do something differently, but also to do something better (Ward, 2019).

According to the OECD (2005), innovation can be classified in 1) product innovation; 2) process innovation; 3) organisational innovation and 4) marketing innovation. These four innovation groups are further divided into technological and non-technological. Technological innovations include product and process innovation, and non-technological ones include marketing and organisational (Ungerman, Dedkova & Gurinova, 2018). Yet, more recently, the Doblin group proposed a framework organized in three areas, 1) configuration, which are innovations focused in the business system, such as profit model, network, structure and process; 2) offering, which includes product performance innovation and product system innovation; and

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3) experience, involving service innovation, channel innovation, brand innovation and customer engagement innovation (Keeley, Walters, Pikkel, & Quinn, 2013).

Most innovations, especially the successful ones, result from a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities, only found in a few situations. Opportunities can exist within an organisation or industry, such as industry or market changes, process needs, incongruities or even unexpected occurrences. Some additional sources of opportunity lay outside the organisation, namely in its social and intellectual environment, such as demographic changes, changes in perception or new knowledge (Drucker, 2002).

It is also the case of the above mentioned digitalisation of information and communication. It collapsed boundaries in the marketing communication activities, allowed the emergence of new concepts, products and services, the revamp of brands, and generated new value (Corniani, 2006). For instance, digital content brought different types of new value to businesses. First, it has value intrinsically, of functional (fulfil user desires related to the user's objectives or needs), emotional (degree of gratification or satisfaction with the consumption of the product), social (when one's social image is formed according to other people's expectations or social norms) and economic nature (the difference between the cost of consuming the product and the perceived utility of consuming it) (e.g. (Rowley, 2008; Sheth, I. Newman, & Gross, 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Second, it creates value due to its role in the interaction between the digital content's users, between the content and the user, and between the system and the user (e.g. (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Stini, Mauve, & Fitzek, 2006; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007; Williams, Chatterjee, & Rossi, 2008). Finally, it allows adding new value into the business through changes in the product value (the superiority and high-quality of digital content), in the user value (the joy felt by users using digital content) and/or in the process value (including cost and time savings, and affective achievement goals by using digital content) (e.g. Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Rowley, 2008; Stini et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2008).

In this regard, marketing in general and marketing communication in particular have an important role in helping organisations with both innovations and innovative businesses. Marketing and the interaction with the organisation's multiple stakeholders allow the organisation to identify unmet and even unknown market needs and understand the deep-seated drivers of consumers' perceptions and behaviours. Additionally, it is through marketing communication activities that organisations can engage with consumers; develop the customer experience ecosystem and use an appropriate go-to-marketing strategy for innovation. Ultimately, it will help convert the organisation's innovative actions into economic and social value (Yohn, 2019).

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## MARKETING COMMUNICATION PARADIGM

IMC is currently facing a paradigm shift (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Winer, 2009). Once passive, consumers are now becoming more active and involved with the organisation's communication (Vernuccio & Ceccotti, 2015). Further, globalisation and the evolution of interactive technologies opened up new paths in marketing communication, collaboration and connection to shareholders, social networking, individual and group publishing, blogging and even crowd-sourcing. These trends came to challenge organisation's assumptions about its business, its role in communicating to the market and even the way it organizes itself (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013; Parboteeah & Jackson, 2011). The main characteristics of this paradigm change are presented in table 1.

*Table 1. Characteristics of IMC paradigm shift*

| Previously | Nowadays |
|---|---|
| **Push communication** | **Pull communication** |
| **Monologue / One-way communication** | **Dialogue/ Two-way communication** |
| **Divergence** | **Convergence** |
| **Top Down** | **Bottom up** |
| **Consensus** | **Conflict/Dissent** |
| **Communication management** | **Communication influence** |
| **Control** | **Self-organisation** |
| **Corporate Social Responsibility** | **Accountability** |
| **Integration** | **Collaboration** |
| **Channel marketing** | **Omni-channel marketing** |
| **Long "path to purchase"** | **Quick/immediate "path to purchase"** |
| **Moments of truth** | **Zero Moments of Truth (ZMOT)** |

In push communication, the organisation promotes a message by pushing it along a channel, while in pull communication, the communication flow is requested by the

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market (Corniani, 2006). With the continuously growing consumer participation, we are assisting to a combination of traditional push (outbound) communication models and innovative modes of communication that are based on pull (inbound) and/or collaborative approaches (Kitchen & Schultz, 2003; Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008). Hence, the traditional one-way monologue of organisations to their stakeholders is being supplemented by two-way communications and dialogue not only between consumers and organisations, but also among consumers themselves. Communication is, then, extended to a permanently connected super-consumer (Bosman, 2010), who can not only talk back to organisations (bidirectionality), but sometimes does it instantly (Rakic & Rakic, 2014).

IMC involves a coordinated effort of the communication activities so as to create synergies and transmit a coherent message (Batra & Keller, 2016). Still, with the convergence of information, data and media, the interdependency created via communication network structures increased (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Ruler, Vercic, & Sriramesh, 2007; Miller, 2009). In fact, the development of products and services result from the interactions between consumers and brands (Wang, 2007). As such, marketing communication became an all-embracing function (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013).

Also, in the previous paradigm, information was transferred from supervisor to subordinate (top-down). Now, the emphasis is central to bottom-up, privileging organisational listening and embedding (Rensburg, 2012). One example of this new perspective is the use of crowdsourcing rather than advertising agencies to promote organisations and their facilities to clients (Chatterjee, 2011; Stokes, 2009).

Due to this bottom-up perspective and dialogue, the communication management once based on consensus-seeking processes, gives opportunity to others, such as consumers, to participate. Though this process may give rise to conflict and dissent, it may (or not) lead to new forms of understanding and knowledge (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013). Hence, now the key issue is not as much communication management, given that the organisation's communication is becoming less predictable and hard to control. The role of the communication professional nowadays involves more communication influence and self-organisation enabling, which is related to the process of relating to the stakeholders (Overton-de Klerk & Verwey, 2013).

In the emerging communication paradigm, the accountability refers to the fact that multiple stakeholders, even the ones that not have a direct stake in the organisation, are viewed as active influencers who can affect and be affected by the organisation's actions (Coombs, 2000; Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Purnell, & Colle, 2010). Additionally, this collaboration has many diverse voices, which may add considerable noise to the organisational message, challenging the very identity. This is very different from the precious integration perspective, in which the organisation spoke with one voice, by strategically coordinating all behaviour and messaging.

The very purchase experience changed and became holistic and instant (Payne et al., 2017). On the one hand, nowadays, consumers benefit from an omni-channel environment in which the key interaction is not with the channel, rather than with the brand (Batra & Keller, 2016; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2004). Then, organisations must incur in a "synergistic management of the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels is optimized" (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015, p. 176). On the other hand, with an environment increasingly characterized by interactivity and digitality (search engines, smart TV, mobile browsers, brand websites and shop online), the process of purchase speeded up (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Lastly, online marketers introduced the term "Zero Moment of Truth" (ZMOT) to describe the new reality where marketers have to compete for consumers' attention online constantly.

Considering the above, and specifically referring to the digital content, organisations need to adapt their IMC strategy (figure 2):

*Figure 2. Adaptation of IMC to the new marketing communications paradigm*
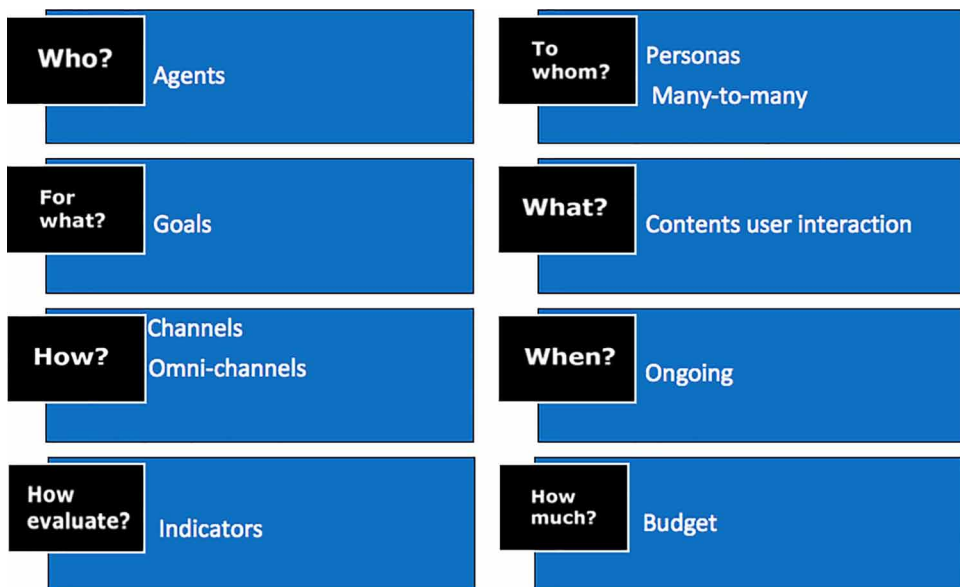


**Who:** People who are involved in the elaboration of the digital campaign strategy and in the development of digital contents.

**To Whom:** Personas are obtained by transforming market research information into user requirements. Personas are archetypal users with specific goals and

needs based on realm marketing and design research. They are a mean to tease out and identify user needs and often include a name, a photo, demographic characteristics, technographic characteristics, behavioral characteristics (namely motivation), barriers and/or challenges, as well as specific goals and needs (Don & Petrick, 2003). With the evolution of the Internet and its worldwide use, markets can be seen as constellations of personas who have access to digital platforms and can incur in a many-to-many interaction (Kim & Kim, 2017).

**For What:** Marketing communication objectives are determined by the problems of the target audience or the product category that may represent a market opportunity. These objectives are the foundation of the message content.

**What:** Digital contents are created to transmit the message that was built based in the marketing communication objectives and target audience. These contents will be exchanged between users, who will interact with the organizations and amongst themselves (Stini et al., 2006).

**How**: Through multiple channels (omnichannel), several touchpoints and the traditional MarCom (marketing communication techniques). Consumers combine online and offline behaviours. Online hyper-consumers try to benefit from time savings. However, sometimes incur in offline behaviours. Recently, the dark channels, that is, the channels that allow to share content outside of what can be measured by web analytics programs, have been gaining relevance. Consumers feel more comfortable "being themselves" when sharing privately, in comparison to sharing publically information to a multitude of followers (Valentine, 2019).

**When**: Even though organisations can define a date to launch their marketing communication strategy and perform their activities, due to the dynamic and interactive nature of the market, there can be some brand information sharing and even reposts at any given time – conveying an "ongoing" feeling of marketing communication. As a result, one cannot absolutely predict how long the campaign will be on.

**How evaluate:** Digital presence of organizations or of a communication campaign can be evaluated using indicators made available by the online platforms. The number of reviews, number of likes, posts, shares or even the number of pages viewed by the clients are but some examples.

**How much:** In terms of investment in marketing communications, if organizations intend to combine the traditional MarCom techniques with the new trends, both costs have to be considered. In what regards the digital contents, organizations need to consider both the content development cost and the one from placing such contents in the online platforms.

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## CASE-STUDIES

Case study 1 represents the case of a small company that revamped its business using digital marketing. Case study 2 presents how brands can use digital contents to promote and leverage themselves nowadays.

## Case Study 1 – Furniture Restoration
## Business 'Gradapa Marcelino'

'Grandpa Marcelino' is a furniture restauration company located in the centre region of Portugal. Founded in 1939 by António Marcelino, it benefited by improved city centre facilities and attracted new clients. Mr. Marcelino's son, Carlos, helped his father in his spare time, but his love for restoration and crafts lead him to get involved full time, up until now, where he is the current CEO. According to him, in restoration each piece is unique, and it has a story and a sentimental value that needs to be maintained.

This case study was developed by a Media and Communication Master student of Polytechnic of Leiria, who is the granddaughter of the company's founder. Her goal was to use digital marketing communications to assist a traditional familiar business revamp. Table 2 below identifies the main elements of digital marketing communication strategy of 'Grandpa Marcelino'. Even though originally the case study didn't include the element "how evaluate", the student later on referred that some indicators were used, namely site visits, number of likes and followers in social media and budget requests received (via email and via social media).

Some notes regarding case study 1:

**Who:** refers to all agents presented at digital campaign, who make her possible to go on.

**To whom:** This company target audience are local men and women, with ages between 40 and 88 years old. They have medium-high income, love tradition and have emotional links with their furniture pieces. Medium/highly qualified, these people use digital media and interact in social networks. When developing the case study, the student didn't identify a persona. Our proposal is Manuel, 55 years old, works in a bank and has 2 children. He lives in the centre region of Portugal with his wife, primary teacher and they have a dog and a cat. Manuel is a grandfather. His older son is married and lives in Porto and his daughter studies Biology in the Azores University. Manuel is starting to use Facebook. He recognizes the advantages of this social network and how it facilitates communicating with his family. He aims to gather the family in the

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celebration days, such as anniversaries and Christmas. It is a tradition and he really loves these moments.

*Table 2. Digital marketing communication strategy elements of case study 1*

| Digital communication element | Main characteristic | Explanation | Details of Grandpa Case study |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who? | Agents | List people involved in the digital campaign | Website designer, Facebook and Instagram content web-designer. |
| To whom? | Personas Many-to-many | Value of digital content: Interaction value between user and user and between content and the user which should express the need and motivation | Parents who love their family and tradition |
| For what? | Goals | Transmit trust | Transmit trust, credibility and tradition in furniture restoration pieces |
| What? | Content | Digital contents | "Preserve tradition" |
| How? | Touch points | Website, Facebook and Instagram | Value of digital content: Emotional value |
| When? | Ongoing | We know the day of campaign launch but with user sharing in social networks is difficult to predict the end of campaign | September  Value of digital content: business content |
| How much? | Budget | 770,47€ | Small and familiar company |

**For what:** The main goal is to keep the "word of mouth" to sustain the company's credibility, but do it through digital media. Hence, the company wants to generate buzz with digital contents in order to transmit company's values, namely trust, tradition and family.

**What**: The message foundation is "Grandpa Marcelino, the value of tradition". This expression is showed by slogan, images or typography type, as we can see in figures 3 to 7.

## 'Grandpa Marcelino Campaign'

*Figure 3. Goes back to the origins with a photo of the founder*



**How**: The company started its digital media communication using a website, Facebook and Instagram. The contents developed focused emotional values, specifically the degree of gratification or satisfaction of using the service.

**When**: The launch of this campaign was planned to be in early Autumn of 2016, after the summer vacation (table 3). The plan included to prepare the website and Facebook in August and Instagram in September. In the period between September and January the company planned to post new content weekly or monthly.

**How much:** The proposed budget is in table 4.

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*Figure 4. Presents the slogan in a classic frame, resembling to a seal*



Familiar businesses have unique characteristics. With the new media these firms, which tend to have lower resources, but more flexibility in their decision making, take advantage of how information spreads and consumers interact. 'Grandpa Marcelino' has an active market presence, benefiting not only of the traditional word-of-mouth, but also of the digital.

Acknowledgements: Rita Marcelino and her father Carlos Marcelino

## Case Study 2 – Beer With Pineapple Flavour

Super Bock is a Portuguese beer brand that belongs to the Super Bock Group. It was founded in November 1927 and launched its first advertisement in 1967 with the slogan "a cerveja supera a sua exigência"[1]. In 1992 Super Bock becomes the Portuguese market leader and three years later created and sponsored the biggest rock festival in Portugal. It is a brand recognised for its innovation and diversification of product and package.

The brand acknowledged rather early (2009) the relevance of social media to contact the market and increase the consumer level of engagement. As such, the brand is in Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter and Spotify (Baynast, Rodrigues, Lendrevie, Lévy, & Dionísio, 2018).

The brand Super Bock case study is based on the digital marketing campaign to launch a fictitious new product. None of the products illustrated in images 6-11 are real, and the contents are merely illustrative.

*Figure 5. Focuses on a detail of restoration activity*



This case study was developed in an academic context by Marketing degree students of Polytechnic of Leiria. The goal was to develop contents to communicate the brand in social networks.

Table 5 identifies the main elements of the digital marketing communication strategy of Super Bock. The students didn't apply the "How evaluate" and "How much" elements.

Some notes about case study 2:

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*Figure 6. Presents a final product restored by the CEO*



*Figure 7. Builds in the story of the company, with the passage of father to son*



**Who**: Agents who can promote and manage the brand digital content, such as web designers, marketeers and Super Bock brand managers. The brand was already

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considered the brand with the highest engagement in social media (Baynast, Rodrigues, Lendrevie, Lévy, & Dionísio, 2018)

*Table 3. Chronogram campaign (from August 2017 to January 2018)*

| Month/week Activity | August | September | October | November | December | January |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Website | Create template | Post pictures of restored furniture | – | – | – | – |
| Facebook | Create firm page | 1 or 2 posts per week | 1 or 2 posts per week | | | |
| Instagram | – | Create firm page | 1 post per week and obtain new followers | 2 posts per month and obtain new followers | 2 posts per month and obtain new followers | 1 post per month and obtain new followers |

*Table 4. Budget Campaign*

| Activities | Quantity | Price | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Website | 1 | - | 630,47€ |
| Facebook Ads | 1 post / week | 17,5€/week | 70€/month |
| Instagram Ads | 1 post / week | 17,5€/week | 70€/month |

**To whom:** Men and women with ages between 18 and 35 years old, living in urban centres and from medium and high incomes classes. They are highly qualified and like new experiences, travel to far destinations and differentiated products. The product to be launched is associated with Summer, warm weather, beaches and good moments with family and friends. Given its pineapple flavour, it aims consumers who are concerned with their health and body, have physical activity habits and enjoy healthy food. Hence, the proposed persona is Maria, a 18 years old environmentally-friendly university student. Socially active, Maria doesn't say no to a party nor can she live without her mobile phone. She was born in the north of the country but lives in Leiria where she studies. Her

goals are to graduate on the expected deadline, lose weight and attend parties and concerts. Her major characteristic is "very social".

*Table 5. Digital marketing communication strategy elements of case study 2*

| Digital communication element | Main characteristic | Synthetic approach | Details of Super Bock Case study |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who? | Agent | List people who are involved in digital campaign | Super Bock brand responsible, Creative agency, Video producers |
| To whom ? | Personas Many-to-many | Value of digital content: Interaction value between user and user and between content and the user which should express the need and motivation | University student and social media profile. Urban young adults, socially active and who love experiences |
| For what? | Goals | Drive experimentation | Promote taste experience and first purchase |
| What? | Content | Creative technique to spread the message: Storytelling | "This Summer is online" Contents-user-interaction of Pineapple beer adult lovers` |
| How? | Touch points | List all touchpoints of the brand/company and the customer | Social network: Facebook and Instagram Value of digital content: social value |
| When? | Ongoing | The launching day of the campaign is defined, but user social media shares makes it difficult to predict the end of the campaign | Beginning of summer Value of digital content: business value |

In terms of interaction value, this presents a content–user interaction. "Interaction", here, is defined as the mutual influence of users as components of the exchange of meaningful messages' process (Feijoo et al., 2009; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008;

Rowley, 2008). In this case the contents are exchanged by users (Stini et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2008; Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007).

**For what:** The main purpose of this campaign is to lead consumers to try Super Bock Pineapple.

**What:** The base message is "this Summer is/be online, drink Super Bock" and will be transmitted via storytelling. "Transmedia storytelling is a narrative technique based on telling a story across different communication platforms" (Gurel & Tigli, 2014, p.36). The stories developed will express the summer social life, namely summer parties (sunsets, disco nights, pubs, summers festivals) and city sites (gardens, streets, houses). The stories will challenge the target audience and use a provocative tone:

◦ Drink and share pictures of the bottle or friends in a party (figure 8);
◦ If you are thirsty, drink Super Bock Pine (figure 9);
◦ If you like music, tune in this season, try this new product (figure 10);
◦ "Menina estás à janela", translated as "girl is at the window", it is a popular Portuguese song, transversal to all generations and is allusive to the girl and the night/moon (figure 11);
◦ Drink and win tickets to Festival Super Bock, Super Rock, find your ticket in the cap (figure 12).

All images are according to Portuguese alcoholic drinks legislation and include "Seja responsável. Beba com moderação" that means be responsible, drink with moderation.

**How**: The company started the digital communication using as touchpoints its website, Facebook and Instagram. The contents for these media are associated with social values, ie., forming one's social image in accordance with others' expectations or social norms (Sheth et al., 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Maria is a persona with a big social motivation, so the digital contents developed elevate one's social status, enhance one's relationships with others, and generate one's desired social image within the context of digital content use (Heymann, Koutrika, & Garcia-Molina, 2007; Lai & Turban, 2008).

The brand also uses traditional MarCom techniques such as advertising, merchandising, sponsorship and patronage.

**When:** The launch of this campaign was planned for the beginning of summer and would last until the middle of July (date of the Super Bock Super Rock festival).

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*Figure 8. "This summer is/be online"*



The students who developed this case study proposed a Super Bock pine logo (figure 12), which represents a continuity of current brand logo, but with a pineapple extension. This new product is in line with the brand innovation and the proposed communication is in accordance with its presence on digital media. The launch in

the summer and association to music (Super Bock Super Rock) can also be a source of new experiences.

*Figure 9. Drink Super Bock Pine*



Through the presented product, Super Bock innovates, launching a new flavour which is low in calories, facilitator of digestion and mobilization of fat deposits, and with anti-inflammatory properties. The chosen target is pertinent given its preferences and behaviours.

Acknowledgements: Super Bock and students André Gameiro, Bruno Pereira, Leandro Gonzaga and Luís Colaço

## CONCLUSION

The current market setting is rather different from the one existing a decade ago. Digitalisation and the emergence of new media brought not only different consumer profiles, but also changed the status quo in terms of the way businesses are developed and managed, or even who is involved in marketing communication.

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*Figure 10. Tune in to the night flavour*



This chapter discussed how marketing communication can relate to business innovation and introduced the new marketing communication paradigm. Furthermore, two case studies were presented as to elucidate the application of this new approach to two different situations. Case study 1 refers to a small traditional industry company that tries to revamp itself by using digital media whereas case study 2 shows how a known, established brand, can launch a new product benefiting from not only the new media interaction but also from the new role of consumers in brand communication.

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*Figure 11. Girl is at the window*

*Figure 12. Contest – Tickets to the Super Bock Super Rock music festival*

*Figure 13. Current Super Bock logo (left) and Super Bock Pine Logo (right)*



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## ENDNOTE

[1] "Beer exceeds your demand."

Chapter 2

# Digital Influencers and Follower Behavior:
## An Exploratory Study

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## ABSTRACT

*The advent of new technologies, the massification of internet access, the availability of personal computers in the market, and the entrance of smartphones into citizens' daily lives all have constituted a revolution that has led to a change in consumer behavior. There is no need for an empirical study, since it is enough to enter some social networks to observe that companies are using these networks as a marketing vehicle. Digital marketing constitutes a great tool to attract new clients and customers, be it by means of content or paid advertisements in browsers, blogs, videos, Instagram, etc. Hence, the aim of this study is to understand the role and importance of digital influencers in consumers' daily lives. For this, the authors developed an exploratory, quantitative, observational, and transversal study based on a non-probabilistic sample, composed of 161 individuals who integrated or interacted with someone who integrated the academic community of a higher education institution.*

# INTRODUCTION

According to Kotler (2000), marketing is seen as the task of creating, promoting and providing goods and services to clients and customers, and thus its goal is to find means to connect product benefits to people's interests. The main purpose of marketing is to help organizations achieve their goals, since companies make money from meeting clients' needs better than their competitors.

According to the American Marketing Association (2013), marketing is defined as a set of activities and processes of creation, communication, delivery and exchange of offers which are valued by clients, customers, partners, and by society in general.

In a nutshell, marketing is a process seeking to understand the target audience's needs so as to promote sales. Primarily, marketing consists of a continuous market research process within which the company acts or intends to act in the future, therefore conducting an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and market changes and trends.

It is currently impossible to talk about marketing and ignore that most of the world population are connected to the internet and shop online. Such technological support has quickly transformed traditional marketing into digital marketing. This digital marketing can be defined as the 'set of activities that a company (or individual) executes online with the aim to attract new business, create new relationships and develop a brand identity' (Peçanha, 2019).

Digital marketing has transformed the way business and other organizations communicate with their audiences. The 5Ds of digital marketing (digital devices, digital platforms, digital media, digital data and digital technology) can be used, alongside traditional marketing techniques, to get closer to audiences than ever before (Dave and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Nowadays, social media content has been used by various brands for competing with their competitors, promoting products and offers, and maintaining a reputation among the stakeholders (Brennan and Croft, 2012, Chen, 2013).

This is the background for our research work, which in terms of structure will develop from this introduction into the review of literature on social networks and the marketing within such networks. Subsequently, we define digital influencers and their power to influence behavioral change. The following section gives an account of the research method used in this study, namely the survey, focusing on its structure as well as on the target population. Finally, the results and conclusions are presented in light of the research data obtained, the limitations of the study are identified, and further works are put forward.

## Social Networks

Digital marketing has transformed the way business and other organizations communicate with their audiences. The 5Ds of digital marketing (digital devices, digital platforms, digital media, digital data and digital technology) can be used, alongside traditional marketing techniques, to get closer to audiences than ever before (Dave and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Within social networks, people affect one another through complex social/ interpersonal influences. These are conscious or unconscious, active or passive, normative or informative (Eck van, Jager, and Leeflang, 2011). Word of mouth reflects part of this social influence. In earlier times, the usual strong effects of social influence could only be measured with much difficulty. Since their introduction, social media offer opportunities to stimulate and to measure social interrelations among customers (Chen, Chen, and Xiao, 2013) and hence word of mouth. Social media can be defined as "a group of Internet-based applications […] that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61). Social media provide an unparalleled platform for consumers to publicize their personal evaluations of purchased products and thus facilitate word-of-mouth communication (Chen, Fay, and Wang, 2011). Usually, a distinction is made between customer-initiated social media (e.g., reviews, blogs) and firm-initiated social media (de Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2012).

But how can we define social networks? In a nutshell, they can be said to be virtual spaces where groups of people or companies relate to one another by sending messages, sharing contents, among others. For the authors (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, Scott, 2000), a social network is a set of people or groups of people, "actors" in the jargon of the field, with some pattern of interactions or "ties" between them. Friendships among a group of individuals, business relationships between companies, and intermarriages between families are all examples of networks that have been studied in the past. Network analysis has a long history in sociology, the literature on the topic stretching back at least half a century to the pioneering work of Rapoport, Harary, and others in the 1940s and 1950s (Newman, 2019).

Currently, there are different social networks, each of which with their specific purpose and target audience. Amongst them, we can highlight the following: Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Skype, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Messenger.

## Digital Influencers

Due to all the freedom and easiness provided by the internet, content becomes one of the main tools used by brands when drawing their marketing plan in digital

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environments. Within this context, some individuals have stood out in some social networks, gathering and influencing thousands – in some cases, millions – of people: those are called digital influencers.

The term refers to those individuals who use one or several social networks to express analysis and influence other people's opinion by means of online text or video posts and who are followed by massive audiences.

The concept of digital influencer is not a new one within marketing, especially if we think of forums, where people have always given their opinion on several topics, or of the subsequent Blogs as well as the engagement strategies used by Bloggers. Presently, with the creation and sharing of contents increasingly more sophisticated, influencers have had an impact which is bigger than ever before (Gow, 2016).

Consumers have the power to decide what brands they want to follow and what products they want to acquire, and brands are anchored in what their followers like and want to buy. (Santos, 2016).

The connecting link between consumers and brands are the so-called digital influencers. Through Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, and others, they use their social networks to introduce consumers to the products that brands want to advertise.

By watching the shared advertised products, the consumers who follow their digital influencer will feel dragged to being like them and therefore, to buy the products that brands want to sell (Fernandes, 2016).

Due to the saturation of traditional marketing strategies, followers tend to trust products' users (influencers) more than the actual brands (Nagy, Kemény, and Szűcs, 2017). Thus, some brands choose to ally with someone who has the power to get their message across to as wide a number of people as possible. These allies are the so-called DOLs (Digital Opinion Leaders), who assume this role and give voice to the brand they represent (Costa and Alturas, 2018).

The advent of such new digital opinion makers may cause a change in the behavior and mindset of their followers, who tend to be easily influenced. This issue is the focus of the present study, in an attempt to understand to what point people let themselves be persuaded by these influencers.

## Research Methodology

In order to understand and identify users' behavioral patterns in relation to the action of the so-called digital influencers within an increasingly technological and educated society, we developed an exploratory, quantitative, observational and transversal study based on a non-probabilistic sample, snow-ball type, made up of 161 individuals who integrated or interacted with subjects integrating the academic community of a higher education institution located in the Northeast of Portugal.

For a confidence level of 95%, the sampling error corresponding to a random sample of the same size was of 5.7%. The data were collected from May 3 to May 17 2018, through a survey developed on Google Forms and applied online.

The Survey was found to be the appropriate data collection tool for this study, since it enables a clear, straightforward and objective answer to the questions presented to the respondents. The Survey stands out as a social research technique more suited for large-scale studies. It is seemingly easy to apply, relatively quick, standardized, and it privileges data which are comparable, generalizable and quantitatively analyzable.

Another factor contributing to our opting for the Survey was the fact that the study was conducted in a higher education institution, within the course unit Marketing II, of the Management bachelor degree course, and that therefore, the respondents were basically undergraduates. Hence, the application of an online survey to understand users' behavior towards digital influencers was found to be appropriate. The application Google Forms was used to draw the survey and collect the data. The structure of the survey resulted from the review of literature on social networks in general, and particularly on digital influencers. The questions in the survey, of individual and confidential response, were organized into three groups.

The first section was composed of questions allowing the respondents' sociodemographic characterization. The second one contained questions regarding the participants' academic situation, The third section contained questions on the respondents' use of the internet and other digital tools for the acquisition of goods and services, as well as questions on the importance and influence that Digital Influencers may have in consumers' purchase decision making.

So as to enable the collection of the highest possible number of answers, we aimed for a survey that would be easy to answer and that would not be too long.

The data were analyzed by means of the spreadsheet program Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 software. The following statistical techniques were used:

a)   Descriptive statistics were calculated, namely frequencies (absolute and relative), measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode) and dispersion measures (minimum, maximum and standard deviation) to characterize the sample and describe the data (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014; Maroco, 2018).

b)   Factorial exploratory analysis – principal components approach, with varimax rotation, to identify the most relevant Digital Influencers for the respondents (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014; Maroco, 2018). Factorial analysis correlates the variables analyzed so as to simplify the study, since it reduces the number of variables needed to describe the data. That is, it looks for a set of factors that is smaller than the original variables and that can express what those variables have in common (Maroco, 2018; Pestana & Gageiro, 2014).

c)  Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was applied to analyze the questionnaire's reliability and the answers' internal consistency. The value must be positive, ranging from 0 to 1; values higher than 0.9 mean that consistency is very good; between 0.8 and 0.9 mean it is good; between 0.7 and 0.8 correspond to reasonable; between 0.6 and 0.7 to weak; and values below 0.6 are not acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

d)  The independent Qui-square test ($\chi 2$) was used to study the relation between two variables whenever the test's practical rule was applicable. The test practical rule refers that the global sample size must be above 20, the expected frequencies must be above 5 and, whenever below 5 but above 1, they cannot represent more than 20% of the cells in the contingency table (Maroco, 2018). For the execution of the Test, a degree of confidence (1- α) of 95% was used, to which corresponds a level of significance (α) of 5%. The statistical decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis (H0) when the p-value or significance probability is inferior or equal to α (Maroco, 2018). The Qui-square test enables testing the null hypothesis (H0) of the variables being independent against the alternative hypothesis (H1) of the variables not being independent.

## Results

Many studies in literature focus on different forms of social media, including blogs, and conclude that these media outlets gain immense traction and have a subsequent social influence on the information consumers (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger and Shapiro, 2012, McCormick, 2016, Prentice, Han, Hua and Hu, 2019).

Among the 161 individuals who responded to this survey, 59 were male and 102 were female. Regarding age, the respondents were between 18 and 46 years old, with a mean of 23.3 (SD = 4.798). The age mode and median were 22.

As far as the sample subjects' nationality is concerned, the data obtained shows that almost all the answers were given by Portuguese individuals (93.2%).

## Descriptive Analysis

When asked whether or not they use the internet and social media, the sample subjects unanimously answered "Yes".

The results shown in Figure 1 show that Facebook is the most used social network, followed by YouTube and Instagram, which are only slightly apart from each other since the former revealed about 141 responses and the latter 138. Among the 8.77% of the answers obtained for "Other", the following were mentioned: Blog; WhatsApp; Researchgate; Tinder; Viber; LinkedIn, and Pinterest.

*Figure 1. Most used Social Network (N = 161)*

| Social Network | Value |
|---|---|
| Facebook | 153 |
| Youtube | 141 |
| Instagram | 138 |
| Snapchat | 70 |
| Twitter | 36 |
| Tumbir | 14 |
| Other | 14 |
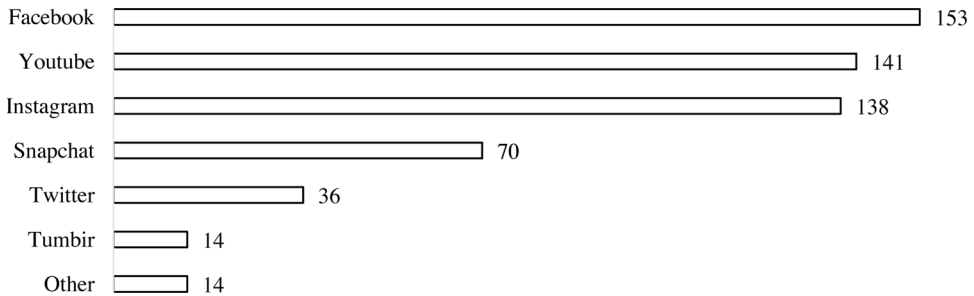
When asked whether they are familiar with the term "Digital Influencer", 59.0% (95) of the respondents said "Yes" and 41.0% (66) said "No". Such results lead to the conclusion that the term "Digital Influencer" is not yet a very familiar one to the enquired (Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Familiarity with the term "digital influencer" (N = 161)*

Yes
41%

No
59%
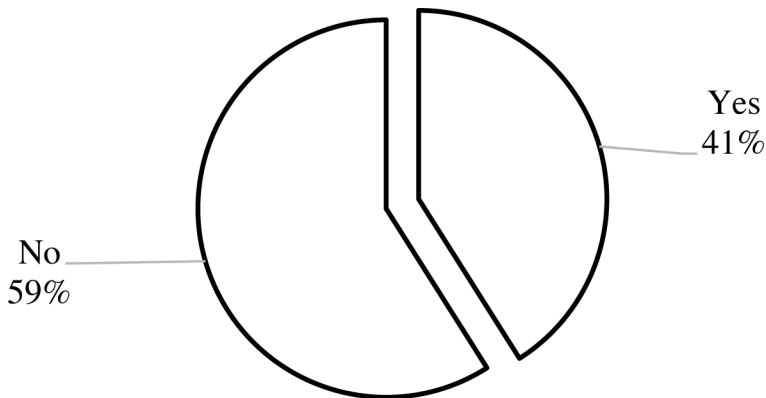
The sample subjects who answered "Yes" to the previous question (Figure 2) also answered another question giving their opinion on whether digital influencers are a positive or a negative factor in society, which allowed clarifying the respondents' opinions. For this, a Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (Very Negative) to 5 (Very Positive).

As shown in Figure 3, there is a number of favorable answers regarding digital influencers' action. Indeed, despite the high percentage of respondents expressing neutral opinions (57.1%), the positive opinions represent 21.7% (35) and the very

positive opinions represent 9.3% (15). On the other hand, 8.7% (15) of the surveyed consider digital influencers' action to be "Negative".

With regard to the open-answer question on "why" they consider digital influencers a positive or negative factor, the results show very similar answers, among which the following can be highlighted: good and bad influence; positive influence; different knowledge; negative influence; introduction to several products; and inspiration.

The majority of the subjects surveyed have a neutral opinion regarding Digital Influencers' action. Among the remaining minority, most have a rather positive opinion regarding Digital Influencers and are familiar with the term. According to the respondents, the good or bad influence depends on the Digital Influencers themselves, the topic they approach or the product they promote. They are an asset as they provide faster knowledge of all kinds of information or products, and they can contribute their own different knowledge or point of view regarding the topics they deal with. However, the respondents evaluated negatively the fact that digital influencers often flaunt certain products and are paid to influence people's opinions. In sum, the group of sample subjects surveyed appreciate the role of Digital Influencers for all the knowledge and interaction they provide. Nonetheless, they are also careful not to be dazzled by everything the influencers say and transmit.

*Figure 3. Positive or negative factor (N = 66)*
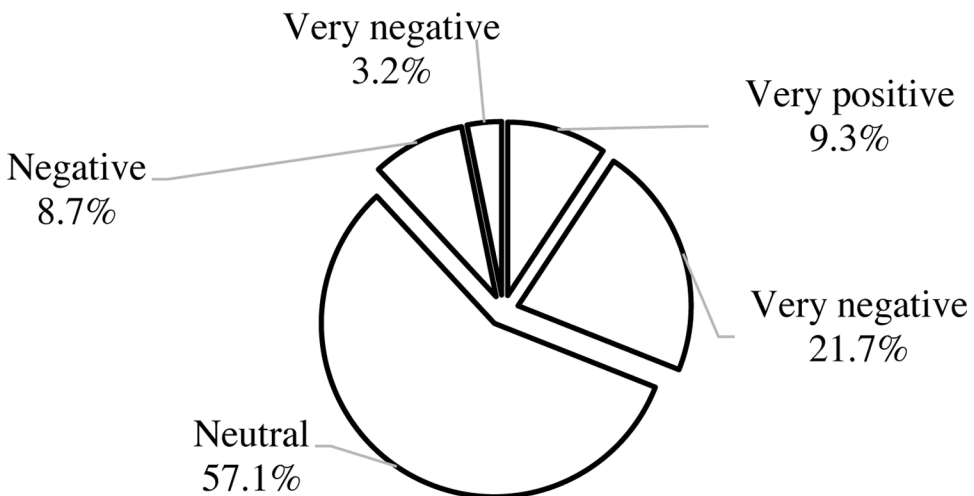


With regard to the kind of product most consumed by the respondents and over which they most felt the influence of Digital Influencers, the results show a prevalence of products related to Lifestyle (48.4%), Technology (47.2) and Fashion

(46.6%). Gastronomy registered 26.7% of the answers and Others 11.8% (Figure 4). Among the products mentioned in the option "Other", we highlight the following categories: Make-Up, Games and Travel.

*Figure 4. Categories of products most followed by the respondents (N = 66)*
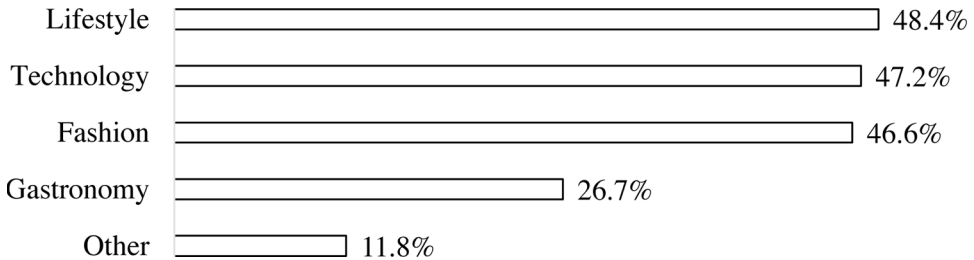


When asked about how they started following a digital influencer, over 50% of the respondents, more precisely 68.9%, said to have started following them casually. The options "By someone's influence" and "Public figure" registered 28.6% and 25.5% of the answers, respectively. The option "Publicity" reported 20.5% of the answers, and finally, "Television" got 9.3% of the answers (Figure 5). It is noteworthy that the options provided were not mutually exclusive, which means the subjects could choose more than one option. The fact that the option "Public Figure" was not the most chosen one (with only 25.5%) is rather surprising since it was expectable that the subjects might follow digital influencers by emulating the behavior of public figures.

*Figure 5. How the respondents started following the "digital influencer" (N = 66)*
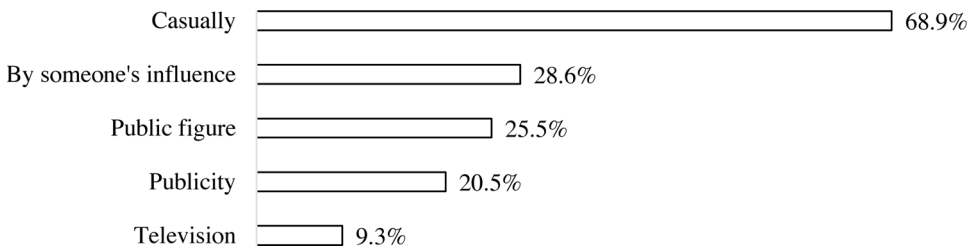


When asked about the reasons that lead them to follow a digital influencer, the majority of the respondents (68.9%) replied that they do so in order to keep updated; 39.8% follow the digital influencer to get inspiration; 24.2% do so for consumerism

reasons; 19.9% because the influencer is a public figure that they can relate with; and finally, only one respondent said they followed the digital influencer because everyone else does (0.6%). Note that the options provided were not mutually exclusive, that is, the subjects surveyed could choose more than one option.

*Figure 6. Reasons for following the "digital influencer" (N = 66)*

| Reason | Percentage |
|---|---|
| To keep me updated | 68.9% |
| Inspiration | 39.8% |
| Consumerism | 24.2% |
| Because it´s a public figure that I identify with | 19.9% |
| Because everyone follows | 0.6% |
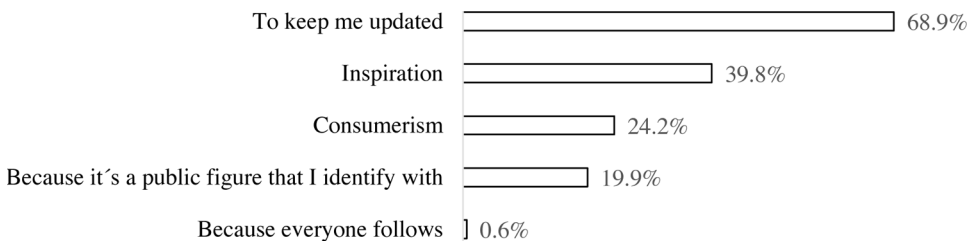
The results obtained concerning how often they follow Digital Influencers' action regarding products comprised in the categories Fashion, Lifestyle, Technology and Gastronomy are shown in Figure 7. As far as the products related to Fashion are concerned, we found that 28.0% of the respondents follow Digital Influencers casually, 18.0% do it rarely, 17.0% do not follow them, 15.0% do so when they think of it, 13% follow them every day, and finally, 9.0% follow them when advertising about the subject appears.

With regard to the products comprised in the category "Lifestyle", 28.0% of the surveyed follow digital influencers casually, 16.0% do so whenever they think of it, 15.0% follow them every day, an equal percentage rarely do so, 13.0% follow them whenever the subject is advertised, and the same percentage never follow digital influencers.

The results regarding the category of products "Technology" show that 34.0% of the sample subjects follow digital influencers casually, 20.0% rarely do, 18.0% do so whenever they remember, 12.0% follow them every day, 9.0% do so whenever the subject is advertised, and 8.0% never follow them.

Finally, with respect to the products within the category "Gastronomy", the results show that 28.0% of the respondents follow digital influencers casually, 20.0% rarely do, 19.0% follow them when they remember, 16.0% when advertising about the subject appears, 10.0% never follow digital influencers, and 8.0% always do.

When asked whether they have ever felt "influenced" to purchase something they saw online, the majority of the sample subjects (122) reported to have felt influenced by digital influencers to buy something (Figure 8).

*Figure 7. How often the respondents follow the categories of products (N = 66)*

**Fashion**

| | |
|---|---|
| Casually | 28% |
| Rarely | 18% |
| Never | 17% |
| When I remember | 15% |
| Every day | 13% |
| Whenever advertising about the subject appears | 9% |

**Lifestyle**

| | |
|---|---|
| Casually | 28% |
| When I remember | 16% |
| Rarely | 15% |
| Every day | 15% |
| Never | 13% |
| Whenever advertising about the subject appears | 13% |

**Technology**

| | |
|---|---|
| Casually | 34% |
| Rarely | 20% |
| When I remember | 18% |
| Every day | 12% |
| Whenever advertising about the subject appears | 9% |
| Never | 8% |

**Gastronomy**

| | |
|---|---|
| Casually | 28% |
| Rarely | 20% |
| When I remember | 19% |
| Whenever advertising about the subject appears | 16% |
| Never | 10% |
| Every day | 8% |

Another question in the survey was about how often the sample subjects felt influenced. In this question, a 0 to 10 scale was used in order to assess how often the respondents are influenced by digital influencers to purchase a product. As shown in Figure 9, such influence mostly occurred between 3 and 7 times (73.9%). Indeed, 33 respondents were influenced 5 times, 27 stated to have been influenced 3 times, 22 answered 4 times, 19 were influenced on 6 occasions, and 11 respondents on 7 occasions.

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*Figure 8. Have they ever felt "influenced" to purchase goods they saw online? (N = 161)*

I never thougth about it 10.6%

No 13.6%

Yes 73.8%
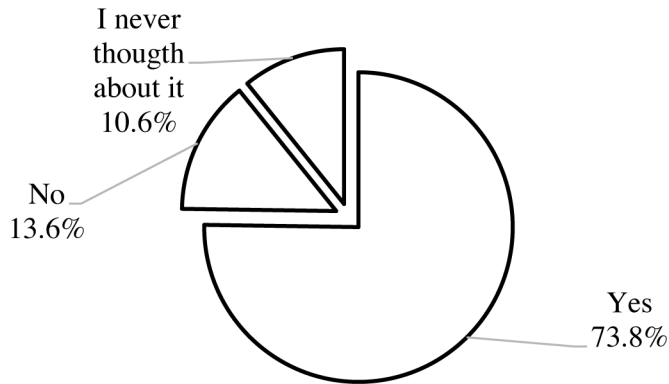
*Figure 9. How often are they influenced? (N = 161)*

11 (6.8%)  10 (6.2%)  13 (8.1%)  27 (16.8%)  22 (13.7%)  33 (20.5%)  19 (11.6%)  18 (11.2%)  4 (2.5%)  3 (1.9%)  1 (0,6%)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
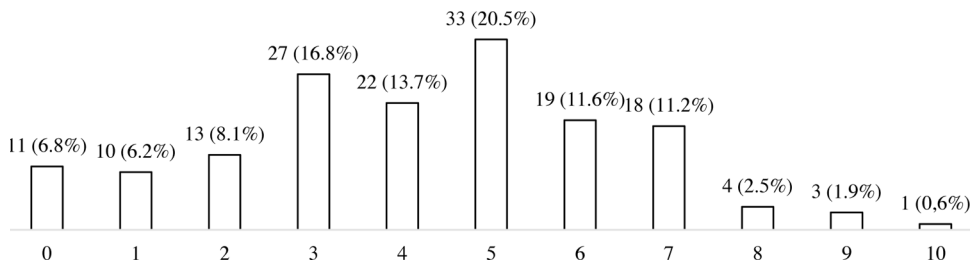
*Figure 10. Do they consider becoming a Digital Influencer? (N = 161)*

Yes 17%

No 83%

41
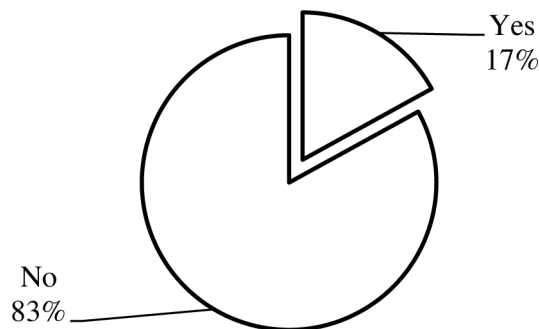
*Table 1. Correlation Item-Total*

| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In your opinion, is the "Digital Influencer" a positive or negative factor in society? | 25.02 | 36.01 | -0.01 | 0.41 |
| How often do you follow: [Fashion] | 24.91 | 27.71 | 0.31 | 0.28 |
| How often do you follow: [Lifestyle] | 25.17 | 27.59 | 0.34 | 0.26 |
| How often do you follow: [Technology] | 25.19 | 30.80 | 0.18 | 0.35 |
| How often do you follow: [Gastronomy] | 24.88 | 28.67 | 0.34 | 0.28 |
| How often do you follow: [Other] | 24.39 | 27.05 | 0.30 | 0.28 |
| How often are you influenced? | 24.06 | 33.35 | -0.06 | 0.49 |
| How did this influence come about? | 24.34 | 32.82 | -0.01 | 0.44 |

With regard to the question about whether the respondents have ever considered becoming a digital influencer, the results show that although digital influencers have quite an impact on the life of nowadays society, the sample subjects of this study are not particularly keen to become one (83.0%). Only 17.0% consider the possibility of becoming a Digital Influencer (Figure 10).

## Internal Consistency Analysis

In order to determine suitability, respecting reliability, it is necessary to study internal consistency. Internal consistency occurs when the whole of the variables is analyzed and suitable correlations are revealed, the number of variables can be divided into equal parts and they have equal contributions to the whole of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha is one of the most used measures when it comes to assessing internal consistency.

*Table 2. Item-Total correlation with extraction of variables*

| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach´s Alpha if Item Deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How often do you follow: [Fashion] | 13.49 | 20.85 | 0.46 | 0.60 |
| How often do you follow: [Lifestyle] | 13.76 | 21.16 | 0.48 | 0.59 |
| How often do you follow: [Technology] | 13.77 | 24.87 | 0.26 | 0.68 |
| How often do you follow: [Gastronomy] | 13.46 | 21.94 | 0.50 | 0.59 |
| How often do you follow: [Other] | 12.98 | 20.52 | 0.42 | 0.62 |

Through the Item-Total correlation, we can see that the Cronbach's Alpha obtained by using the seven variables is 0.39, which in the given scale represents an unacceptable value, since the Alpha obtained is below 0.6.

The seven variables considered were:

- In your opinion, is the "Digital Influencer" a positive or negative factor in society?
- How often do you follow: [Fashion].
- How often do you follow: [Lifestyle].
- How often do you follow: [Technology].
- How often do you follow: [Gastronomy].
- How often do you follow: [Other].
- How often are you influenced?
- How did this influence come about?

Since Cronbach's Alpha was unacceptable with the seven ordinal variables, we removed the variables which were irrelevant for this study and kept only five variables. The following variables were successively removed:

- In your opinion, is the "Digital Influencer" a positive or negative factor in society?
- How often are you influenced?
- How did this influence come about?

*Table 3. Communalities*

|  | Initial | Extraction |
|---|---|---|
| How often do you follow: [Fashion] | 1.00 | 0.82 |
| How often do you follow: [Lifestyle] | 1.00 | 0/74 |
| How often do you follow: [Technology] | 1.00 | 0.83 |
| How often do you follow: [Gastronomy] | 1.00 | 0.61 |
| How often do you follow: [Other] | 1.00 | 0.44 |

After the removal of these three variables, the Cronbach's Alpha obtained was 0.67. Thus, even after the extraction of some variables, the Cronbach's Alpha is still weak, but it is acceptable considering the given scale.

The Item-Total correlation analysis showed that the items presented a correlation between 0.26 and 0.50. As shown in Table 2, the Item-Total correlation is not very good, since although the values are above 0.4, they are not significantly higher. This means that there is not a good cohesion, since in statistical terms, the correlation between each Item-Total must be strong (0.4 to 0.7).

## Factorial Analysis

In Table 3 we can identify the most relevant variables associated with each factor. The model enables a good explanation of the variance of the variables since the values are all above 0.5, except for the variable "How often do you follow: [Other]", which presents a value of 0.44.

*Table 4. Total Variance Explained according to Pearson and Kaiser criteria*

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 2.19 | 43.80 | 43.80 | 2.19 | 43.80 | 43.80 |
| 2 | 1.24 | 24.89 | 68.68 | 1.24 | 24.89 | 68.68 |
| 3 | 0.75 | 15.07 | 83.78 |  |  |  |
| 4 | 0.50 | 10.07 | 93.84 |  |  |  |
| 5 | 0.31 | 6.16 | 100.00 |  |  |  |

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*Figure 11. Scree Plot*
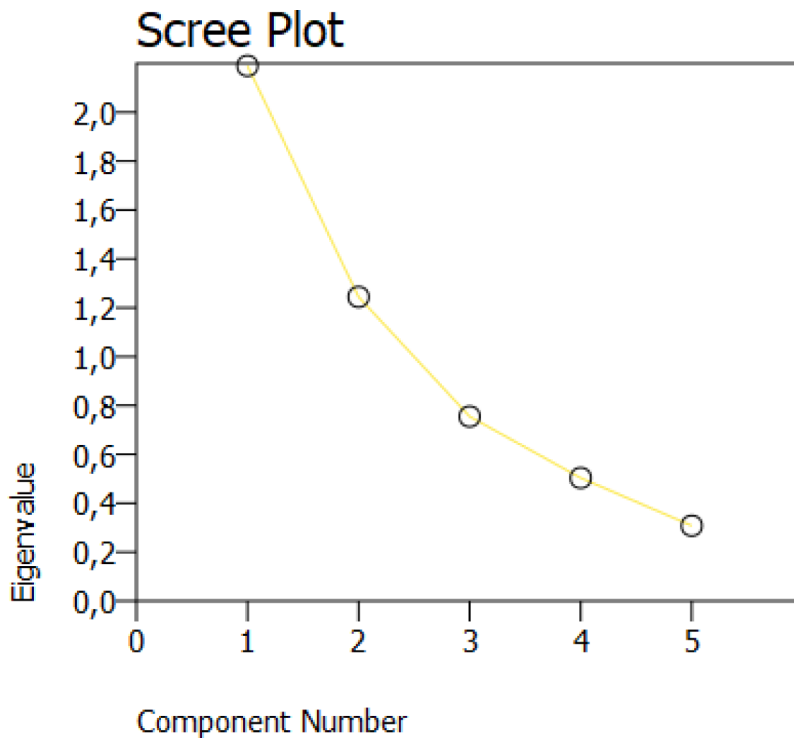


According to Pearson's criterium, the factors to be used are those in which the cumulative variance is equal to or above 80%. When considering Table 4, three factors must be used in order to obtain such variance. Therefore, according to Pearson's criterium, three variables would be enough to explain the model. However, according to Kaiser's criterium, the factors to be used must be above 1. As shown in Table 4, two factors must be used. Therefore, according to this criterium, only two variables would be enough to study the model.

When using the Scree Plot analysis, what must be considered is the moment when the trend line seems to level off, i.e. stops dropping. It is this condition that provides the number of factors to be retained for the study. Therefore, the Scree Plot shown in Figure 11 reveals that two variables are enough in this research work.

Although the results are not immediately conclusive, since the number of factors to be used do not match when using Pearson's criterium (three factors) and Kaiser's criterium (two factors), the Scree Plot presented in Figure 11 and its trend line meet Kaiser's criterium, therefore allowing the conclusion that the study of two factors is enough for the present research work.

*Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix*

|  | Component | |
|---|---|---|
|  | **1** | **2** |
| How often do you follow: [Fashion] | 0.90 | 0.09 |
| How often do you follow: [Lifestyle] | 0.85 | 0.14 |
| How often do you follow: [Technology] | -0.18 | 0.89 |
| How often do you follow: [Gastronomy] | 0.33 | 0.71 |
| How often do you follow: [Other] | 0.36 | 0.56 |

*Table 6. Relationship between dichotomous nominal variables*

| Variable | Categories | Gender (%) | | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | **Male** | **Female** |  |
| Are you a user of any social network? | Yes | 98.3 | 99.0 | 0.693 |
|  | No | 1.7 | 1,0 |  |
| Are you familiar with the term "digital Influencer"? | Yes | 50.8 | 63.7 | 0.109 |
|  | No | 49.2 | 36.2 |  |
| Do you want to become a "digital influencer"? | Yes | 17.2 | 17.0 | 0.968 |
|  | No | 82.8 | 83.0 |  |
| Are you part of the higher education institution? | Yes | 78.0 | 81.3 | 0.372 |
|  | No | 22.0 | 18.7 |  |

The subsequent analysis consisted of the Rotated Component Matrix (Table 5). The method used to conduct the rotation of factors was the Varimax, due to the strong suspicion that the variables are associated with certain factors. In order to determine which variables are associated with one same factor, an analysis must be conducted line by line to find the highest value in absolute terms.

It was found that the variables "How often do you follow: [Fashion]" and "How often do you follow: [Lifestyle]" are associated with factor 1. This factor has a characteristic which is common to these variables, which in this study can be quality.

The remaining three variables "How often do you follow: [Technology]", "How often do you follow: [Gastronomy]", and "How often do you follow: [Other]" are associated with factor 2. This factor also has a characteristic that is common to all these 3 variables, which in this study could be frequency.

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## Statistical Inference

As duly mentioned above, the analysis of the relation between dichotomous nominal variables was conducted by means of the Qui-square test. The variables involved in the analysis were the respondents' "gender" (female/male) and the variables "do you use any social network?", "are you familiar with the term Digital Influencer?", "Do you consider becoming a Digital Influencer?", and "are you a member of the higher education institution?" (Yes/No).

As shown in Table 6, considering a level of significance of 5%, the variable "gender" is independent from the other variables mentioned.

## CONCLUSION

The fusion between the real world (offline) and the digital world (online) is paramount within the Internet era, in which it is necessary to keep up with the consumers' needs and demands as well as with the technological advances, in order to enable the establishment, whenever possible, of a close relationship between product and consumer. The strategies could be segmentation, communication, sale and customer loyalty (Ferrão and Alturas, 2018).

The majority of the population somehow use a social network, which makes it easier for companies to contact people in a faster, wider and more practical way.

The interface between companies and their clients is carried out by the so-called "Digital Influencers". Through Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, they introduce consumers to the products that the brands want to promote via their social networks.

The present study was conducted within a higher education institution, by means of an online survey. The number of respondents to the survey was 161, among whom 59 were male and 102 were female. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 46 years old and the age mean was 22.

Over 90% of the sample subjects are Portuguese, although the academic milieu where the study was conducted has a significant number of foreign students.

The results show that the most used social network is Facebook, followed by Snapchat, and the least used are Tumblr, Blog and LinkedIn.

The majority of the respondents have a positive opinion regarding digital influencers, and the category they most follow is Lifestyle, while the categories they least follow are Make Up, Games and Travel.

The main reason given by the respondents to follow a digital influencer was to keep updated.

The results show that 83% of the subjects surveyed do not intend to become digital influencers.

In the factorial analysis, seven ordinal variables were first taken into account, with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.39, which is an unacceptable value since it is below 0.6. After removing three variables, an acceptable Cronbach Alpha value of 0.67 was obtained.

In light of the results, we can clearly conclude that the respondents to this survey feel influenced by digital influencers, since from the 161 sample subjects, 122 reported to have felt influenced to purchase a certain product or service after following certain social networks.

The statistical inference analysis revealed that "gender" is not a key differentiator of the behaviors regarding the use of social networks, the acquaintance with the term Digital Influencer, the possibility of becoming a Digital Influencer or being part of a higher education institution.

The results obtained in this study may contribute to the identification of important factors which might be taken into account for drawing business plans and strategies aiming to reach a wider network of clients and customers.

Several limitations can be found in this study. The first one is the fact that the sample is a non-probabilistic one, which may eventually bias the results since the sample may not be representative of the population under analysis. Despite this, the conclusions will always be valid for the group of individuals surveyed. The second limitation has to do with the fact that the study is transversal and therefore, static. The third limitation is the fact that this research work focuses only on digital influencers and not on particular social networks.

Further research may help bridge the gaps aforementioned. Indeed, the use of a random sample will prevent a possible bias of the results and expand the extrapolation of the results to the universe under study. The development of an experimental model involving the collection of data in different moments (longitudinal study) will allow finding whether the reasons for individuals to follow digital influencers vary throughout time. It might also be relevant to analyze the behavior of users within different social networks.

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# Chapter 3
# Digital Marketing:
## A Bibliometric Analysis Based on the Scopus Database Scientific Publications

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aimed to identify the most developed themes in the field of digital marketing from 2010 to 2019. A total of 898 publications were selected from the Scopus database from the Business, Management and Accounting and Economics, Econometrics, and Finance domains. A bibliometric analysis was carried out using VOSviewer software and the term co-occurrence technique was used. Three clusters were identified. The first cluster relates digital marketing to the changes and adaptations of society and the economy since the emergence of the internet. The second cluster relates digital marketing to information technologies, e-commerce, and consumer behavior. Finally, the third cluster relates digital marketing with markets, social media, users, tourism, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).*

# INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing involves all marketing functions performed electronically and encompasses all the efforts a company makes to communicate, promote and sell its products or services over the internet (Kotler & Armstrong, 2015). Chaffey and Smith (2013) define digital marketing as the use of technologies by companies to develop marketing activities in order to improve consumer knowledge and meet their needs. According to Shirisha (2018) the digital marketing strategy is based on and adapts the principles of traditional marketing, using the opportunities and challenges offered by the digital environment. In short, engaging customers and enabling them to interact with the brand through the use of digital tools and platforms is the goal of digital marketing (Jeevan, 2015).

The growing use of the Internet has led to the growth of many other activities including those related to digital marketing. It is a fact that in a technological world that is making use of the internet all the time, digital marketing is spreading everywhere. An emerging concept that, according to Khan and Siddiqui (2013) is being aggressively adopted internationally for marketing success, benefiting organizations and consumers.

The importance of the theme to consumers, companies and society has increased the interest of the scientific community. Therefore, this research aimed to understand with more detail the topics addressed in the scientific literature on Digital Marketing. In this context, a bibliometric analysis based on a research carried out on April 3, 2019 was developed. This bibliometric analysis focused on articles published in the last 10 years (2010 to 2019) in the Scopus database. The term co-occurrence technique was applied to 898 selected publications in order to group the articles into thematic clusters.

This chapter is organized into six sections. The introduction is the first section which justifies the theme and sets out the definition and importance of Digital Marketing. In the second section, the literature review on digital marketing is organized, a small approach to bibliometrics and bibliometric indicators is presented, and the most frequently used bibliometric databases in are listed at the moment. The third section describes the methodology used in this research. In the fourth section, the results of the descriptive and thematic areas analyses are presented. In the fifth section the limitations of this study are exposed and promising lines of research are suggested. Finally, the sixth and last section draws the main conclusions of this research.

# BACKGROUND

This section intent to present the literature review on Digital Marketing, bibliometrics concept and bibliometric indicators, and the most frequently used bibliometric databases.

## Digital Marketing

Using the internet, social media, mobile applications and other digital communication technologies have become part of people's daily lives (Stephen, 2015). Along with the growth of the use of these tools, there was a growth of activities related to digital marketing (Ištvanić, Milić & Krpić, 2017). Digital marketing also referred to as "online marketing", "internet marketing" or "web marketing" is characterized by aligning traditional marketing with the use of technologies, social networks, among other tools or channels, in promoting products or brands (Shirisha, 2018). Kannan and Hongshuang (2017) define Digital Marketing as an adaptive and technologically empowered process by which companies collaborate with clients and partners to create, communicate, deliver, and preserve value for all stakeholders. In this way, consumers have access to information about products and services at any place and any time, increasing the probability of the purchase (Cetină, Cristiana & Rădulescu, 2012), which fosters sales revenue, especially in products in which clients can read reviews from other consumers and write comments about their personal experiences (Bala & Verma, 2018). In this context, marketing rules have been redefined around the world, significantly altering how consumers respond to brands. Many of the strategies used by Traditional Marketing are currently obsolete and can no longer meet consumer needs, which limits companies to achieve its objectives (Edelman, 2010). In this way, Digital Marketing is considered an important tool around the world (Gurneet, 2017). For businesses, it is easier and more efficient to conduct online surveys to get relevant information from target groups and analyze results based on consumer responses. On the other hand, potential customers have easily availablem on the internet, evaluations and recommendations that can help them making a decision to purchase a product or service (Khan & Siddiqui, 2013). Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, among others, in addition to successfully transforming consumer attitudes and perceptions, have also allowed companies to rethink the way they respond to its customers (Khan & Siddiqui, 2013), allowing a more customized and adequate response to consumer needs (Bala & Verma, 2018). Digital Marketing is currently considered an increasingly important competitive advantage for every type of organization that uses it (Ištvanić, Milić & Krpić, 2017; Shirisha, 2018).

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## Bibliometrics: Concept and Indicators

Scientific production reflects the performance of institutions, teachers and researchers in their teaching and research activities (Lopes, Costa, Fernández-Llimós, Amante & Lopes, 2012). Bibliometrics is a subarea of Information Sciences (Maximino, 2008) and can be defined as the statistical technique used to quantify the components of academic and scientific production (Medeiros & Victorian, 2015; Paula, Shimoda, Batista and Santos Júnior, 2017) or the quantitative analysis of the performance and cognitive and organizational structure of science and technology (Ale Ebrahim, 2016). According to Rostirolla (2014), bibliometrics is an important tool in the management and propagation of the information, from the various areas of human knowledge (Silva, Santos & Rodrigues, 2011) and is increasingly valued by research administrators because it is another strategic contribution to the decision-making process of higher education institutions (Boshoff & Akanmu, 2017). The concept of statistical bibliography was first used in 1917 by Cole and Eales when a statistical analysis on anatomy was published (Okubo, 1997). Since bibliometrics is a statistical technique, it comprises a set of methods used to originate new database inputs (Côté, Roberge, Deschamps & Robitaille, 2018), based on three laws, which are considered pillars of its structure, namely: Bradford's Law (journal productivity), Lotka's Law (authors' scientific productivity) and Zipf's Law (word frequency) (Guedes & Borschiver, 2005).

According to Holbrook (1992), Science and Technology have dimensions that can be measured by indicators, the so-called bibliometric indicators, from which relevant information can be drawn, such as obtaining an overview of a research area and links with similar research areas (Waltman & Noyons, 2018), to verify the trends of publications in the various areas of scientific knowledge; to follow the development of authorship patterns, publication and use of research results (Silva, Santos & Rodrigues, 2011; Costa, Lopes, Fernández-Llimós, Amante & Lopes, 2012); to evaluate authors' productivity, to perform citation studies, to evaluate the quality of scientific journals (Araújo, 2006; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Okubo, 1997), among others. In this context, according to Costa, Lopes, Fernández-Llimós, Amante and Lopes (2012) and Durieux and Gevenois (2010), bibliometric indicators can be divided into: (1) indicators of scientific quality or performance; (2) indicators of scientific activity or quantity; (3) indicators of scientific impact; and (4) indicators of thematic associations or structural indicators.

Durieux and Gevenois (2010) consider bibliometric indicators to be especially important for researchers and organizations as they are often used in funding decisions, consultations and career advancements for researchers.

## Bibliometric Databases

For more than four decades and until 2004, the Science Citation Index (Expanded), the Social Sciences Citation Index, and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index, now regrouped on the Web of Science, were the primary databases (Archambault, Campbell, Gingras & Larivière, 2009). Thus, the Web of Science established itself as the only bibliographic source that allowed the production of citation counts, among other bibliometric indicators (Boshoff & Akanmu, 2017), a monopoly that ended in 2004 with the release of the Scopus database by the Reed Elsevier publisher (Archambault, Campbell, Gingras & Larivière, 2009; Boshoff & Akanmu, 2017). In order to compare the scope of the two databases, Gavel and Iselid (2008) developed a study in which they overlapped the titles of journals. These authors concluded that the Scopus database covered 84% of all Web of Science database journal titles, whereas the Web of Science database included only 54% of the Scopus database titles. Currently, the Scopus and Web of Science databases are the most used bibliometric data sources. In addition, Scopus is currently considered the largest database of abstracts and citations in the peer-reviewed literature. Being multidisciplinary allows a broad view of what has been published in the world in various areas of Science, Technology, Medicine, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (Ale Ebrahim, 2016; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). Reasons that led to the choice of Scopus database for the elaboration of this study.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

A bibliometric analysis was developed based on a research carried out on April 3, 2019 which focused on articles published in the last 10 years (from 2010 to 2019) and available in the Scopus database. In the research carried out, only publications containing the terms "Digital Marketing" in the title, abstract or keywords were selected. Thus, the search began with 7128 documents. Of these, only publications from the Business Sciences areas were considered, namely, "Business, Management and Accounting" and "Economics, Econometrics and Finance". Considering this criterion only 1301 documents were obtained. Finally, the research was limited to peer-reviewed publications, "Article" and "Review" and, at the end, 898 publications were selected, which served as the basis to develop the bibliometric analysis. After the identification of the documents, the bibliometric term co-occurrence technique was used. The titles and abstracts of the 898 articles were used. The terms were extracted using VOSviewer software in order to construct a map showing the associations between the various terms and their association with thematic areas clusters. According to van Eck and Waltman (2011), this methodology analyzes

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the distance between the various terms selected. The shorter the distance between two terms, the stronger the association between them. In the map, colors represent the various thematic areas clusters, and terms with the same color are part of the same cluster and, therefore, more closely related to each other than terms that have a different color. In the analysis, the binary counting method was selected to identify whether the term is present or absent in each document analyzed.

## RESULTS

This section presents the results of the descriptive analysis, namely, number of articles published per year in the 2010-2019 period, Top 20 journals with most articles published, Top-20 Institutions with the largest number of published articles, Top-20 Countries with Most Scopus-based Digital Marketing articles published, subareas with Digital Marketing domain publications, type of Scopus publications on Digital Marketing with peer-reviewed validation, and Digital Marketing Literature H-Index (h-42).

   Later, the results of the thematic areas analysis are presented, that is, the term co-occurrence map.

*Figure 1. Evolution of the number of articles published per year in the 2010-2019 period*
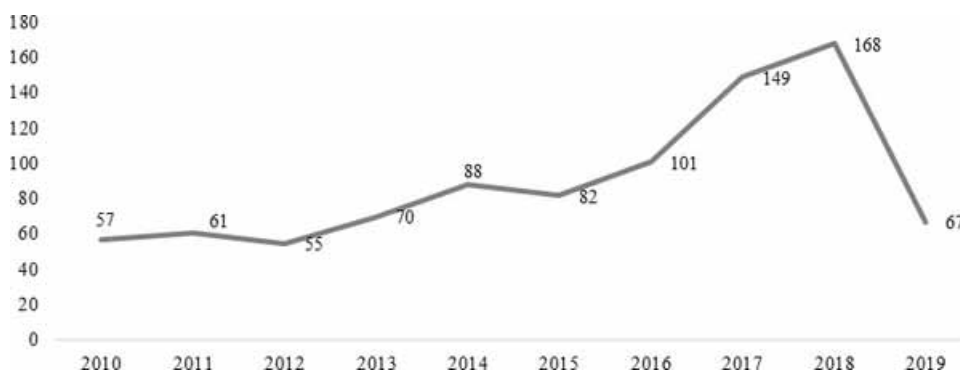
*Figure 2. Top 20 journals with most articles published*



| Journal | Count |
|---|---|
| Strategic Direction | 9 |
| Publishing Research Quarterly | 9 |
| Industrial Marketing Management | 9 |
| Marketing Intelligence And Planning | 10 |
| Journal Of Marketing Management | 10 |
| Journal Of Marketing | 10 |
| International Journal Of Research In Marketing | 10 |
| Business Horizons | 10 |
| Journal Of Retailing And Consumer Services | 11 |
| Journal Of Global Fashion Marketing | 11 |
| Printing Impressions | 14 |
| Journal Of Marketing Research | 14 |
| Journal Of Marketing Education | 14 |
| Journal Of Business Research | 14 |
| Journal Of Advertising Research | 14 |
| Espacios | 15 |
| Journal Of Research In Interactive Marketing | 17 |
| Journal Of Interactive Marketing | 18 |
| European Journal Of Marketing | 18 |
| Journal Of Direct Data And Digital Marketing Practice | 48 |

*Figure 3. Top-20 Institutions with the largest number of published articles*



| Institution | Count |
|---|---|
| Aalto University | 6 |
| Temple University | 6 |
| Columbia University in the City of New York | 6 |
| University of New South Wales UNSW Australia | 6 |
| Carnegie Mellon University | 6 |
| University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School | 6 |
| Università degli Studi di Firenze | 6 |
| University of Maryland | 6 |
| Deakin University | 6 |
| University of Texas at Austin | 6 |
| University of Pennsylvania | 6 |
| University of Manchester | 6 |
| Bournemouth University | 7 |
| Ulster University | 7 |
| Texas A and M University | 7 |
| Oxford Brookes University | 7 |
| Hong Kong Polytechnic University | 7 |
| Oulun Yliopisto | 8 |
| Queensland University of Technology QUT | 8 |
| University of Jyvaskyla | 10 |

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*Figure 4. Top-20 Countries with Most Scopus-based Digital Marketing articles published*
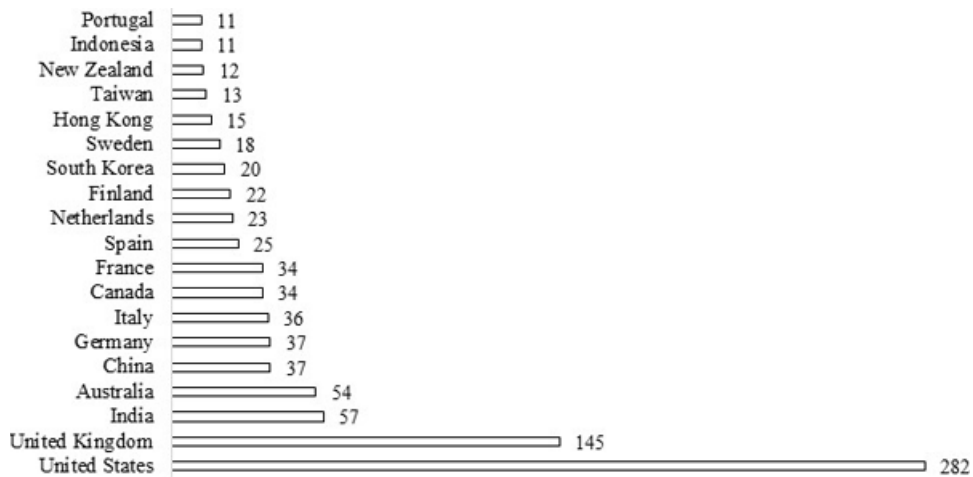


## Descriptive Analysis

As already mentioned, 898 publications were selected within the scope of Digital Marketing. Figure 1 shows a growing trend in the number of articles published over the period under review. It should be noted that in 2019, the number of articles was only 67, due to the fact that this research was carried out on April 3 and as such only three months of 2019 were used. The average growth rate from 2016 to 2018 was 27.8%. Over the analyzed period, this was the three-year period that recorded the highest growth.

Digital Marketing literature focuses on marketing journals, with the Journal of Direct Data and Digital Marketing Practice (5.3%) being the source with more published articles (Figure 2).

At the institutional level, publications are widely dispersed. The University of Jyvaskyla, located in Finland, was the top-ranked organization with the highest number of publications (1.8%), closely followed by Queensland University of Technology and Oulun Yliopisto, both with 1.5% of publications (Figure 3).

Figure 4 shows that the United States (31.4%) was the country with more publications on the Scopus database. The United Kingdom (16.1%), India (6.3%) and Australia (6.0%) ranked positions 2, 3 and 4 in the Top-20 ranking of the most Scopus-based Digital Marketing articles published considering the country. As shown in Figure 4, Portugal and Indonesia were the countries (1.2%) that ranked the last position of the Top-20.

The subarea with absolute and relative representativeness in terms of publications was "Business, Management and Accounting" with 99.2% or 852 publications. The subareas with the least publications on Digital Marketing were Chemistry, Health Professions, Neuroscience and Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics (Figure 5).

*Figure 5. Subareas with Digital Marketing domain publications*



*Figure 6. Type of Scopus publications on Digital Marketing with peer-reviewed validation*



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**Digital Marketing**

*Table 1. Digital Marketing Literature H-Index (h-42)*

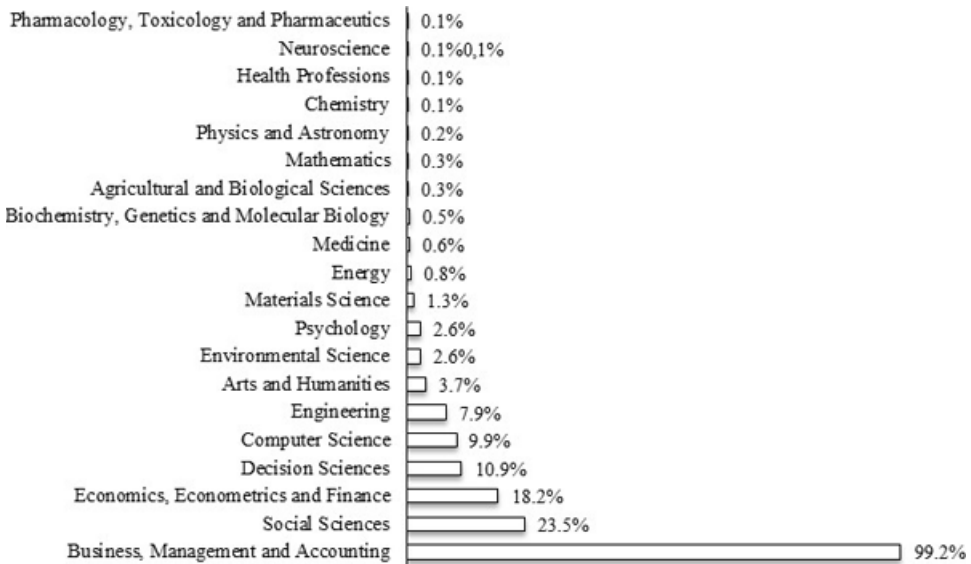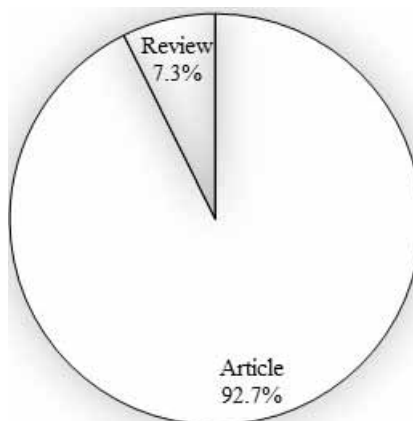| Authors | Methods | Contributions | Citations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden (2011) | Empirical Quantitative and qualitative (Case Study) | Conceptualizes online social media as an ecosystem of related elements involving digital media and traditional techniques. | 525 |
| Sashi (2012) | Conceptual | Develops strategies for customer engagement using social media. | 325 |
| Day (2011) | Conceptual | Develops adaptive capabilities for organizations to respond to more technologically savvy customers | 263 |
| Burtch, Ghose & Wattal (2013) | Empirical Qualitative | Examines social influence in an online journalism project market; to highlight the benefits and potential of a financing model by raising awareness and attention around causes and endeavors. | 221 |
| Barrett, Davidson, Prabhu & Vargo (2015) | Conceptual | Theoretical developments on service innovation in the digital age. | 176 |
| Labrecque, vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak & Hofacker (2013) | Conceptual | Explores the intersection of consumer behavior and digital media by clearly defining consumer power and empowerment in social media and Internet contexts: it presents a theoretical framework of four distinct sources of consumption: demand, information, network and the multitude. | 136 |
| Yadav, de Valck, Hennig-Thurau, Hoffman & Spann (2013) | Conceptual | Definition of the meaning and domain of social commerce. Develops a framework for assessing the social marketing potential of social commerce. | 134 |
| Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson (2013) | Empirical Quantitative | Digital business models that take a strategic view of social networks that integrate social media into the consumer and shopping experience rather than just as a substitute for offline marketing. | 130 |
| Jalilvand & Samiei (2012) | Empirical Quantitative | Investigates the impact of Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on tourist destination choice using planned behavior theory. Motivates tourists to participate in online travel communities and create online travel communities with features that are useful and easy to use. | 129 |
| Sotiriadis & van Zyl (2013) | Conceptual | Develops a conceptual framework to understand the fundamentals of digital communication and empirically investigate its validity by examining the factors that influence tourism consumer behavior. This study adopts a conceptual model of Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and explores the use of Twitter by tourists. | 127 |
| Lee & Bradlow (2011) | Empirical Quantitative | Provides a method for supporting market structure analysis and visualization by automatically enhancing product attributes and relative brand positions from online customer feedback. | 118 |
| Anderson & Magruder (2012) | Empirical Quantitative | Implements a design to estimate the effect of Yelp's positive ratings on restaurant reservations. | 108 |
| Bai (2011) | Empirical Quantitative | Proposes an accurate method for predicting sentiment by extracting opinions from the Internet and assessing online customer preferences that is useful for economic or marketing research to leverage a strategic advantage for a business or to detect cyber risks and security threats. | 107 |
| Leeflang, Verhoef Dahlström & Freundt (2014) | Empirical Quantitative | Discusses the challenges companies face in going digital based on the results of a survey that involved a convenience sample of 777 marketing executives worldwide. The results reveal that filling "talent gaps", adjusting "organizational design" and implementing "actionable metrics" are the greatest opportunities for improvement for companies across all industries. | 103 |
| Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman & Kannan (2016) | Conceptual | Examines the effect of company-generated content on social media on three key customer metrics: spend, cross-purchase, and customer profitability. | 102 |
| Persaud & Azhar (2012) | Empirical Quantitative | Investigates the willingness of consumers to accept marketing through their smartphones. | 102 |
| Li & Hitt (2010) | Empirical Quantitative | Develops an analytical model that examines the impact of price reviews on optimal pricing for the business ensuring consumer welfare | 102 |
| Labrecque, Markos, Milne (2011) | Empirical Qualitative e quantitative | Understands how people manage online profiles and feel about others' judgments about the content they post | 101 |
| Yadav & Pavlou (2014) | Conceptual | Organizes and synthesizes literature findings using a structure organized around four key interactions: business-consumer interactions, business-consumer interactions, consumer-consumer interactions, and business-business interactions. The proposed framework serves a valuable organizational function and helps to identify a broad spectrum of gaps in the literature to lead to advances the next generation of knowledge development. | 99 |
| Hudson, Roth, Madden &Hudson (2015) | Empirical Quantitative | Examines the influence of social media on relationships with music festival customers. Social media-based relationships also lead to positive word of mouth recommendations. | 87 |

*Table 1. Continued*

| Authors | Methods | Contributions | Citations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hudson & Thal (2013) | Conceptual | Studies the impact of social media on consumer decision making and brand engagement. | 87 |
| Jenson & de Castell (2010) | Conceptual | Presents a review of digital game choices by gender. | 82 |
| Bart, Stephen & Sarvary (2014) | Empirical Qualitative | Examines which product features associated with mobile display advertising campaigns are effective in increasing consumers' favorable attitudes towards products and purchase intentions. | 81 |
| Marchand & Hennig-Thurau (2013) | Conceptual | Addresses the processes that create value for businesses and consumers in the context of video games that are currently available on multiple devices (eg, consoles, laptops, mobile devices) and across multiple channels (e.g., commerce and online). | 74 |
| Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch (2017) | Conceptual | Introduces a new and holistic definition of cross-functional, interdisciplinary social media marketing that includes culture, purpose, structure and governance. | 71 |
| Shankar et al. (2016) | Conceptual | Discusses mobile shopper marketing and its purpose. Presents a process model that relates the act of mobile shopping to four main entities (buyer, employee, organization, and mobile technology). | 67 |
| Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé (2015) | Empirical Quantitative and qualitative (Study case) | Highlights the utility of big data analysis to support Smart destinations, studying the online image of Barcelona (a leading smart city and tourist destination). | 65 |
| Tiago & Veríssimo (2014) | Empirical Qualitative | Understands digital marketing and the use of social media, as well as their benefits and inhibitors from a business perspective. | 65 |
| Elberse (2010) | Empirical | Addresses the separation of music into digital channels. What is the effect of this separation on sales? What characteristics of the package generate this effect? | 65 |
| Phan, Thomas & Heine (2011) | Empirical Quantitative and qualitative (Study case) | Highlight how brands, especially luxury brands, can rebuild their image by being closer to their customers using social media marketing. | 61 |
| Sinha, Machado & Sellman (2010) | Empirical Quantitative | Proposal of a model that defines and estimates the concept of hardcore piracy. | 59 |
| Xu, Frankwick & Ramirez (2016) | Conceptual | Introduces the knowledge fusion taxonomy to understand the relationships between traditional marketing analytics, big data analytics, and new product success. | 56 |
| Hong (2012) | Empirical Quantitative | Understands the implications of news organizations adopting social media sites (realizes their potential as a journalistic tool). | 55 |
| Chen (2013) | Empirical Quantitative | Examines the phenomenon of voluntary self-disclosure of users of websites or social networks. Develops and validates a model based on Information Disclosure Behavior theory and in the literature. | 52 |
| Taken Smith (2012) | Empirical Quantitative | Determines which digital marketing strategies Millennials (person reaching adulthood in the early 21st century) prefer and which ones are effective in influencing their behavior. | 52 |
| Kannan & Li (2017) | Conceptual | Develops and describes a digital marketing research framework that highlights the touch points in the marketing process as well as in the marketing strategy process where digital technologies have a significant impact. | 50 |
| Poncin & Ben Mimoun (2014) | Empirical Quantitative | Determines the impact of digital technologies (magic mirror with augmented reality, interactive game terminals) on a physical toy store. Proposes a model with eight hypotheses related to the effect of using a technology in the store on holistic perceptions of the store environment (shopping values, positive emotion, satisfaction and behavioral intentions). | 49 |
| Rohm, Kaltcheva & Milne (2013) | Empirical Quantitative and qualitative | Examines the role of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, among younger consumers ("digital natives") and their interaction with brands (interaction between companies and consumers). | 49 |
| Sundararajan, Provost, Oestreicher-Singer & Aral (2013) | Conceptual | Describes four types of research that appear to be promising. The first studies how information technologies create and reveal networks whose connections represent social and economic relations. The second examines the content that flows through networks and their economic, social and organizational implications. The third develops theories and methods for understanding and utilizing the rich predictive information contained in networked data. A final area of research highlights the dynamics of the network and how it affects its evolution. | 49 |
| Ng & Wakenshaw (2017) | Conceptual | Reviews the Internet-of-Things (IoT) concept. Provides a definition of IoT and presents the implications and impact of this new concept on future marketing research. | 48 |
| Wilson & Grant (2013) | Conceptual | Discusses what Islamic marketing is and link its developments to the classic/traditional marketing paradigm. | 47 |
| Zheng, Zhu & Lin (2013) | Empirical Quantitative | Proposal for the development of a semi-supervised system, called Online Review Quality Mining, to estimate the quality of online reviews.(online product purchase reviews). | 44 |

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*Figure 7. Term co-occurrence map*
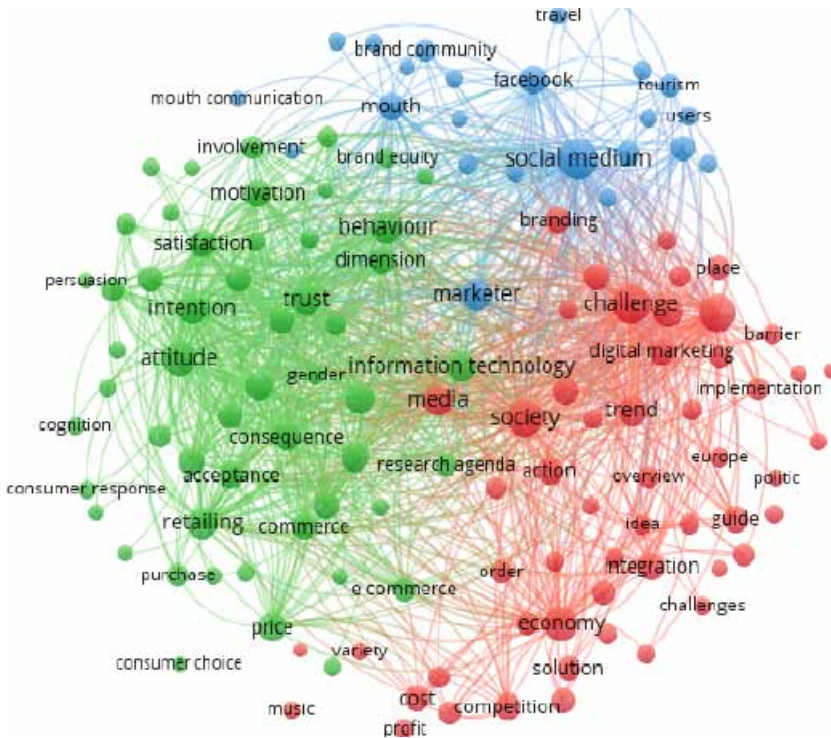


As shown in Figure 6, out of a total of 898 publications, 92.7% were articles on Digital Marketing with peer-reviewed validation. Only 7.3% corresponded to reviews with peer-reviewed validation.

Table 1 shows that 42 articles were included in the h-index, that is, the number of articles by a given author with, at least, the same number of citations (Costas & Bordons, 2007). In the h-index, also known as the Hirsch index, publications are organized in ascending order according to the most cited publication and then calculated where the sequence number of the publications meets the citations (Hirch, 2005).

The most cited study, developed by Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden (2011), had 525 citations and addressed the concept of ecosystem, which includes social media, involving elements of both digital marketing and traditional marketing. In the authors opinion, the use of this ecosystem can be an asset to increase customer satisfaction and improve organizational performance (Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, taking into account the methodology used in the h-index publications, 24 were empirical studies and the remaining 18 were conceptual studies. Empirical studies focused essentially on consumer behavior and the use of social

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media. The most recent empirical studies by Hudson, Roth, Madden and Hudson (2015) and Marine-Roig and Anton Clavé (2015) recorded 87 and 65 citations, respectively. Both articles focused on tourism management. The first empirical study was focused in music festivals and the second one was focused in a smart tourist destination. The article developed by Hudson, Roth, Madden and Hudson (2015) aimed to develop and test a model to measure the influence of social media on customer engagement in the activities. These authors concluded that the use of social media had a significant influence on the involvement of festival customers. In turn, relationships also generated positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Marine-Roig and Anton Clavé (2015) highlighted the usefulness of big data analysis in supporting the promotion and image visibility of a smart tourist destination, namely the case of Barcelona.

On the other hand, conceptual publications were mainly review studies, in which the authors proposed to develop models and/or frameworks in the field of marketing. The most cited article, with 325 citations, was developed by Sashi (2012) and proposes a customer engagement model examining the opinions of professionals, linking the model to the concept, to orientation and to relationship marketing. The most recent studies were developed by Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch (2017), Kannan and Li (2017), and Ng and Wakenshaw (2017) with 71, 50 and 48 citations, respectively. The first article proposed to present a new and global definition of social media marketing that is multifunctional and interdisciplinary, involving four dimensions, namely culture, purpose, structure and governance. The second article developed and described a digital marketing research framework, with digital technologies having a significant impact, highlighting the important topics of the marketing process and marketing strategy. The third article was a review of the definition of "Internet-of-things" using four concepts, namely, "Internet-of-things" as a resource (speed, ease and consistency of information); Internet-of-things as digital materiality; "Internet-of-things" as a service system; and "Internet-of-things" as modules, transactions, and service. Based on these concepts, Ng and Wakenshaw (2017) provided a definition of "Internet-of-things" and presented the implications and impact of this definition on future digital marketing research, interfacing with information systems, design and innovation, data science. and cyber security, economics and organizations.

## Analysis of the Thematic Areas

Considering the analysis of the thematic areas using the VOSviewer Software and the term co-occurrence technique, 125146 terms were identified in the 898 selected articles. Subsequently, the number of occurrences of a term was defined as 50 in the total of the analyzed documents, resulting in a total of 625 terms. Of these, 60% of the most relevant terms were selected, corresponding to 375 terms and, finally,

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the insignificant terms were excluded (eg study, paper, meta-analysis, conceptual, among others). In the end, a total of 132 terms were obtained, distributed over three clusters of thematic areas. The cluster 1 related digital marketing to changes (changes and opportunities) in the society and economy in the digital age, with 54 terms (green color in figure 7). The cluster 2 related digital marketing with information technologies, e-commerce and consumer behavior (satisfaction, trust, loyalty, preferences, emotions) with 53 terms (red color of Figure 7). Finally, cluster 3 related digital marketing with markets, social media, users, tourism management and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), with 25 terms (blue color of Figure 7).

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

One of the limitations of this research is that it is limited to the Scopus database. However, there are other bibliometric databases, such as the Web of Science, equally important in terms of scope (number of publications, scientific areas covered, publishers and miscellaneous documents), frequency of use (for the functionalities and facilities they present) and updating.

Another limitation is related to the analysis which was limited to the time period from 2010 to 2019, although in recent years the largest number of publications in the field of digital marketing has been recorded. In fact, in this research, relevant literature was omitted, which was not included in the period under analysis.

Finally, this research was limited to publications from two scientific areas, namely, Business, Management and Accounting and Economics, Econometrics and Finance, leaving out other areas that may be relevant, such as Social Sciences. and Compute Sciences.

Given the clusters of the thematic areas that were founded in this research, the topic relating digital marketing and tourism management seems to be a research area to be developed in future research. In fact, it is a recent and promising area of research because presents advantages for both consumers and organizations from various sectors of activity, especially services (hotels, social or cultural events, restaurants, small businesses, among others).

## CONCLUSION

Digital marketing is a theme that has originated a growing number of publications, especially in recent years. Therefore, this study sought to identify the main thematic areas of research in the field of digital marketing. For this, a bibliometric analysis was developed based on a research carried out on the Scopus database which focused on

articles published from 2010 to 2019, that is, in the last 10 years. From this research, 898 publications were selected within the scope of Digital Marketing. Most of these, were articles with peer-reviewed validation. Over the analyzed period, a three-year period (2016 to 2018) recorded the highest growth of Scopus publications.

Digital Marketing literature focuses on marketing journals, with the Journal of Direct Data and Digital Marketing Practice being the source with more published articles. The subarea with most publications was "Business, Management and Accounting".

The University of Jyvaskyla, Queensland University of Technology and Oulun Yliopisto were the top-ranked organizations with the highest number of publications. United States, United Kingdom, India and Australia were the countries with the most Scopus publications. Portugal and Indonesia were the countries at the bottom of Top-20 countries rank.

To identify the main thematic areas of research in the field of digital marketing, the VOSviewer Software was used to perform the analysis using the bibliometric technique of term co-occurrence, with the objective of grouping the literature into clusters. Three clusters were identified. The first cluster related Digital Marketing to the transformations that have been occurring in the society and economy since the emergence of the internet. The second cluster related Digital Marketing with information technology, e-commerce and consumer behavior. Finally, the third cluster related Digital Marketing with new markets where the Internet and social media are increasingly used by organizations from various sectors, especially in tourism management.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Chapter 4

# Search Engine Marketing to Attract International Digital Traffic

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses search engine marketing (SEM) techniques that companies should implement in order to stimulate digital traffic. Those techniques include the attraction of organic traffic by search engine optimization (SEO) as well as search engine advertising (SEA). The authors used SEM techniques to a specific case of a company with the purpose of attracting international traffic and develop external marketing. The research discusses the effectiveness of SEM techniques in the case developed through an experimental method. New insights emerged from the experiment and are presented with contributions for international managers who want to de develop international digital traffic.*

## INTRODUCTION

The development of an integrated digital strategy allows companies to push their businesses online, motivate its expansion and promote its brand and products internationally, recognizing its strategic implications and bringing it closer to

businesses, markets and, ultimately, consumers, as a new form of contact its potential business partners and customers.

This chapter displays a review of the techniques to attract qualified traffic: SEO on page, by bringing digital notoriety to the brand; responsive navigation and page speed, crucial for improving customer experience and preventing the loss of international traffic and potential leads, with increased awareness to mobile for its expressiveness; content marketing, by stimulating and retaining the visitor; SEO off page link building, essential when targeted for lead benefit; and, also noteworthy, the https security protocol and the switch to an international domain for the sudden overall gains and the SEA for its fast yet valuable results approaching the targeted markets.

The review conducted intensifies SEM theory and allow recommendations for international managers to take a prominent position in their internationalization process.

## BACKGROUND

Considering that users who perform their search on a search engine rarely look beyond the first page of results, developing a search engine marketing strategy will therefore boost the success of your business (Gudivada & Rao, 2015). Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is remarkable in terms of the density of search as well as shopping, even offline, and the search engine is used as a means to gather information and thus be included in the consumer buying journey (Brooks, 2004). In its definition, Search Engine Optimization is an internet marketing strategy that thrives the volume and also the quality of consumer traffic to the company's website through the use of search engines - designates fundamentally by drawing, writing and coding a website, giving it a digital presence (Khraim, 2015). Considering that a digital presence will, in the current conjuncture, be a growing necessity of all those wishing to sell goods or services, there is a greater effort to obtain higher rankings, to superior its presence in the first results of a search and to make frequently, as a website with greater visibility will bring more visits (Enge et al., 2015).

## Search Types and Digital Personas

Search psychology divides into three possibilities on how the average user searches, meaning which keywords it uses and how it verbalizes desire or need: the search types will be discerned as navigational, informational and transactional (Lewandowski, 2011). Search types will be taken into consideration in the search engine optimization

environment, in the relationship between the search for a term that translates into a consumer's desire or need and the offer of the products or services in question.

Navigational research consists of a specific search for a company or a brand, whereas it differs from a transactional one, since it searches specifically for a product, and the informational one, more comprehensive for searching the specificities, information or clarifications in relation to its search term, using deductively specific, longer phrases in the search.

Digital consumerism has led to an improvement in content marketing, translating it into a pleasant consumer experience and positioning its consumer journey. Before making a purchase, the customer seeks to know more about the company, its mission, its offer and what the competition has to offer before deciding (Wall & Spinuzzi, 2018). Consumer experience is essential as it induces and delivers, according to Lemon & Verhoef (2016), cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensory and social responses to their market. Consistent with the same authors, the digital form we're addressing is just a point of contact to improve the relationship between the firm and the consumer in order to influence their buying journey, as it is a cycle based on different stages, including: the pre-purchase stage (recognition, research and consideration), the purchase stage and the post-purchase stage. These stages will, where possible, be influenced by past experience, and your current journey will be taken into account to remind you of a future experience. The consumer's journey clarifies the consumer's behavior towards a purchase, helping the seller to meet his expectations, of which: in the pre-purchase stage, the consumer considers products or services, seeking more information about them, in the recognition, consideration and research. At the buying stage, your behavior changes to the choice, ordering process and payment. At the post-purchase stage, you consume the product or service, have expectations about your purchase and look for positive emotions - it's the ideal stage to retain the customer for future consumer experiences. In short, it should correspond, as personalized as possible, to the consumer's expectations, paying attention to their tastes and preferences. In this sense and in favor of customization, the target market will be analyzed for the subsequent creation of the brand's digital personas.

## SEO - Search Engine Optimization

SEO was thought through as an effort to provide the visibility of the brand's digital platforms by achieving a better ranking in organic searches, bearing in mind this process isn't a static technique, being fundamental its constant transformation through experimentation to seek better results. In this sense, it can be considered as maneuvering the characteristics of a website in order to improve its ranking in search engines (Malaga, 2010). In short, SEO is characterized as a series of techniques and modifications that make it easier for search engines to work by collecting, indexing

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and understanding the content of a website (Zilincan, 2015). As a goal, SEO will promote new visitors, develop brand awareness, build a product or service reputation and increase sales volume (Chotikitpat, Nilsook & Sodse, 2015). Effectively, SEO is critical to the success of online businesses (Zhang & Cabage, 2017). SEO enables and highlights a product or service only through an organic optimization, without resorting to promotional payments, circumventing the difficulties imposed and corresponding religiously to guidelines imposed by search engine algorithms, to ensure it is properly indexed for its purpose.

In this matter, Jerkovic (2010) indicates there is a general consumer confidence in the organic results presented, since almost 60% of users click on organic search results, being the percentage higher in users with more digital experience. It also indicates the study by Keane et al. (2008), that users are biased in their searches as there is an implicit confidence in the search results presented by the Google search engine.

However, a more robust strategy needs to be developed as, according to Jerath (2014), consumers only click on links a total of 1.19 times while searching for online information that, conclusively, indicates a strong competition between websites, whereas the number of visits by consumers will be substantially limited.

In SEO, such tactics are not consensual by those working in the digital marketing field, dividing the practices in terms recognized as white hat and black hat, characterized as good or bad practices, respectively, by the scientific community, and equally, by the search engine algorithms, as noted below.

## Google Search Engine Algorithms

At the heart of the search engine marketing research, namely SEO and SEA, keywords play a key role being crucial in the development of an optimization strategy, since their analysis target not only the market, but also keyword usage and popularity, related keywords, and search trends focused on finding information about a product or service. In this sense, it will be important to address techniques and methodologies, also referring to penalties for deceptive and erroneous practices under constant monitoring by search engine algorithms, namely robots, crawlers and spiders, that seek the optimization of rankings, through more than 200 factors (Gudivada & Rao, 2015; Evans, 2007).

According to Manhas (2013) and Egri & Bayrak (2014) observations, previous updates of Google search engine algorithms in the rank brain view, namely "Panda" and "Penguin" indicated to attribute relevance to factors such as website session, page speed, bounce rate and the usability of navigation. However, a detailed report of the sensitivity of the algorithms is unrealistic (Enge et al., 2015). The primary purpose of robots, crawlers and spiders is to create a copy of the visited pages

(Khraim, 2015), through recurring visits and ranking calculation improvements that, according to Evans (2007), complicate optimization more and more.

In consideration, it is essential to note the importance of location indexing, that is, indexing attractive content according to searches and the traffic generating interest on the part of consumers that assists in a higher ranking (ranking in hierarchy) by a web page. Therefore, content suitable for the local consumer will generate higher local traffic and, consequently, better local ranking.

## White Hat Tactics

White hat techniques will be those most extensively addressed in the development of this case study given their feasibility against Google search engine algorithms. These techniques are a set of digitally recognized best practices for successfully attracting traffic and awareness online. In short, they are contributory techniques to page ranking (Killoran, 2013) in the form of quality content, engagement and user-friendly navigation. In line with Berman & Katona (2013), white hat effectively contributes positively to the content of a website, translating into consumer satisfaction and thus making it more humanly relevant but equally inhuman relevant, satisfying search engine algorithms. On the contrary, black hat techniques only tries to improve the ranking of a website, not contributing to its usefulness or experience to its audience.

## Black Hat Tactics

Characterized as a set of initiatives that tries to promote rapid growth of traffic generated using unconventional methods considered spam or irrelevant content, or even erroneous and deceptive (Killoran, 2013), the main purpose of black hat tactics is to simply generate traffic. Although it may seem as a faster route or shortcut for better results, these are becoming more and more ephemeral and highly penalized by search engines algorithms, given the constant updating of mechanisms that punish and repeal them (Aswani et al., 2018).

Therefore, bad practices will not be considered or performed in the development of this investigation, in order to avoid search engine penalties, such as a decrease in impressions, hits or ranking place, as well as to avoid the search engine blacklist (Zhang & Cabage, 2017), which aggregates bad practices websites carried out by misleading owners whose practices involve keyword stuffing, duplicate content, spamming, link farming, cookie stuffing, doorway pages, and more.

*Table 1. White hat and black hat Techniques*

| SEO TECHNIQUES | APPLICABILITY | BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES |
|---|---|---|
| **WHITE HAT** | Quality content | Enge et al., 2015; Berman & Katona (2013); Duk et al., 2013; Killoran, 2013; |
| | User friendly navigation | |
| | Engagement | |
| | Directory Submission | |
| | Generating keywords | |
| | Link building | |
| **BLACK HAT** | Irrelevant content or spam | Zhang & Cabage, 2017; Chhabra et al., 2016; Enge et al., 2015; Gudivada & Rao, 2015; Reyes, 2015; Whiteman, 2015; Duk et al., 2013; Janani et al., 2013; Moreno & Martinez, 2013; Malaga, 2010; Wu & Davison, 2005. |
| | Keyword stuffing | |
| | Duplicate Content | |
| | Link farming | |
| | Cookie stuffing | |
| | Doorway pages | |

Source: Own elaboration.

## On Page Optimization

"On page" or internal optimization of a website describes the best practices to be developed to ensure the contents are readable to search engine crawlers, capturing and transforming code into information that characterizes and classifies the website on the web. In line with Ghulam et al., (2017), on page optimization will depend on the creation and development of a website structure (tree structure), the creation of a domain and the naming of the page, the meta data of its title, description of the website and keywords, the organization of their URLs or permalinks, heading tags, alt tags, content marketing, page navigation and sitemap index.

*Figure 1. Website architecture or tree structure*
Source: Enge et al. (2015)
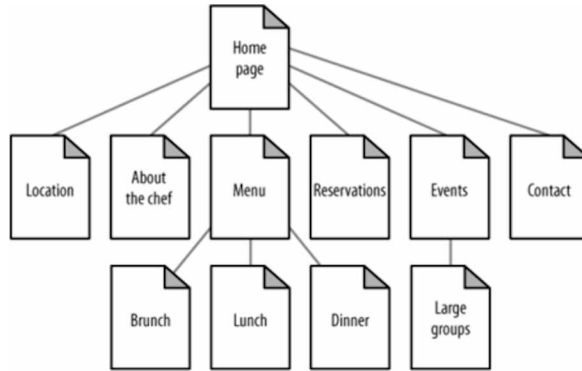


In essence, the page architecture in descending and organized format should come from a strategy of static URLs, that is, immovable to make it easier to index by the search engines, but also easy to search and find for the user, providing a seamless on-page experience. Similarly, it should have a semantic relationship to the brand, product or service name to which it refers, which is advised to use hyphens or plus symbols that separate identifying terms from subpages. Accordingly, the following terms will be described and developed:

## Page Titles

The page titles delimit its area of activity by indicating its main theme and subthemes. Therefore, it will be properly categorized and then ranked by search engine crawlers. It is crucial to identify the main purpose and theme of the page and to indicate informative content about it (Noruzi, 2007). In line with Enge et al. (2015), page titles will be limited to a maximum of 65 characters, exceptionally 70 in particular cases and depending on constant crawler updates.

## Page Meta Descriptions

Meta descriptions aren't visible to the consumer but are targeted to the search engine and its indexing (Khraim, 2015). In definition, meta descriptions succinctly but promotionally describe the content of a page and are intended to inform and entice a potential consumer. Page meta description does not directly influence the on-page optimization and its consequent placement in search engine results. However, writing a clear and concise meta description about the website 's main theme helps with the click through rate and therefore addresses a satisfaction of consumer research needs.

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According to Enge et al. (2015), although its wording is more objective and promotional, as it is done by human hand, it must be taken into account that a human essay may limit a potential consumer research, as when a consumer searches for certain keywords, the search engine may advise the website not based on a limited meta description but on the entire content of the page if it has indexed any of the keywords searched by the consumer, so sometimes, this description may be limiting to leads. In real terms, it is limited to a number of characters that can range from 160 to 200, depending on the search engine, and therefore will have significant weight in choosing which words to use for page optimization.

## Heading Tags

Just as a title arouses the reader's interest, so does the inhuman algorithm by indicating what the main theme by which it should be identified. The same goes for the referring subtitles. In short, heading tags suggest a larger organization and sequence of headings and subtitles (Busche, 2017) to be read by both the reader and Google's spiders and crawlers. From this point of view, H1 will be the most relevant and important element - explained in hierarchy, namely Heading 1, H2, H3 and beyond. Heading tags may not directly influence page optimization in a crawler view but rather responsiveness to the consumer (Enge et al., 2015).

## Alt Text, File Names and Media Description

Search engines, in their continuous process of indexing pages, cannot read more than text - which means any images, videos or multimedia files are discarded. In order to overcome these circumstances and to evade the void left by increasingly multimedia-enabled content, there are alternative tags designed to describe their content to search engine crawlers. The description should be appropriate to the content presented and the theme of the page and may be written in descriptive keywords or phrases (Bailyn & Bailyn, 2013). Search engines only acquire information from the HTML language, discarding all other formats, as meant above, found on a typical website, or other languages like Java and Adobe Shockwave files, while Alt attributes make it possible to subtitle it for human accessibility purposes, not necessarily thinking about the purpose of ranking but of the overall optimization of the website before search engines (Enge et al., 2015). According to the same author, the attributes alt may no longer rank, due to black hat practices of keyword stuffing.

In accordance with Choudhari & Bhalla (2015), video media also has its own form of optimization, namely VSEO (Video Search Engine Optimization) that unfolds into a white hat technique of title, description and transcribed script, segmenting the video according to your audience by updating on trends and analyzing the most

appropriate keywords. In addition, there's a thumbnail describing the topic of the video and annotations in a single image that promote link building, with external links that strengthen all platforms of the product, brand or service to promote.

## Taxonomies: Categories and Labels

The taxonomy of a website allows its categorization and hierarchy by topic, useful both in presentation, layout and hierarchy for a fluid consumer experience, but also important in referring to SEO (Enge et al., 2015), allowing to indicate categories, conceptually similar relevant topics or topics that allow the page description to be enriched (Batsakis, Petrakis and Milios, 2009).

## Sitemaps

Sitemaps indicate the website map: it bundles a set of URLs that make up the website as well as the attachment of files such as PDFs, TXTs or DOCs. Under the XML extension, it is used to indicate to Google and its search engine the correct indexing of pages (Visser & Weideman, 2011) to appear in search results, and can prioritize which pages should be more relevant and which ones to follow with greater attention and frequent visits: for example, for a blog tab with constant updates and content (Blankson, 2008). However, adding a URL to a sitemap does not guarantee its crawl, and you need to restate that a sitemap should be a supplement, not a substitute, to regular search engine crawling. The sitemap allows for greater customization, beneficial for optimization as it allows modification of meta data, the addition of URLs that would eventually not be collected or duplicated, allowing modification of them or choosing a canonical version and also modifying the frequency at which the site is visited for indexing purposes (Enge et al., 2015). These benefits related to personalization and off page optimization translate into greater trust, better ranking, authority and website popularity from the search engine crawler's perspective.

## Responsive Navigation, Page Speed and Structured Data

Google's search engine guidelines have implied the importance of page speed as a deciding factor in their ranking (Mustafa et al., 2015). Speed implies an improvement of your page objects and external objects in JavaScript, CSS, HTML and json and these need to be properly compressed to avoid visitors leaving the page, as well as promoting the navigability of the brand's website as a seamless user experience, because high performance websites lead to greater user engagement, retention and conversion (Manhas, 2013).

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The concept of structured data indicates an HTML perception of the hierarchization of the page so the search engine can better categorize and present it in the SERP (search engine results page) (Mustafa et al., 2015).

The tree structure indicates a dual-purpose website hierarchy: on the one hand, the distinction between parent and dissident pages for proper reading by the search engines, and on the other, the organization and user experience for a seamless and uninterrupted page navigation.

## Short Tail and Long Tail Keywords

Short tail indicates a short search for keywords. Long tail are keywords with more than one searched word, lower search volume, and infrequent (Ramlall et al., 2012). As a result, they extend search terms to subcategories (Killoran, 2013) and diversify results (SERP) presented, making billions of searches unique (Mustafa et al., 2015) and further enhance the conversion cycle or even sale, since action verbs are often included for the purpose of redirecting search to a purchase. Numerous specialized agencies and bloggers reaffirm the success of long tail keyword in the Search Engine Marketing (Skiera et al., 2010). According to the same authors, long tail keywords describe the phenomenon of demand distribution for niche products.

*Figure 2. Search and Conversion Template*
*Source: Ramlall et al. (2012)*
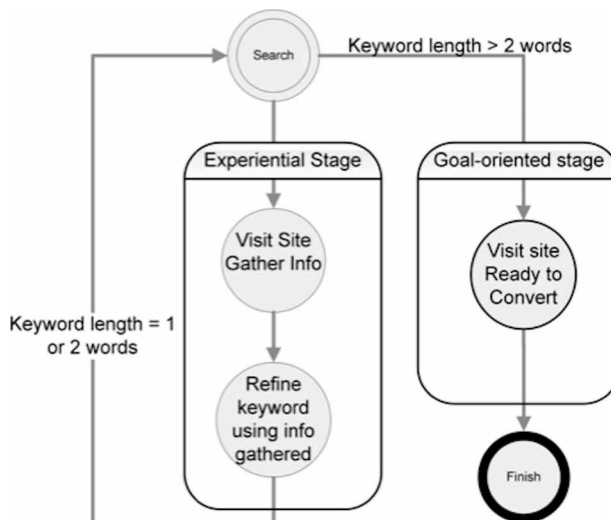
According to Ramlall et al. (2012), a one or two-word keyword indicate the experimental search stage: allows users to collect information and then refine their search to the next stage, the goal-oriented stage, with the purpose of converting.

Keywords will be the center of this research as it will be possible to categorize the brand across the industry, the market and the search results, implemented both technically and creatively, through on-page content. In order to carry out a precise optimization, an analysis will be required of the most used, trending and competing keywords. Long tail keywords allow you to add relevance to a consumer research, as they are more accurate and descriptive and thus deduct greater value to the traffic generated. The long tail is infrequently used in common searches, with a smaller percentage estimated at 30% compared to 70% of short tail keywords. However, the choice of keywords related to the product or service should not fall into a random choice or too sheltered to the subject due to the cannibalization phenomenon of keywords - the same keywords on different pages within the hierarchical interior of a website will force the crawler to choose the most relevant one, making others obsolete (Enge et al., 2015).

## Off Page Optimization And Page Authority

### Link Building Strategies

Off page optimization indicates off-site optimization - a link building strategy for the purpose of branching out the brand for digital notoriety – or, as it indicates Google's search engine in its indexing mechanisms, page authority – because a page with internal and external links on your or others' platforms indicates greater digital belonging, a larger community, and therefore greater confidence in its reliability (Gupta, 2016). The page authority thus indicates how different websites interconnect and what unites them in this niche market, having as good examples social networks and their own forums or interactions in others related to the business activity (Enge et al., 2015), measured in popularity, relevance, trust and reputation, (Killoran, 2013) as quality content will have a positive effect on consumers, social engagement, therefore page rank and ultimately relevant to ranking factors.

As a link building strategy, Figure 3 exemplifies the connections of digital presences. According to Zhang and Cabage's (2017) comparative study of link building and social sharing, a strategy with greater concern in link building generated more traffic, authority and SERP ranking gradually but exponentially, as opposed to social sharing, which raised more traffic in a shorter period of time but immediately decreased – but overall traffic continued to grow in line with a white hat strategy. A link building strategy will be explained in three descendants: the reciprocal link, the link baiting that will involve a need for reaction, attention, exposure and, finally,

the natural link, made organically through a marketing strategy of content and user experience (Deitel, 2008).

*Figure 3. Backlink Strategy*
*Source: Khan & Mahmood (2018)*
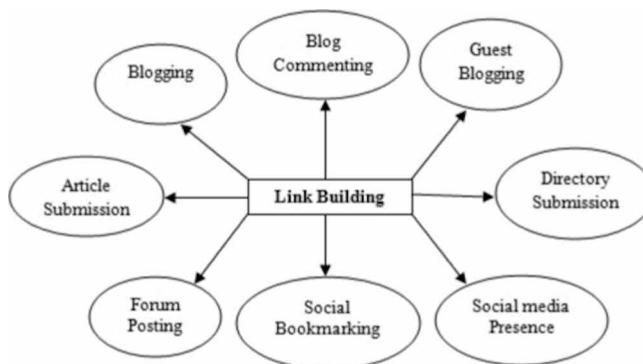


According to Khan & Mahmood (2018), link building takes different forms: directory submission (B2B niche directories), social platforms, social bookmarking, forum posting, article submission, blogging or article-based content marketing, guest blogging that takes the form of articles by others on their own blog, and blog comments.

## Content Marketing, Social Engagement And User Generated Content

Content marketing comes as a response to proper SEO optimization, as more traffic will be generated by a corresponding amount of search that comes from the extensive understanding of online consumers and their expectations (Pažėraitė and Repovienė, 2016) as a requirement for Inbound Marketing – namely attraction, conversion, subsequent sale and customer loyalty.

Content, in addition to quality information, positively attracts and modifies a user's interactivity on a website, translating into trust, satisfaction and loyalty, according to the study by authors Rowley (2008) and Wulf et al. (2006). More than content, we currently seek to attribute value in the relationship between the product or service and the consumer, nurturing their digital connection (Gagnon, 2014).

Developed content, having a connection to the product, service or brand, helps in terms of SEM by combining search and user expectations, delivering higher ranking and greater popularity and thus demonstrating effectiveness in the keywords

used to evoke public attention (Enge et al., 2015). For SEO purposes, each content produced should highlight five to ten keywords that represent the product, service or brand. The distribution of keywords throughout the content created should have an appropriate keyword density that generates the most optimized indexing and should have a proportion of 5 to 20% (1 in 5 words should be a keyword) (Chotikitpat et al., 2015).

At its core, content marketing aims for brand awareness and recognition, approaching targeting markets, attracting leads or developing a relationship of loyalty and reliability with consumers. Content marketing is a new way of creating market' needs (Baltes, 2015).

Content marketing aggregates, according to the study of multiple authors, seven characteristics that promotes a brand: the relevance, informational value and reliability of the content, both in its functional and emotional sense; the content's uniqueness and exclusivity that holds the reader's attention and which proliferates the word of mouth (WOM); the content's emotions, whether positive or negative, more viral and more interactive than neutral emotions; content's intelligence or, in other words, the smart content, which can be read as a whole by humans but also processed by technology Pažėraitė & Repovienė, 2016; Chasser & Wolfe, 2010; Gagnon, 2014; Abel, 2014; Ludwig et al., 2012) Creamer, 2012; Schuinanii et al., 2014; Berger & Milkman, 2012).

In line with Di Gangi & Wasko (2016), the phenomenon of social engagement breaks the traditional concept of a business model in the sense that, instead of planning a tangible communication of a product or service unidirectionally, digital social engagement allowed multi-directional communication within consumers, as they have the power to modify, share and reuse content regardless of the primary communication strategy or purpose of the brand or company, offering new perspectives - it's a generational change. The social engagement, co-creation and its power of interactivity between consumers may be seen by the success of the various existing platforms and social networks since the turn of the millennium.

*Figure 4. User Engagement Research Model*
Source: Di Gangi & Wasko (2016)
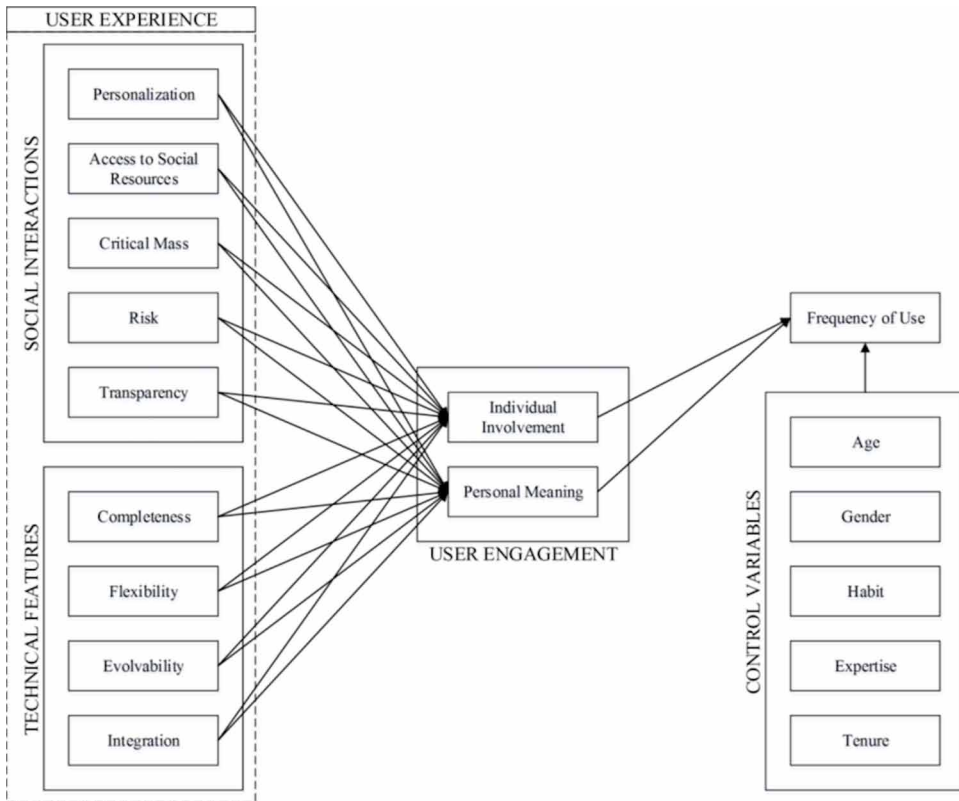


Figure 4 identifies the key features to generate true user experience: first, through social interactions, namely personalization, as the individual customization (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016); access to social resources or social accessibility, referring to the ease of information and subsequent mass communication in networks where everyone is present, namely consumers and brands; the risk refers to the potential damage online engagement could cause for the sake of privacy and the protection of identity; finally, the transparency used to alleviate consumer opportunistic feelings about the brand, communicating it clearly and shifting their perception to a trusted community. Regarding technical features, Figure 4 defines how consumers interact, as the feeling of completeness of their expectations, assuming that, therefore, user engagement will increase when users realize that the social network meets their information needs. Flexibility is defined as the degree of involvement in the different features that the brand offers in the social network; evolvability as they have certain expectations about the evolution of the brand and its presence in order to provoke

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greater participation and engagement of its customers; and integration in the search for different sources and information content that are personally meaningful to the audience. All these particularities allow the personal involvement of the consumer - the so-called engagement - that must weigh the individual characteristics of their audience: namely the variables of age, gender, their habits, among others.

User generated content is characterized as any content created and distributed by any individual, as a non-collective person. This subtheme will be relevant to address in this design and development of a digital strategy for outbound links (link building), strengthening the physical and digital notoriety of the brand by being mentioned on pages other than its platforms. As an example of the type of content, it is commonly in the form of product / service reviews / ratings, consumer forums, images or videos enjoying the product or service (Daugherty et al., 2008). According to (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2017) consumers prefer to bond with other consumers as they do not fully rely on corporate communication which indicates a horizontal trust from consumer to consumer rather than the traditional vertical trust from the company to the consumer. The electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) phenomenon, which comes from the traditional WOM that characterizes individual consumers' predisposition to share opinions, reviews, ideas and suggestions about a product, service or brand is now transposed to digital for the purpose of sharing unbiased horizontal trust information (Thorsten et al., 2004).

## How Search Engine Algorithms Work and SERPs Results

Search engine marketing will depend on the such for constant indexing on all platforms where the brand is presented, exploiting website' URLs by reading their hyperlinks and storing their content for the ultimate purpose of indexing (Amudha & Phil, 2017). Briefly, crawlers and spiders create a copy of the webpages they visit for later processing by the search engine (Lavania et al., 2013). Furthermore, the search engine's own algorithm will be considered as relevant to this entire optimization process, executing and evaluating the best practice results to match it needs, in order to promote better results.

The page ranking algorithm is based on defining the importance of each page according to the related internal and external links (Enge et al., 2015.). According to Zhang & Cabage (2017), SEO defines the success or failure of an internet startup.

## Search Engine Advertising

Search Engine Advertising can be advertising text (formerly Google Adwords) or multimedia content, namely display Advertising (formerly Google Adsense), now merged into Google Ads. Inorganic research will be approached for the purpose of

attracting traffic and visitors to the brand's page, ultimately achieving sales. It is characterized as a paid advertising measure - in this case, Google's advertising - with the purpose of increasing their visibility and appearing more frequently and more prominently in searches conducted through researched and selected keywords, considering the investigation of Gudivada & Rao (2015) that users rarely click on links beyond the first page of search engine results.

However, the payment for greater prominence does not necessarily imply its conversion into customers or sales (Barr & Gupta, 2012), assuming it only aids to its recognition by the public and allows the following phases of the Inbound Marketing process, namely the conversion, transformation and loyalty of its consumers, acting as one dynamic strategy. The effectiveness of advertising measures fundamentally includes attracting consumers' attention and interest (Pažėraitė & Repovienė, 2016).

Nonetheless, this costly measure assists website listing in search results in less time compared to SEO, a long-term optimization measure (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013; Visser & Weideman, 2011). While costly, there's a greater concern in developing a more vigorous strategy, as according to Jerath (2014) consumers only click on links a total of 1.19 times while searching for online information that, conclusively, indicates great competition between websites, as the number of visits by consumers will be substantially limited. This cost will eventually be necessary since, by itself, the SEO strategy rarely can get the highest score in the ranking, being even more difficult to maintain it still through time, as well as profoundly time consuming (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013).

The benefit of the advertising measure was demonstrated empirically by Ghose & Todri-Adamopoulos (2016) by indicating that the mere exposure of a consumer to display advertising makes it possible to entice and further search, as well as favoring the possibility of purchase as well, concluding that the higher the exposure, the greater benefit on the consumer's journey.

Pažėraitė & Repovienė (2016) believe that an advantageous relationship will emerge in the ability to deliver content that consumers seek to consume, because if an user visits the page looking for more product or service information, and if it meets its expectations, it will emerge as a reliable and trustworthy website, as on the contrary a less informative page will not incite consumer interest (Keeney, 1999). The importance of appealing content is therefore justified, as it indicates Cespedes & Heddleston (2018) that, on average, the viewing time of a page with content is only two minutes twenty-seven seconds (2m 27s).

## Advertising Text

Advertising text generates inorganic research and highlights the search keywords defined by the brand with the ambition to rise above your competition in the search

results in the area of sponsored results, with paid search (Aksakalli, 2012) and pay-per-click campaigns (PPC), whose monetary cost will depend on the number of clicks this particular campaign has generated (Baylin & Baylin, 2013). Advertising text or sponsored links delivers superior exposure to SERP listings, as 80% of new visitors come from search results 1-20 (Cen & Guixing, 2011).

*Table 2. Conclusive Summary*

| SYNTHESIS | | | RESULTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SEO** | **ON PAGE OPTIMIZATION** | Page titles | ü Positive results |
| | | Meta Descriptions | ü Positive results |
| | | Alternative Text | ü Positive results |
| | | Sitemaps and Indexing | ü Positive results |
| | | Responsive Navigation | ü Positive results |
| | | Page speed | ü Positive results |
| | **OFF PAGE OPTIMIZATION** | Page authority | ~ Satisfactory Results |
| | | HTTPS protocol | ü Positive results |
| | | Link building | Ò Unsatisfactory organic link building |
| | | Content Marketing | Ò Unsatisfactory results |
| **SEA** | Text Ads | | ü Positive results |
| | Image ads | | Ò Unsatisfactory conversion results |

## Display Advertising

Online advertising campaigns have caused an increase in businesses' turnover, offering advantages over traditional modes of advertising (Miralles-Pechuán et al., 2018).

Display Advertising differs from advertising text in the way it presents advertising to a market segment in the form of visual banners or media to advertising text that uses related keywords and sponsors them (Aksakalli, 2012). As a goal, display advertising aims to maximize consumer response, conversion rate and, similarly, click through rate (Azimi et al., 2012).

According to Bruce (2017), animated display advertising formats such as videos or gifs are superior to static formats in terms of customer engagement, having concluded their study that effectively attracts more attention when compared to other methods, and favors the image of the brand being sponsored. According to the study of Sigel, Braun & Sena (2008), banners in vertical format 160x600px (skyscraper wide) collect double the click through rate compared to the leaderboard (horizontal

layout banner) (728x90px) and the medium rectangle (300x250), although the latter achieved the highest interaction rate.

Therefore, the SEA process should follow steps based on Choi et al. (2017) as in: (i) delineate objectives, (ii) plan and execute a media plan according to specific market demand; (iii) get impressions according to the budget available and (iv) measure return on investment (ROI).

## EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The SEM strategy for the purpose of brand awareness was applied to the Olivus Floris brand for internationalization purposes in the B2B business model. The following metrics were evaluated: clicks, impressions, average position, number of sessions, average session length and number of pages visited per session, among others considered more relevant in particular cases.

Positive results were achieved in on-page optimization promoting the digital presence of the brand by truly identifying it with worldwide visibility. As said by Berman & Katona (2013), white hat approaches effectively contributes to the content of a website, translating into the true consumer experience. Sitemaps were effectively successful as well, and prioritized responsive navigation, adaptation to mobile devices and improvements in page speed, proved to be crucial for the trust, experience, retention and engagement of visitors. As a consequence, and in line with Manhas (2013), high performance websites lead to greater engagement, retention and conversion of users, due to their better experience on page, as concluded by this case study and as indicated by Egri & Bayrak (2014), speed and response is an essential feature for the success of an inbound marketing strategy concluding that it is a decisive factor, as Mustafa et al. (2015) testified.

Regarding off page optimization, in fact, a report on the sensitivity of search engine algorithms is unfeasible (Enge et al., 2015), although it was proven a set of on-page and off page factors allowed the ranking gradual growth and indexing quality of the case study' website.

In this sense, it was seen as essential the concern with online security (SSL protocol) with the mutation from http to https. It provided a trustworthy website with high improvements on ranking, although mixed with other factors shown above.

A content marketing strategy based on enticing and informing users retrieved better organic ranking results. It proves that, as predicted by Wall & Spinuzzi (2018), digital consumerism has forced an improvement in content marketing, translating into a pleasant consumer experience and positioning the consumer's journey to the extent that, before making a purchase and making a decision, it has to educate and inform itself, also corroborated by Pažėraitė & Repovienė (2016), in the sense that

a user visits the page in search of more information about the product or service and that, if it meets expectations, it will appear as a reliable website, contrary to a less informative page that will not promote the interest of the consumer (Keeney, 1999).

Social networks have collected positive results, but poorly targeted and with little return on truly qualified traffic, as they are social networks for a more B2C approach, but important in creating a connection with the end consumer despite the fact that, at this stage, there is no focus on nutrition in this market segment. Still, according to Zhang & Cabage (2017), the algorithm has recently added mentions of social networks and social sharing as ranking and page authority factors, adding technical value to the SEO effort.

According to Chotikipat, Nilsook and Sodse (2015), SEO will promote new visitors, reputation and increase sales volume - which is proven by the sustained and sustainable digital growth of the brand and its organic results that have grown gradually since the second semester of the year since the beginning of the strategy implementation. However, and in line with Kritzinger & Weideman (2013), SEO alone cannot obtain the best ranking and is still a lengthy process. In short, the organic efforts of SEO on page and off page allowed improving the authority of the website and its pages which, in the words of Killoran (2013), is a measure of popularity, relevance, trust and reputation.

Regarding internationalization in terms of SEO, namely the application of the global international domain whose results were beneficial in attracting international traffic, it is concluded that if internationalization is aimed, then the remaining process of adaptation will be obligatory - the linguistic approach will have to be made in favour of the consumer experience and affinity to the brand as well as to organically enhance its digital position.

Concerning SEA strategy and in line with Cen & Guixing (2011), the sponsored links effectively increase brand exposure, since 81% of new visitors come from the search results in positions 1-20: it allowed bid adjustments on keywords that were more successful according to their level of competition, while eliminating the less successful that spent from the short budget in vain; and it verified the number of pages visited in both cases were insufficient, demonstrating that it is necessary to optimize not only the landing page but also the internal link building that it allows, outlining a roadmap for the user that encourages it to visit several pages of the website. Finally, in any campaign, it was possible to fine-tune the list of negative keywords in order to save on the scarce budget.

In comparing a targeted conversion campaign versus a more common search keywords campaign, the latter aggregated a larger number of clicks and impressions - as predicted by Snyder & Hilal (2015), reporting that 71% start their search with generic keywords, although the targeted achieved top ad positions. Ramlall et al. (2012) is corroborated to the extent that long tail keywords were, effectively, keywords of

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lower volume of searches and infrequent and, as a consequence, lengthen the search terms covering even subcategories (Killoran, 2013), which allowed diversifying the SERP results and making searches unique (Mustafa et al, 2015).

This effectively enhanced the conversion cycle: initially, the theory of Ramlall et al. (2012) was applied, as one or two-word keyword strategy - the experimental research stage allowed a user to collect information and subsequently refine their research; to evolve to the next stage, the objective-oriented stage - mirrored in the campaign of generic keywords versus the campaign of targeted keywords. The long tail keywords (< 3 words) did not obtain any more impressions or clicks, but actually collect higher CTR, in line with Skiera et al. (2010).

Display advertising allowed, with greater financial expenditure, to collect the highest number of visits in the shortest time, but also granted valuable insights on what the consumer researches, where it researches and their related researches.

In line with the authors Sigel, Braun & Sena (2008), banners in the vertical format 160x600px (wide skyscraper) reach twice the CTR compared to the leaderboard (728x90px horizontal banner) and the middle rectangle (300x250), although the latter has the highest interaction rate - however, In the application to this case study, the vertical banner achieved the lowest values regardless of the metrics, with the average rectangle effectively having the highest number of impressions, clicks and CTRs, despite the lower CPC cost than the others. It is concluded that advertising campaigns, as predicted by Miralles-Pechuán et al. (2018), caused an increase in the sector's turnover, while also offering advantages over traditional forms of advertising, as indicated in the market insights, both in relation to its competition and in relation to its intermediate and final consumers. Considering that users who perform their searches in a search engine rarely look beyond the first page of results, the development of a search engine marketing strategy will therefore boost the success of their business (Gudivada & Rao, 2015), regarding the number of leads generated.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that, as indicated by Aswani et al. (2017), search engine marketing strategies enable the highlight of a product or service to the extent that it allows the brand's promotion in search engines.


## CONCLUSIONS

White hat on-page techniques, namely page titles, meta-descriptions, heading tags and alternative text, did not allow measuring, specifically, the return in notoriety; however, it showed important results in the construction of its online brand, visible to the world - namely in Google and Google Images search results, allowing correctly indexing. Taxonomies truly obtained successful results in their application, not only improving the position in the ranking, but also reaching the first page SERPs. Through

content marketing, it was possible to acknowledge the analytics metrics grew and generated continuity, rising the time on page metrics, showing signs of interest and positive expectations by the user. Overall and organically speaking, tags on pages and the posts on the content marketing efforts gradually improved organic ranking.

In terms of responsive navigation and page speed, the techniques applied in favor of its optimization proved to be broadly palpable and with very beneficial results in this first brand awareness strategy, to the extent that it allowed the website's rejection rate to drop abruptly, consequently increasing other metrics such as the number of pages visited per session.

Structured data is not possible to measure, being considered a good practice to the extent of an organization excellent in the correct indexing of a website, which is expected to have helped to correctly present all the pages that compose it, given the successful indexing. Tree structure had the same effect but reveals importance in the creation of CTAs that indirectly increases the number of pages per session due to the internal link building generated.

In the off page SEO it was demonstrated that a link building strategy allowed to disseminate the brand image by the most diverse platforms, including social networks, however the submission in B2B platforms allowed a significant return on brand awareness, namely in number of pages visited per session and time spent on page, being possible to conclude that the traffic generated was of higher quality and, therefore, better niche segmentation.

However, the optimization of different factors that make up the ranking factors, with special emphasis on page speed, but also aided by an optimization of the SSL and HTTPS protocol and the international domain, allowed the overall improvement of the company's website, with the effect of positive results in its mission of generating international traffic and brand awareness.

In terms of link building, and despite the difficulty of external links from a more institutional website and offline sales to the B2B market, business platforms showed more commercial interest and notoriety, based on analytics metrics such as time on page, number of pages per session, average session and 0% bounce rate, compared with social media, although the latter had monthly improvements due to organic communication and content marketing efforts.

With regard to the Search Engine Advertising (SEA), the two international text campaigns based on a trial and error approach indicate that, despite a scarce CPC budget, it was possible not only to acquire a reasonable number of impressions, but also effective clicks, concluding that, with a prior study of the market and its trends of research, maintenance and monitoring of campaigns with effort, it is possible to reach the top of the first page of results and an average position among the first in the auction, contrary to the low quality score that is usually avoided due to the failure of campaigns. The low quality score campaign reached the 1.1 position in

SERP compared to the 1.6 position of the generic keywords campaign and obtained 81.82% in impressions at the top of the page compared to 19.34% and absolute top of the page (reach of the first position in SERP) in 65.45% of the times compared to less than 10% achieved by the generic keyword based campaign. These figures suggest a clearly higher position in terms of SERP and ad visibility, indicating a greater segmentation of search terms in the search for qualified traffic.

With targeted keyword campaign versus generic keyword campaign testing, it was possible to develop new campaigns to better segment target markets, thus proving the need for a trial and error strategy to effectively understand a market's behavior based on its research, research trends, and buying behavior on its journey. The campaigns allowed for the collection of highly segmented international impressions and clicks but, above all, conversions, truly transforming visitors into leads and potential consumers and provided valuable insights in terms of knowledge of international competition, as well as auditing your business and assessing their position and market share.

Regarding display advertising, it met the brand reach and brand awareness - but with the allocation of a larger budget, since it is a traditionally more expensive form of advertising - with results of a rejection rate of only 1.09% and a percentage of outbound 33.70% and average time on the page was only 30 seconds, which does not indicate commercial interest and therefore weak segmentation for the target audience. However, if the rejection rate is considerably low, only 1.09%, which indicates that the user visited only that page, the average time may mean that users diverted their attention to other pages of the Olivus Floris website, since the lading page has links to the page of products, contacts and requests for quotation, which improves the prospects of results of this advertising measure.

In conclusion, display advertising collected a higher percentage of visitors achieving an higher number of visits to the website. In second place was the PPC and, in third place, the direct traffic, result of offline marketing and the recognition of the company. In the draw for the fourth place is the organic traffic and social networks of the brand. Finally, the referral traffic, coming from corporate databases and B2B trade platforms. Despite being residual, the latter was extremely important for the brand: firstly, because it came from specialized targeted platforms and, therefore, it better segments the profile of potential consumers; secondly, because despite the low return on sessions, number of pages visited and time of session exceeds the remaining.

The digital strategy determines indispensable results and insights, by allowing to observe, study and understand how markets behave, their target audience, their habits and preferences, search intentions and consumption trends unique and exclusive to each market, therefore fortifying the SEM theory and allowing recommendations for international managers to take a prominent position in their internationalization

process. The digital efforts resulted in the stimulation of international traffic, meeting the expectations of penetration to target markets and the company's international expansion.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Click Through Rate:** Ratio between the number of clicks and impressions of an organic or inorganic search result (Wang et al., 2011).

**Consumer Journey:** The buyer's journey is a framework divided in steps that acknowledges a consumer's progression through recognition, consideration and research ultimately culminating in a purchase decision (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

**Content Marketing:** Strategy based on text, rich media, audio and video content aimed at engaging customers and meet business goals (Chaffey & Smith, 2013).

**Digital Personas:** Fabricated representation of the target customer based on previous data about existing customers and market research (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

**Keyword Stuffing:** The misuse of keywords for the purpose of getting more prominence when searched, using code only viewed by the search engine and hidden from the average user to jam target keywords, related or sometimes unrelated to page content (Janani et al., 2013).

**Search Engine Advertising:** An inorganic (paid) search engine marketing strategy characterized by sponsoring searches to be displayed alongside organic (non-sponsored) web search results (Ghose & Yang, 2009).

**Search Engine Marketing:** Marketing efforts made through the optimization of search engines, highlighting and promoting a product or service (Aswani et al., 2017).

**Search Engine Optimization:** An organic search engine marketing strategy characterized as a set of techniques, namely on-page website optimization where it lays, for example, content marketing, and off page optimization, such as link building and social sharing techniques (Zhang & Cabage, 2017).

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Chapter 5
# Geographic Marketing in Support of Decision-Making Processes

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## ABSTRACT

*Nowadays, geographic information and spatial aspects are essential elements for the definition of companies' strategies. With the use of different sources data, companies were able to obtain insights that they could not obtain without the spatial component and were able to use them to optimize their business. Then, geographic marketing presents itself as an added value for companies, one of the key factors being its role in supporting decision making. The main attributes of geographic marketing or GeoMarketing allow us to identify and present through digital maps the behavior and trends of certain variables based on characteristics of a market. The meticulous study of spatial and demographic information generated by GeoMarketing are crucial for important strategic adjustments in the business plan, such as definitions related to the location considered ideal for the business, target audience, price and growth prospects, among other factors. In this context, GeoMarketing will be introduced, exploring its scope, applicability, and relevance of its use in support of the decision-making process.*

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, geographic information and spatial aspects are essential elements for the definition of companies' strategies. With the use of data from different sources,

companies were able to obtain insights that they could not obtain without the spatial component and were able to use them to optimize their business. In this sense, geographic marketing presents itself as an added value for companies, one of the key factors being its role in supporting decision making.

The main attributes of Geographic Marketing or GeoMarketing, allows to identify and present through digital maps the behavior and trends of certain variables based on characteristics of a market.

The meticulous study of spatial and demographic information generated by GeoMarketing is crucial for important strategic adjustments in the business plan, such as definitions related to the location considered ideal for the business, target audience, price and growth prospects, among other factors (Rigaux, Scholl, & Voisard, 2001; Baviera-Puig, Buitrago-Vera, & Escriba-Perez, 2016).

GeoMarketing is a method based on the knowledge of the potential of a particular region, to support strategic decisions by organizations, through the manipulation and combination of data related to geographic, demographic, sociological and economic spaces. Thus, it is possible to generate information about the target market and its potentialities from a perspective linked to the geographical environment, which support the decision in the form of spatial representations (Nunes, Santana, Bezerra, & Sobral, 2014).

In addition to identifying potential sites and existing customers in the surrounding area, it is possible to rationalize processes and the logistics chain of a given commercial establishment, measure the influence of a given location on competitors, identifying consumer activities and market variables based on strategic and reliable information.

The crossing of information of interest to each business carried out by specialized software, being that of consumption potential, income, gender or competition, allows a visualization, on a map of the behavior of a group of individuals and, consequently, a more precise analysis of a situation, minimizing risks and subjectivities of a decision.

A region that is well segmented according to its cultural, demographic, economic and sociological characteristics allows for an increasingly better adaptation of strategic actions to the business.

A method that is based on the analysis of the disposition and behavior of variables in a given space is useful for the entrepreneur, as it makes it possible to make marketing decisions with greater probability of success.

In this context, GeoMarketing it will be introduced, exploring its scope, applicability and relevance of its use, in support of decision making process.

## Motivation

Marketing strategies have been looking for increasingly efficient and, consequently, more innovative solutions. In this context, the information generated with the use

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of GeoMarketing, based on territorial and demographic characteristics, helps to implement marketing strategies in order to increase profitability and reinforce the image of a brand, company or business model.

The need to identify places where it is possible to capture the intended audience, as well as the need to make effective decisions related to market variables, can define the strategy's success.

The closer the managers are to an objective decision making, the lower will be the business risk., In this context, GeoMarketing works with the minimization of this inherent risk to the business, providing the possibility of better knowledge of a certain location, in addition to assessing the advantages and disadvantages of a given scenario (Ramadani, Zendeli, Gerguri-Rashiti, & Dana, 2018).

The introduction of space in the Marketing area covers three major areas: consumer behavior, the point of sale, and marketing management. Currently, GeoMarketing is used by companies from different market segments. However, due to the cost of services being considered high, the method ends up being more explored by larger companies (Cliquet, 2013).

GeoMarketing was developed as a method to support decisions based on the location of a specific business strategy target (Kaar & Stary, 2019). Through the study of areas represented on maps it is possible to know the geography, demographics, consumers, routes of flow of people and goods, consumer preferences, by commercial regions, among others, and thus to plan more assertively decisions for the success of the company.

A better knowledge of the environment around the company, of the variables and their levels of relevance, are relevant factors to mitigate uncertainties that lead to errors and improve the quality of marketing decisions. In this context, it is relevant to identify information that provides more security in the decision-making process of companies, in order to make it possible to reduce the level of failure.

## Geographic Information Systems

Spatial analysis is the processing of information to solve geographic problems, enabling the extraction, manipulation and cartographic representation of data (Sharma, 2018). Several areas of knowledge have been applying spatial analysis. In the case of marketing, spatial analysis can be used to solve problems associated with the location of potential customers, associated with delimitation of areas of influence of retail trade, evaluation of effects caused by competition, and quantification of customer attractiveness by the commercial point, among others.

Spatial analyzes that combine different types of data and streamline decisions about commercial activities are made operational through Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Geographic Information Systems are applications or software that provide storage, retrieval, analysis, visualization and also the creation of maps endowed with spatial information, such as places, territorial information, and location of census information, among others. GIS are tools that allow manipulating georeferenced and alphanumeric data to support decision making, based on spatial analysis.

GIS combines three different types of technologies: Remote sensing, GPS, and Geoprocessing, having the ability to process large volumes of data, being a tool that offers solutions to complex problems (Fig. 1).

*Figure 1. GIS technologies*
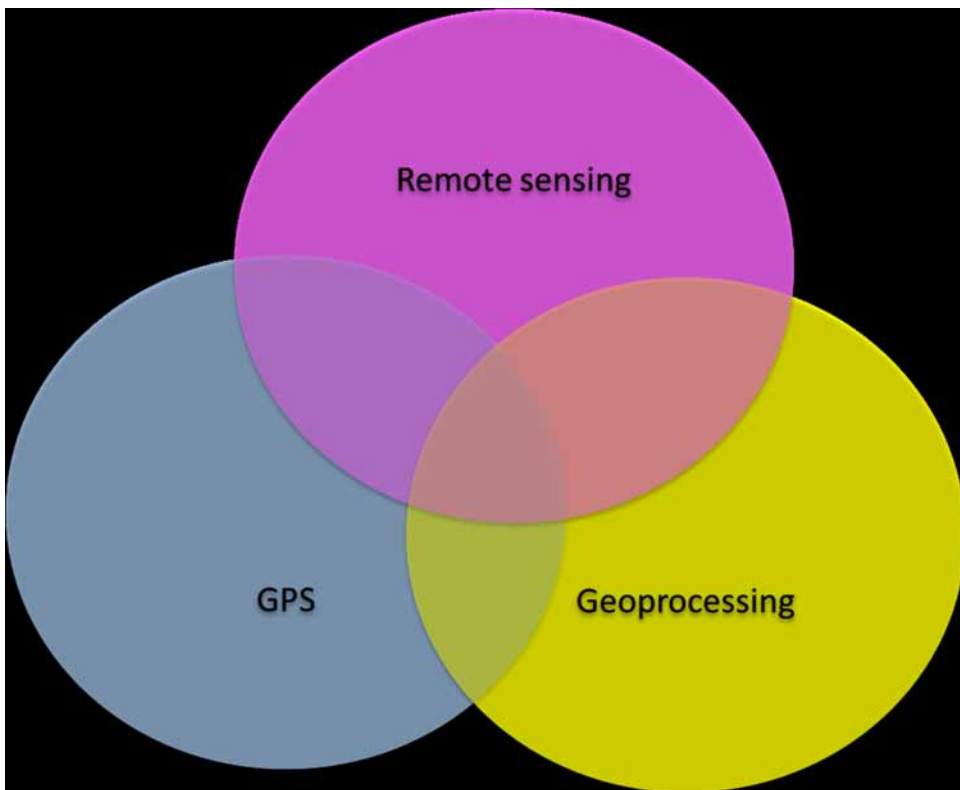


Remote Sensing (RS) is the set of techniques and technological procedures that aims to represent and collect data from the Earth's surface without the need for direct contact. Therefore, all information is obtained through sensors and instruments in general. Such a process is linked to the treatment, storage and analysis of such data in order to better understand the phenomena that appear on the surface. Remote sensing is based on the capture of images using not only satellites and radars as

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aero photogrammetry. The use of this tool is extensive, and can cover the area of meteorology with the observation of air masses and even capture of fire outbreaks, GeoMarketing, as in the present study. In this specific case, GIS are the tools by which GeoMarketing is performed.

The Global Positioning System (GPS), is a system that supported by the use of satellites, emits information based on geographic coordinates. GPS has the main function of finding your way to a specific location, knowing the speed and direction of your travel. The GPS system works with a set of 24 satellites that circle the Earth, at an altitude of approximately 20,200 km and at a speed of almost 11,500 km / h (Gopi, 2005). Anywhere in the world, the receiving device (the GPS device) captures information from a group of four of these satellites and, through the exchange of some data and algorithms, it is able to determine for the user its exact location on the map.

Nowadays, GPS is used in the most diverse aspects of people's daily lives, either as a navigation direction (air, sea or land) or to find a specific location on the map.

GeoProcessing (GP) is a set of technologies aimed at collecting and processing spatial information for a specific purpose. The activities involving geoprocessing are performed by Geographic Information Systems.

Geoprocessing systems aims processing the georeferenced data, from its collection to the generation of outputs in the form of conventional maps, reports, digital files, and others; providing resources for its storage, management, handling and analysis.

GP is about the information management part, through the two previous systems. One of the most used geoprocessing tools is Google Earth, these are basically software capable of handling geographic information in order to add different information about a given space.

For the proper functioning of GIS there must be at least five components involved: software, hardware, geographic data, personnel and organization.

From a Marketing point of view, a GIS is like a system that captures and displays spatially located information. In a complex decision-making process, a wide variety of information when made available on a map can be better viewed, so decision making becomes timelier, as it ends up considering a wider range of information.

GIS have three hierarchical levels (Fig. 2). At the man-machine level, which would be the closest to the end user, it is defined as a system operated by this user, that is, a tool to support decision making. In this sense, the tool has to be planned so that this interaction generates positive results, meeting the user's needs. At the intermediate level, there must be mechanisms that can process (input, editing, analysis, visualization and output) spatial data. At the third, more internal level, a management system that allows you to store spatial data and its attributes.

*Figure 2. GIS hierarchical levels*
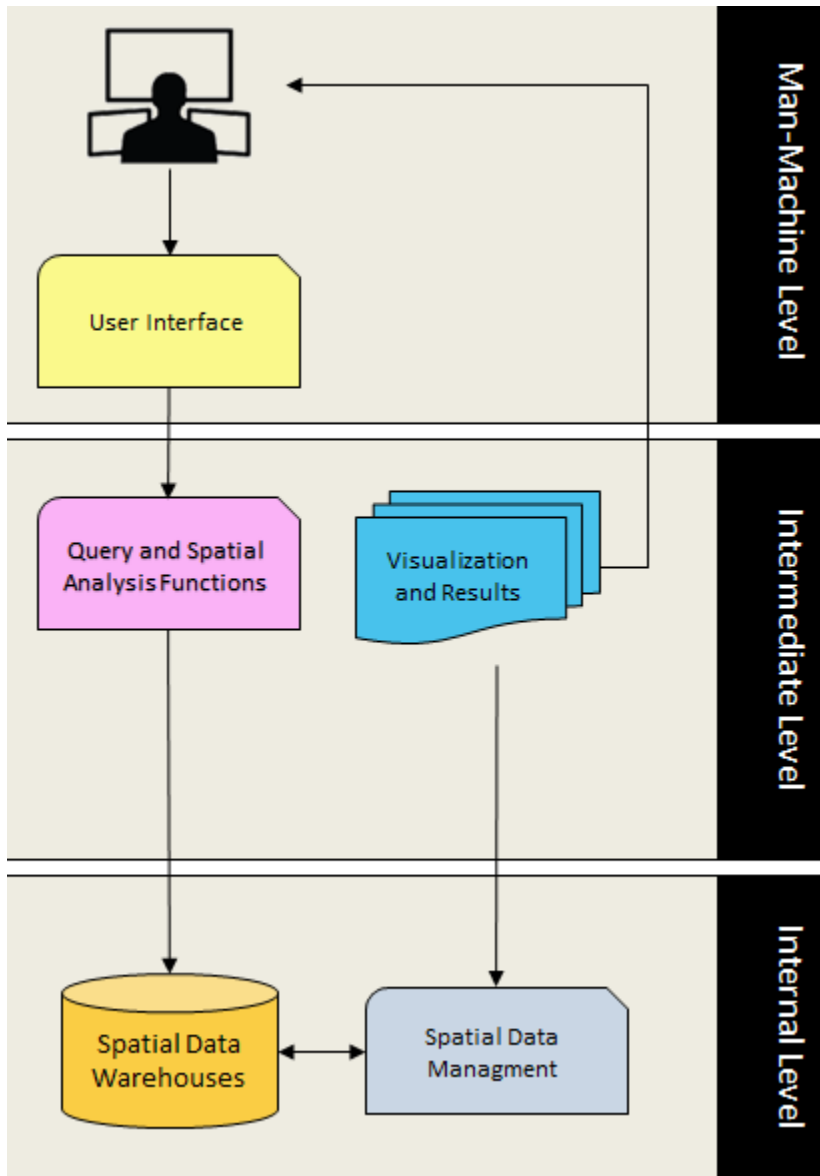


## Location Models

Location models are used to build decision support tools for the location of a specific target in a continuous geographic space. These models seek to represent spatial interrelationships to help decision makers in choosing the best alternative. .

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Conventional GIS packages are useful for data management, collection, visualization and spatial analysis, but do not have advanced statistical approaches, particularly methods that are relevant for modeling species distribution. However, while statistical packages are able to analyze and model species data with a variety of modeling techniques, visualization and support for GIS data are often deficient and require a high learning curve for users (Guo, 2010).

There are several approaches that can be used to generate potential distribution models, each of which can achieve good results under different conditions. However, the software packages available for this purpose, in most cases, only implement a single algorithm, each software package presenting a new learning curve for the user

In spatial modeling it is common to use different statistical techniques to unravel the complexity of the interactions between distributions and environmental factors.

Location models are computationally complex and time-consuming. In addition to the computational task involved in the solution of a location model, there are several important issues related specifically to the integration model and the GIS, namely, data compatibility, the accuracy of the location of the installations and the demand for them, the aggregation of data, errors that may exist in the modeling, and the visualization of the results.

## Geographic Marketing

Geography is an interdisciplinary science, since it comprises the social and human sciences and the natural sciences, presenting several aspects, the main ones being the physical and the human aspects. Due to this versatility, this science is already well inserted in the business world, since Geography manages to understand the territory and the phenomena that happen in it that can condition the success or failure of a company.

Theories of location and economic manifestations invariably occur in time and place, in spaces characterized by phenomena of demographic agglomeration and spatial centrality. Thus, locative science is interested in studying and determining the optimal position of economic agents in the urban environment. This science becomes essential to observe the reality of the market and how it behaves with the introduction of new agents. Locative science must include several disciplines, such as geography, marketing and cartography, that is, Geographic Marketing or GeoMarketing.

The emergence of GeoMarketing was due to four major events: the development of economic theories; the emergence of marketing and its collaboration with Geography; the evolution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); and the creation of GIS.

Marketing is defined as the art and science of choosing target markets and winning, retaining and cultivating customers. As society evolves, customer behavior changes, leading this science to adapt and seek new knowledge to increase its efficiency in business decisions, for this reason, they have been incorporating new techniques, concepts, tools, and cooperating with other areas of study, including statistics, psychology, information systems and geography.

With this need to study customers and locations, GeoMarketing (GM) arises. In the 1980s, GM emerges as the confluence between Marketing and Geography, adding to marketing the physical and human components that Geography provides. However, this concept is broader, encompassing other elements and sciences such as information technology, statistics and cartography (Yrigoyen, 2003; Hess, Rubin, & West Jr, 2004; Dacorogna, Müller, Nagler, Olsen, & Pictet, 1993).

GeoMarketing needs to assume multidisciplinary functions (Fig. 3), including cartography, geography, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and Marketing; that manage to interconnect different visions to solve the same problem.

The development of Information and Communication Technologies has led to the rapid growth and use of GeoMarketing. The use of GIS enabled efficient storage and a quick retrieval and interactive visualization of geographic data sets, offering a good solution for companies to produce relevant and useful information for decision making (Yener, 2017).

The evolution of GIS has spread the data spatialization technique used in company strategy, for several purposes. Among them, estimate the potential demand for services or products from geographically located populations.

Geographic Marketing is an integrated data system for software processing and static and graphical methods developed to produce relevant information in decision making, using instruments that combine digital maps, graphs and tables (Guarda, Augusto, & Lopes, 2019).

Roig-Tierno et al. (2013) states that GeoMarketing is the discipline that uses GIS as a decision analysis tool in marketing seeking to identify consumer needs and desires for the benefit of a business itself (Roig-Tierno, Baviera-Puig, Buitrago-Vera, & Mas-Verdu, 2013).

From the perspective of Cliquet (2013), GeoMarketing is a set of techniques capable of assisting in analysis, strategies and decision making, using the manipulation of encoded geographic data. In this context, geographic information must be skewed for different marketing domains depending on the objective of the manager or decision maker (Cliquet, 2013).

The information generated by GeoMarketing helps the manager or marketer to have a more complete view and identify the needs of the consumer.

It can then be observed that GeoMarketing involves elements such as: available database, or from market research, digital maps and GIS for processing and

manipulating information. The database can be internal (sales, co-operative data, customers) or external (statistical, census institutes). The digital maps that are used can be from private or public sources, finally, GIS is the tool that links data with geographic information.

*Figure 3. GeoMarketing multidisciplinarity*
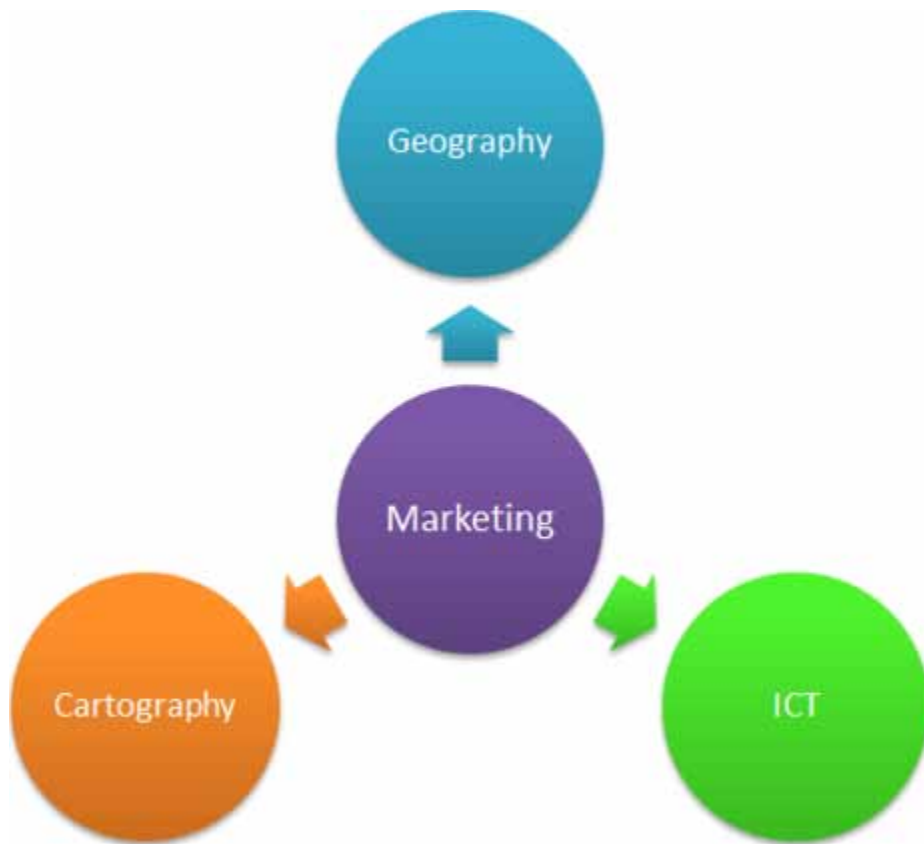


GeoMarketing works by finding crucial variables and mapping its location. For that it is necessary to gather information about a certain area, and the collection of information is essential to achieve a good result, to gather a reliable database, with the largest possible number of information, related to the specific case. In this sense, GeoMarketing acts as a decision support method based on geographically located market data. The maps are able to provide an integrated view of the information in a given area, enhancing the understanding of the market as a whole.

Uncertainty plays a key role in the need for information. In today's world, companies with the best information systems obtain their competitive advantage. Being able to better develop their markets, develop better offers and better execute their marketing plan (Kotler, Burton, Deans, Brown, & Armstrong, 2015).

To make a GeoMarketing study, the following elements are needed: external databases (economic data, demographic data, and social market data); geographic databases (geographic entities, coordinates); points databases (external data associated with geographic locations) (Fig. 4), and GIS for information processing and management (Guarda, Augusto, & Lopes, 2019).

*Figure 4. GeoMarketing multidisciplinarity (Source (Guarda, Augusto, & Lopes, 2019))*
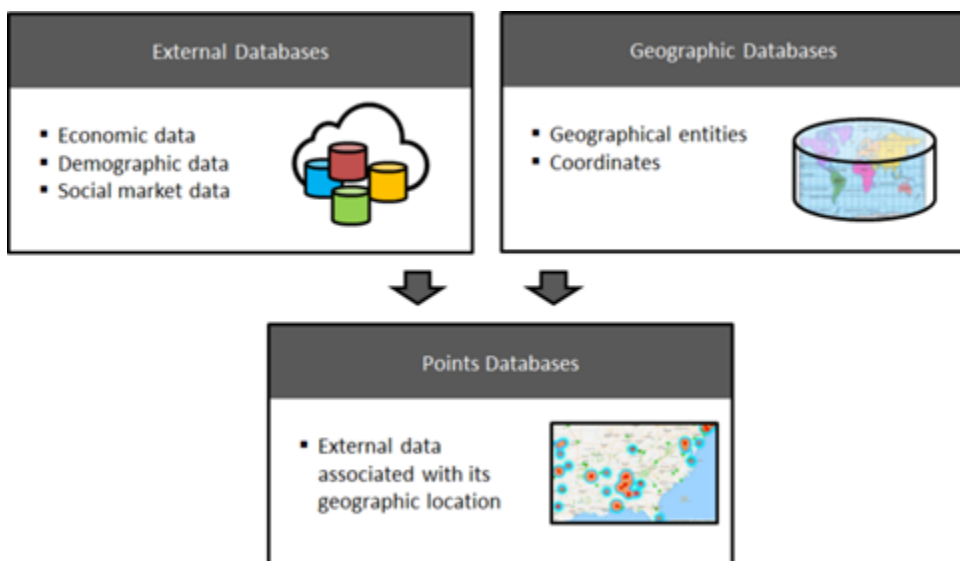


Statistical information, which can be internal to companies or external, forms the basis of all market studies. Along with statistical information, digital cartography is fundamental for this type of studies, since it allows the visualization and statistical analysis of data from different zones and at different scales or geographical scopes.

In this way, GIS appear as the technology that makes it possible to interactively visualize, explore, store and quickly retrieve geographic data, displaying them on forms of maps, tables, graphs and texts. However, it is essential to know the relationships between the different types of data, for this it is necessary to treat the information, specifically to observe the relationships between the data you will have to resort to an exploratory spatial statistical analysis that applies to large volumes of

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data. Data Mining. With this analysis and the spatial modeling of the information, it will be possible to obtain results that will allow the most varied market studies to be carried out, e.g., the study of the location of customers, areas of influence and the detection of market gaps (Guarda, Augusto, & Lopes, 2019).

## CONCLUSIONS

With the technological advances of the last years, the GeoMarketing tools have progressed to the point of allowing crossings of complex information, including sociodemographic data, economic activity statistics and business profiles. Parallel to these advances, the cost of these platforms has also been reduced, making them more accessible.

GeoMarketing is an approach to the geographic analysis of market data, incorporating and embodying strategic planning and competitive intelligence in the market decision-making process.

The power of GIS lies in their ability to integrate spatially related information, to manipulate this information in relation to all attributes and locations, to perform simple spatial analyzes and to easily prepare appealing and informative maps and graphs that allow the display and understanding of information related to the space. The correct use of GIS tools can assist in solving location problems, due to their ability to integrate large volumes of spatial information from different sources. In this way, it is possible to analyze possible locations based on driving time, demographic and socioeconomic variables, competitive information and customer information, making it an important tool in supporting decision making.

Companies from different sectors have converged their marketing, expansion and management strategies from the perspective of geographic market intelligence. In order to find new opportunities for prospecting customers and opening points in different locations, with a wide competitive advantage. In this context, GeoMarketing tools have helped executives from different sectors to gain insights into offers and products.

Despite being a market that still has a lot to be explored, the tendency is that the tools keep evolving, helping companies to reinvent their business strategies and improve their results.

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Chapter 6

# The Perception of Employee Effect and Brand in Industry and Services:
## An Internal Marketing Approach

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## ABSTRACT

*Employee brand effect is a process that values the management of human resources in organizations and contributes to a real and concrete diagnosis of the relational environment inside organizations by promoting internal marketing in people management. This process results from the increase of actions in the domain of interpersonal relationships, which result from the informality of social exchanges in the organization. The present study covered 30 Portuguese organizations from the center region of Portugal in the services and industry areas that responded to a questionnaire survey measuring the process. The results show that in the industry sector there is a greater variation in the employee branding process through mentoring and helping relationships and also a greater variation in the organizational integration domain through the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, which consequently leads to the perception that employee branding effect is more positive in industry employees.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been increasing strategic complexity at the organizational level, which forces organizations to adopt and innovate through other perspectives that could lead them to success (Bali & Dixit, 2016; Cantu, Montagnini, Paiola, & Sebastiani, 2008).

In the current economic context, organizations are facing two major challenges: a constant modeling of market change in one hand and the consequent internal structural and procedural adaptation to make their decision-making faster on the other (Bali & Dixit, 2016; Cantu et al., 2008).

Reinforcing and orienting the culture of the organization towards valuing and developing the skills of employees willing to build and do their utmost for the organization should be a concern of the leadership of organizations.

According to Stuss & Herdan (2017, p. 201), an organization's Employer Branding (EB) is "*determined by the following factors: industry attractiveness, organizational reputation, quality of products and services, location, work environment, salaries, status benefits for the employee, people and culture, and work-life balance*". The purpose of these factors is to condition the image of the organization internally and externally. All these factors make EB one of the main long-term organizational strategies (Stuss & Herdan, 2017). Organizations try to develop an image of "*Best Place To Work*", thus creating competitive advantage over others in the market (Carlota & Espírito, 2016).

Stuss & Herdan (2017, p.201) also consider that "*organizations cannot succeed if they do not attract relevant types of employees*". This idea is especially relevant because the scarcity of talent makes organizations vulnerable to the market.

From a skills management perspective, it is up to the leadership who manages the relationship between the way employees are treated, to implement programs that develop social relations among their employees. In this way, interpersonal relationships are strengthened, which, due to their dynamics, influence employees' behaviors and, consequently, organizational results. (Blake, 2001; Herington, Johnson e Scott, 2006).

The emotional state of the internal customer, that is, the employee, influences customer loyalty and the maintenance of organizational reputation, which in turn reinforces the employee brand image, whether or not contributing through their actions, to overall organizational efficiency. (Lishan e Yaoqi, 2011; Miles e Mangold, 2004; 2005).

Enhancing the skills management strategy allows its leaders to informally influence decisively the culture, citizenship behaviors of peers and mutual support among members, retaining human capital and their competencies and skills. (Thomaz, 2005).

The complicity, when talking about the articulation of management and marketing programs that aggregate and consider people's knowledge and learning, is a strong competitive advantage, achieved through the development of employees to the organization's interests. This allows the increase of organizational loyalty and consequently, the value of the brand that the organization represents assuring the loyalty of external clients.

This brand valuation can be measured through the diagnosis of Employee Brand Effect (EBE) and it is in this sense that this study evaluates the perception of EBE in the service and industry sectors, identifying which of the two values more the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in the organization.

## THE APPRECIATION OF INTERNAL MARKETING IN PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

The concept of internal marketing (IM) argues that the organization's employees are the first market of any company (George 1990), and these are considered as internal customers. Thus, work should attract, develop and motivate employees, satisfying their needs and desires. (Parasuraman e Zeithaml, 1991).

There are then reasons to consider the IM approach as a determinant in behavior management. First, because it is the best way to help employees make a powerful emotional connection with the company's products and services, and second, because this connection is important for employees to be more motivated and loyal to the company. (Vatsa, 2016).

In this sense, an appropriate IM strategy should contribute significantly to organizational success, ie IM can be used to achieve higher levels of employee satisfaction, aiming to make them feel happy with their work experiences.

This IM perspective emerges as a management philosophy that, through its multidimensional construct, aims to attract, develop, motivate and retain employees, satisfying their needs and allowing them the flexibility to respond effectively to the organization's objectives, that is the same goal and yearning when implementing strategic human resources (HR) management in an organization.

Applying many of the principles of consumer advertising to internal communication is vital for business leaders to guide employees toward a better understanding of the brand vision. These principles can lead employees to live the vision of the company so that customers are much more likely to experience company goods and services, building the perception of the organization promise. Thus, internal and external messages must be aligned on the one hand, and companies must keep promises that externally are exposed according to the internal experienced realities on the other hand (Biswas and Saur, 2013; Miles, 2004; Raj, 2011), permiting them

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to manage expectations on a sustained basis. To reinforce the above, the purpose of an internal branding campaign is very similar to an external campaign: to create an emotional connection that, in the case of employees, can make them live their work passionately, even if they do not interact with their customers, but producing a return to the company (Ahmad e Daud, 2016).

Also, Vãleanu, Cosma and Soficã (2012) report that the practice and implementation of effective marketing actions have the power to engage employees with the organization's values and brand identity, making them loyal to the organization's strategy, faithful to these values and experiencing a pleasant or positive emotional state about their job or work experiences (Locke, 1976), which generates loyalty, dedication and commitment to future actions andbrand perception building. Thus, organizations to become more competitive must implement effective programs to maintain employee commitment levels to their goals. These actions involve involving people and implementing *rapprochement* programs between leaders and followers, between mentors and those that are mentored, who value peer communication and allow the satisfaction and loyalty of the organization's first client: the employee.

Rafiq and Ahmed's (2000) definition of IM focuses on using a marketing approach so that internal customers can satisfy external customers in the organization. However, employee branding goes beyond customer satisfaction through IM, that is, it uses all organizational systems, including IM methods, to motivate employees to project the desired organizational image (Vatsa, 2016).

Thus, employees can reinforce, strengthen and even create a brand image by the way they behave. Employee brand building behaviors may include courtesy, responsiveness, reliability, usefulness, and empathy, among others. Such behaviors have been shown to contribute to consumers' perceptions of service quality and may result in higher levels of customer retention and loyalty (American Society for Quality Control, 1988; Rash 2011). If the employee brand is conceptualized in various ways (Estell, 2002; Farrell, 2002; Mitchell, 2002), as stated by Rafiq and Ahmed (2000), several lines of thought support the concept of IM. Through brand internalization (King and Grace, 2007; Miles, 2004), employees are better equipped to deliver on the explicit and implicit promises inherent in the brand and therefore expected by customers. This process focuses on providing people experiences in line with the brand promise through leadership behaviors and people processes and, in some cases, even business processes, both external and internal to the organization.

Effective employee management requires internal market orientation (IMO) just as organizational management requires external market orientation (EMO). According to Lings (2004; p. 291), "*IMO involves the generation and dissemination of information relating to the wishes and needs of employees and the design and implementation of appropriate responses to meet those needs and desires.*" In this

sense, the perceptions that employees have about the brand can affect customers' perceptions of the brand.

Business and brand reputations are often made or broken at the point where employees and their customers come in contact (Bernoff and Schadler, 2010). Thus, organizations can improve their financial performance and gain a sustainable competitive advantage by defining the brand image that their employees should project and then motivating and empowering them to deliver the desired brand image to others (King and Grace, 2009; Miles and Mangold, 2004).

Therefore, the branding process of employees seems to be even broader than originally proposed by Miles and Mangold (2004). Employee knowledge, understanding and motivation to deliver the desired brand image of the organization are key components of the employee's brand structure. With such a competitive market environment, it has become necessary for organizations to position themselves as the best employer by selling their product and service brands and becoming the "*employer of choice*". Only in this way can companies get employees to assume the role of brand ambassadors, something that is achieved through the internal branding initiatives adopted by the organization (Asha, 2013). Following these ideas, it is necessary to implement organizational support practices, techniques, tactics and activities that focus on improving the congruence in the objectives and values of companies with the values and attitudes of employees (Matanda and Ndubisi, 2013).

In recent years, the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) has been a challenge for Human Resources Management (HRM) professionals, and has helped organizations to give their employees what they really expect, increasing their engagement, improving efficiency and reducing turnover rates (Browne, 2012).

According to the Corporated Leadership Council (2006), the development of an EVP has become the key to successful talent acquisition, the creation of an employer-employee mutual commitment, and structural and salary savings, being its key development for successful attraction and retention for the organization (Manpower Ltd., 2009).

Minchington (2005) defines EVP as "*a set of offerings by an organization in exchange for the skills, capabilities, and experiences that an employee brings to the organization*" (quoted in Browne, 2012, p.30). This author focuses on a collaborator-centered approach that is aligned with workforce planning strategies. Minchington (2005), reinforcing the previous idea, adds that EVP "*must identify unique people policies, processes and programs that demonstrate the organization's commitment to employee growth, management development, continuous employee recognition, and community service*"(quoted in Browne, 2012, p.30).

Botha et al. (2011) describes a predictive model for employer branding that takes into account the following characteristics: target group needs, EVP differentiation, people strategy, brand consistency, employer brand communication, emplyer brand

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metrics. According to this author, the model presented contributes to an organization's positioning regarding the attraction of talent. EVP as an employer brand image process is associated with the company in its employer role (Knox & Freeman, 2006).

The transformational style culture and leadership gives employees the same as they give the external customer: attention to their needs, support and involvement, which promotes the creation of lasting relationships between customers, leaders and employees (Cerqueira, 2002), contributing decisively to the promotion of functional packages in the organization.

Leadership, such as that of the servant type, is the one that provides the most determining conditions for the development of social exchange relations, making room for the promotion and helping of mentoring relationships actions (MRA) within the cultural and organizational context (Sousa, 2016). If, on the one hand, the leadership intends to promote a facilitating culture that ensures the commitment of top management to create a dynamic of social exchange that provides conditions for the dissemination of interpersonal relations (IR) in the organization, on the other, the increase of MRA's role between managers and leaders will trigger conditions to shape behaviors and image among members.

In turn, MRA's performance as a single process should be based on formal and informal HR management processes, which should consolidate the correct verbal and non-verbal communication in organizations, through the management of emotions and states of mind and spirit that influence the psychological contract and, consequently, the measurement of the EBE process, which seeks to value the social competence in the organization (Sousa, 2016).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE BRAND EFFECT IN ORGANIZATIONS

EB adds the principles of Branding to HRM (Botha et al., 2011). HR marketing involves the desire to understand and satisfy the employee's need (Mikoláš & Wozniaková, 2009). EB must be positioned in the same way as any product, so traditional marketing techniques should be applied (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

As in marketing, HRM needs to create a relationship that is based on efficient workforce segmentation. HR marketing activities should be target-oriented and place the organization in the top choices of candidates (Zhang, Wan, & Jia, 2008).

Global trends have shown that HR's role in marketing is strategic. There are three main reasons why marketing principles should be used in HR management: one is increasing the influence of reputation management, which is vital in any area where organizations pay more attention to people management in the Branding process; the second is the increased service-based economy in which products are

delivered and differentiated only by trained employees, and the third and last one is the increased importance of intangible assets such as HR and intellectual capital as a source of strategic advantage (Barney, 2011).

The EBE process seeks to evaluate in the organization, and through employee perception, the employee brand image seen as a positive emotional state that enhances better results. Miles and Mangold's Employee Branding (EB) process (2004, 2005) is a functional package implemented by the organization that depends on the creativity of the leaders and that can create positive psychological and economic effects on the employee, given the identity that the employee has with the organization (Vãleanu, et.al. 2012). This process, through its formality, particularizes the origin of the sources (inputs) that define and contribute to the development of the process.

However, the day-to-day management of people has in itself the informality resulting from social exchanges, which is valued in EBE by the integration of the dynamics of MRA actions between managers and managed ones. These concepts are important enablers of social exchange relations and psychological contract maintenance, mainly through the informal way in organizations, through a shift of focus from objective management to competency and or skills management (Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson, 2003) to that of MRA (Kram, 1985; Ragins and Kram, 2007; Schein, 2013).

Miles and Mangold (2004, 2005) in their process, are based on the combination of several inputs that influence the employee's psyche in its relationship with the brand and its psychological contract, emphasizing HR practices and marketing actions that, by their articulation create or sustain competitive advantages in the organization.

If, in the relationship between managers and supervisors, the formal practices of MRA of informal bosses are associated, the mentored's sense of belonging, commitment and organizational citizenship with the team mentor may be enhanced with positive extensions to the organization and its brand.

By introducing MRA actions into informal sources, the way the IR dynamics in the organization are unleashed. This change in the relationship between managers and managed ones leads to adjustments in the results of the EB process, and through a greater proximity between them, develops a more open and frequent communication that fosters a sense of loyalty between the employee and the organization.

The appreciation of IR boosted by the action of MRA actions between managers and managed ones is the integrating and innovative element in EBE.

Interaction between individuals is usually focused on content and rarely on how it is processed. In this context, it is intended that the mentor knows "*how*" to diagnose and constructively intervene so that his mentor is better able to pursue his personal and organizational improvement, so as to be able to perceive, understand and act for him. Thus, by valuing the importance of the social relationship between members, it requires the promotion and learning of this social competence by the organization.

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For this reason, the EBE process opens the space for the emancipation and importance of IR's contribution to the promotion and reinforcement of the psychological contract, either by increasing and enhancing employees' sense of commitment and loyalty in organizational satisfaction, or by increasing their workforce levels of effectiveness and productivity (Sousa, 2016).

According to this, the complicity of the articulation of these informal processes lies in valuing competency management, which aggregates and considers people's knowledge and informal learning as a strong sustainable competitive advantage.

This action will lead to organizational results that will allow the increase of organizational effectiveness and efficiency, by consolidating the synergy and complicity of HR practices and their articulation with the IM processes. This action will lead to organizational results that will allow the increase of organizational effectiveness and efficiency, by consolidating the synergy and complicity of HR practices and their articulation with the IM processes.

## METHODOLOGY

The target population of the present study is the group of employees of organizations that work in the central region area of Portugal. The sample consisted of 725 employees, of which 54.2% (n = 393) belong to the industry sector and 45.8%. (n = 332) to the service sector. A total of 30 organizations participated in the study, of which 14 (46.7%) are linked to the industry sector and 16 (53.3%) to the service sector.

A questionnaire survey consisting of 79 items evaluating the EBE process of employees in organizations was used. For each EBE process instrument item a four-level forced choice scale (2 reference levels, "True" and "False", an intermediate level of "Hesitation" and a "Not Applicable" level) was used. The option of a forced choice scale is based on the scale developed and tested by Thomaz (2005).

The response scale also considered the use of the determinants technique (Figueira, Greco and Ehrgott, 2005; Roy and Mousseau, 1996) in order to define the statements that in each dimension / construct are a sine qua non condition for their definition and diagnosis. from EBE.

In order to quantify the human subjectivity inherent in the scale adopted, Tversky's and Kahneman's (1981) Prospect Theory, which studied how people react to risk and uncertainty and how they evaluate their behavior, gains and losses from a subjective point of reference was applied (Sousa, Thomaz, Ferreira, Jorge and Santos 2016).

The EBE process presented in Sousa, Thomaz, Santos and Felizardo (forthcoming) a Cronbach's alpha value of .898, which according to Pestana and Gageiro (2014) reveals a good internal consistency. Being considered a reliable measure that

results from the synergy of the formal EB process and the introduction of the MRA dimension in the informal domain of IR.

The dimensions that value the informal domain of the EBE process are integrated in the IR construct, namely the Citizenship Elements and Psychological Contract already proposed in the EB process on the one hand, and the actions of MRA, which increase and value the informality of social exchanges in organizations, originating the new EBE process on the other.

The EB process also includes the formal domain, called Organizational Integration (IO) and consists of three constructs, each of which has a three-dimensional structure: Management Support, Organizational Socialization and Brand Socialization, as presented in (Sousa, Thomaz, Ferreira, Jorge and Santos 2016).

Given the objectives of this study, three research hypotheses were identified, which will be tested separately for groups of employees from the service sector and industry:

**Hypothesis 1:** The informality of mentoring and helping relationships positively influences the employee branding process in services and industry.
**Hypothesis 2:** Interpersonal relationships positively influence the organizational integration domain in services and industry.
**Hypothesis 3:** The influence of mentoring interpersonal relationships and helping relationships in the organizational integration domain is moderated by mentoring helping relationships in services and industry.

To carry out this study, an email invitation was sent to the 30 organizations to apply the questionnaires to their collaborators. The invitation provided a link to access the questionnaire (online), as well as the explanation of the objectives of the study and the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided. The study took place between November 27, 2014 and April 30, 2015.

After applying the questionnaires to the collaborators, the data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 24 software. The characterization of the sample was described based on descriptive statistics elements. To test the hypotheses, simple linear regression analysis and moderation effect regression analysis were applied (Marôco, 2014; Pestana and Gageiro, 2014).

## TESTING THE HIPOTHESIS

This section intends to separately test the assumptions for groups of employees in the service sector and industry.

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Through the application of linear regression analysis, for the group of employees belonging to the industry sector, it can be stated that 72.8% ($R^2 = .728$) of the total variability of the EB process is explained by the regression model through MRA dimension. The MRA dimension statistically influences (t (392) = 32.50; p <.01) the EB process, with a positive variation (β = .55) by the MRA performance.

Regarding the group of employees belonging to the **services** sector, it is found that 73% ($R^2 = .730$) of the total process variability of the EB process is explained by the regression model through the MRA dimension and it can be inferred that The MRA dimension statistically influences (t (331) = 29.85; p <.01) the EB process, with a positive variation (β = .48) by the MRA performance. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed for the two groups of employees belonging to the industry and services sector.

To verify the truth of Hypothesis 2, linear regression analysis was also used, and for the group of employees belonging to the **industry** sector, it was found that 73.4% ($R^2 = .734$) of the total variability of the IO domain is explained by the model through of the dynamics of IR. The results demonstrate that the dynamics of IR influence statistically (t (392) = 32.83; p <.01) the IO domain and there is a positive variation (β = .77) in the IO domain by the IR action.

Regarding the group of employees belonging to the **services** sector, 66.6% ($R^2 = .666$) of the total variability of the IO domain is explained by the model through the dynamics of IR. Thus, it can be inferred that the dynamics of IR influence statistically (t (331) = 25.63; p <0.01) the IO domain and there is a positive variation (β = .62) in the IO domain by the action of IR. Hypothesis 2 is confirmed for the two groups of employees belonging to the industry and services sector.

In short, it is in the industry sector that there is a greater variation in the EB process due to MRA's performance and a greater variation in the IO domain due to IR's performance and consequently leads to a more positive perception of EBE in industry employees.

The results of the moderation model of the group of employees belonging to the **industry** sector allow us to state that the influence of IR without MRA in the IO domain is not moderated by the MRA dimension, since the coefficient relative to the interaction (product between the MRA variables and the construct IR without the MRA dimension) is not statistically significant (t (392) = .38; p> .05).

Regarding the group of employees belonging to the **services** sector, it can be stated that 68.2% of the total variability of the IO domain is explained by the independent variables present in the regression model. In this model, the interaction coefficient (product between the MRA variables and the IR construct without the MRA dimension) is statistically significant (t (392) = 4.39; p <.01), and it can be inferred that the influence of IR without MRA in the IO domain is moderated by the MRA dimension. This model is highly significant (F (3, 328) = 237.23; p <.01),

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being the appropriate model. Only the MRA variable has IFV values slightly higher than 5 (MRA with IFV = 6.66, IR without MRA with IFV = 3.72 and Product with IFV = 3.39), which according to Myers (1986) cited in Marôco (2014), does not express concern about the possible presence of multicollinearity. Note that the remaining assumptions, normality, independence and homoscedasticity of the residues are verified. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is confirmed only for the service sector group of employees.

## CONCLUSIONS

The EBE process, through the dynamic and catalytic role of IR in its employees, not only increases but also boosts the brand image, inside and outside the organization, whether in industry or services.

This analysis concludes that, in both sectors, MRA actions positively influence the EB process and IRs positively influence the IO domain, and it is in the industry sector that the greatest variation occurs. Thus, it can be stated that the perception of EBE, between the two sectors, is more positive among industry employees, that is, the EBE process in organizations effectively boosts the brand image.

The increase in the functional processes of EB, when associated with informality, allows a more positive diagnosis of EBE, influenced by the complicity of internal HR management and internal marketing practices. In this sense, the employee does not need an extra effort to expose the brand in the market more eloquently and spontaneously to the external client, which adds to the organizational reputation.

This organizational reputation, worked daily with MI and HR-based organizational support activities, is and can still be enhanced if there is a role based on the principles of MRA that, informally, enhances the quality of the work relationship, aid, knowledge exchange (skills) and personal growth. The building of a more stimulated relationship between managers and employees is also based on the psychological contract and the existence of citizenship behaviors.

The dynamics of job satisfaction is, and should always be, a concern of the management of organizations, especially in competitive environments where differentiation is made by the sustainability of competitive advantage through the employees, especially by their "soul and claw", when perceived by the marketplace.

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# Chapter 7
# Country Marketing Strategy:
## A Low-Cost Digital Marketing Proposal for Cabo Verde

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## ABSTRACT

*Tourism has become one of the most active areas for digital marketing strategy development. Nowadays, almost all players have developed some kind of digital approach in order to publicise or promote their product. Trying to reach the European tourism market, the national travel and tourism authorities of small Cabo Verde have asked for a strategy based on digital media for global communication results. Their goal is to empower their touristic potential throughout social media and any others digital channels. This work presents a possible digital marketing strategy developed throughout social media dynamics generated by users´ interactions.*

## INTRODUCTION

Technologies had introduced a new level of challenges for global touristic players. Through technologies it's possible to promote and developed personalized touristic offers independently customers' proximity, culture or religion.

For this reason, touristic players have been adapting and developing, almost at the same rhythms of technologies development, their communication strategies. Indeed, technology and the internet have created a revolution in tourism marketing (Pease, 2015)

Actually, despite the disparity of locations and related characteristics, all of them might compete for the same customer. Web technologies doesn't only inspire and provides consumers powerful information's on potential travel destinations, but also pushes them to take immediate action. Moreover, once in touch with potential or actual consumers, web technologies allow to tourism players to continue their endless efforts for a new visit or a return. Nowadays mobile devices (smartphones, tablets or any other computer portable based device) had already largely surpassed the number of computers or workstations (Pease, 2015). This tendency is much more than a technology issue – it represents a common social paradigm, at almost developed countries.

As a result, it no surprise that easy access to unlimited information combines with peoples' craving to share their experience with others. Many of them are aiming to get some "out of formal circuits" information's. Such tendency has just created a huge shift in the types of offers that people take, where and when they go, how they book and what activities are they pursuing while travelling. The standard agency played offer has become almost obsolete facing the personalized and customized travel itinerary. At this step, consumers have powerful tools at their disposal and so tourism operators. Therefore, throughout web technologies powered by such social media society, nowadays it is almost possible that a hotel located at Cabo Verde has just as much access to reach a potential visitor as a five-star caribbean hotel (T. Guarda, 2017)

Given that web marketing it is a low-cost strategy and because online marketing is easily accessible, it has opened up global competition, accessible to all tourism players.

This work draws a possible strategy for a small African country with sparse resources but with phenomenal tourism potential – Cabo Verde. Regarding such objective this research has just endorsed the follow questions:

- What kind of presence is possible to maintain on web with Cabo Verde available resources (financial resources and human resources)?
- Which kind of digital marketing dynamics among adopted tools and techniques would it be possible to address for Cabo Verde tourism office?
- How would it be possible to bring closer the users' personal preferences and the recommendation systems?

Following the introduction this paper it is presented Cabo Verde as a country on different dimensions, social characteristics, economy, technology and security. Then tourism marketing is introduced, and touristic products types are explained. Continuing with same theme, on the next section, Cabo Verde tourism potential is presented through country's main interests. The following section is dedicated to digital marketing, continuing on the next section dedicated to digital marketing tools. Thus, the digital marketing strategy proposal is presented and fully explained. The practice appears on the next section and conclusions are draw closing this paper.

## CARBO VERDE

The Cabo Verde archipelago was uninhabited until the 15th century, when Portuguese explorers discovered and colonized the islands, establishing the first European settlement in the tropics. Ideally located for the Atlantic slave trade, the islands grew prosperous throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, attracting merchants, privateers, and pirates. The end of transatlantic slavery in the 19th century led to economic decline and emigration. Cabo Verde gradually recovered as an important commercial center and stopover for shipping routes. Incorporated as an overseas department of Portugal in 1951, the islands continued to campaign for independence, which was achieved in 1975 (Madeira, 2015).

Since the early 1990s, Cabo Verde has been a stable representative democracy, and remains one of the most developed and democratic countries in Africa. Lacking natural resources, its developing economy is mostly service-oriented, with a growing focus on tourism and foreign investment. Its population of around 540,000 is mostly of mixed European, Moorish, Arab and African heritage, and predominantly Roman Catholic, reflecting the legacy of Portuguese rule. A sizeable diaspora community exists across the world, slightly outnumbering inhabitants on the islands (Madeira, 2015).

Cabo Verde is an island state that comprises an archipelago of ten volcanic islands and eight islets. It is located south of the Canary Islands and around 450 km from Senegal. The total area of the archipelago covers 4,033 square kilometers, of which only 11% is arable.

Cabo Verde islands are divided into two groups: the northern Barlavento or Windward Islands and the southern Sotavento or Leeward Islands. The first group comprises the islands of Santo Antão, São Vicente, Santa Luzia (uninhabited), São Nicolau, Sal, and Boa Vista, while the second group comprises the islands of Santiago (which hosts the nation's capital, Praia), Fogo, Maio, and Brava (Cañizares, 2014)

Cabo Verde is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in the Sahelian eco-climatic zone, situated off the coast of Senegal and within easy reach of Europe and

the Americas with a population of approximately 537,661 in 2017 of which 267,570 are female (49.8%), and 28.6% are children under 14 years.4 The Cabo Verdean population is extremely young, with an average of 28.3 years in 2016, compared to a world average of 30 years. Poor in traditional natural resources and with only 10% of land arable, Cabo Verde's locational, structural and geophysical characteristics substantially contribute to its economic, social and environmental vulnerability and determine its strategic choices and development pathway. According to data from the third Survey on Household Expenditures and Income of 2015, in Cabo Verde around 35% of the population lived in poverty, while 10.6% lived in extreme poverty, more intensely in rural areas. The Gini Index is 0.46, more intense in urban zone, 0.45, it is projected to be 0,438 and 0,481 respectively in 2021, for consumption and income (UNDAF, 2019)

## Country Dimensions

Cabo Verde is a republic whose democratic system was established in (1991) and consolidated over the years. Respect for the rule of law and the fundamental principle of separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers puts Cabo Verde on same level with developed countries, ranking him as one of the model countries in Africa in terms of democracy and good governance. Freedom of the press is a reality in the country, and the absence of ethnic, political and religious conflicts has fostered sociocultural cohesion.

Despite its small dimensions Cabo Verde may have proud from its own scene of extraordinary beauty and the lush vegetation. Besides, the fantastic scenery and the exceptional climate, award the archipelago all the necessary conditions for the tourism development in this still unexplored country (Lemos, 2005)

The most relevant aspects to the tourism development of Cabo Verde focus: ecotourism (lush vegetation occupying more than 15% of territory, wonderful mountains, fauna and flora), sea (magnificent beaches, dolphins and whales in a turquoise sea), cocoa (one of the best quality cacao in world), its friendly people and the security of its territory (albeit located in Africa, Cabo Verde is a territory of stable governance and citizenship concepts well developed). (Lemos, 2005)

## Main Social Characteristics

During many years, Cabo Verde population has been acknowledged on basis of folk group. Albeit such notation remains, Cabo Verde people are already characterized by some level of literacy and professional commitment.

While Cabo Verde is well on its way to achieving the desired development levels, significant challenges remain. High poverty rates, particularly in the mostly rural

islands with limited tourism infrastructure, especially youth unemployment, should be improved so as not to have an impact on tourism development.

The kindness and hospitality of Cabo Verde citizens are essential factors that may favor the tourism development of the island.

The challenges of the country's development agenda - PEDS and 2030 Agenda - represent the need to work simultaneously, in an integrated and coordinated way, inter- and intra-sectoral to achieve the stated goals.

For the future some population concerns are usually addressed, such as:

a.    To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
b.    Respect to human rights
c.    To promote gender equality and empower women (high unemployment rate);
d.    To reduce child mortality;
e.    Reduce social inequalities and asymmetries at island level;
f.    To ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development

Social stability and unrest in Cape Verde generally revolve around labor issues, with sporadic demonstrations over job opportunities, unemployment benefits, and salary increases in line with the cost of living likely to continue. By de end, as an African country Cabo Verde might be considered a calm a secure country. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019)

## Economy

The Cape Verdean government has long-term plans to make the archipelago a logistics and services hub as well as a year-round tourist destination, in July 2019 establishing a special economic zone reducing regulatory and tax measures to maritime trade on São Vicente Island. Corruption is a relatively minor issue, and the government regularly conducts checks into ministers and managers of state-owned companies accused of illegal activity, with Finance Minister Olavo Correia investigated and then cleared in April 2018 for alleged influence-peddling. Strikes are generally of short duration, although the national airline has experienced persistent industrial action in 2017–18 due to its financial troubles and the privatization process. (World Tourism Organization, 2019)

Cape Verde has shown very high growth rates relative to tourism. This sector represents a very significant portion of the economy of the country, however, the global prospects are for acceleration of activity over the coming years, with the main tourist centers being the islands of Sal and Boavista. Such scenario might represent

an excellent opportunity for Cabo Verde to establish itself as a tourist destination based on its rich and diverse natural resources (World Tourism Organization, 2019).

Due to the rural nature and disparity of the island, there is a strong dominance of the primary sector and similar activities in its economy in which family and seasonal exploitation predominates, thus contributing to a certain incidence of unemployment.

Being an island where the entrepreneurial fabric is reduced, the fight against unemployment is automatically one of the main tasks of public, private and social institutions. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019)

## Technology

In recent decades, technological innovations have taken on a truly important role in any industry. One of the fundamental aspects of technology in tourism is related to the speed of information transmission and this factor is very relevant in the dissemination and promotion of tourist destinations. The internet is today a strategic tool that allows us to promote a destination by expanding its dissemination boundaries far beyond what would be possible from traditional means. Subsequently, with the emergence of social networks comes a new opportunity to publicize destinations and communicate with customers in real time.

## Secure Territory

Cape Verde has one of the most stable political environments in Africa, exemplified by a peaceful change of government in March 2016 from the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV) to the Movement for Democracy (MpD). Prime Minister Ulisses Correia e Silva is focused on promoting the service sector, reducing taxes for small and medium-sized businesses, and cutting expenditure on costly infrastructure projects. Cabo Verde's real GDP growth prediction for 2019 was 4.4%, which represents an auspicious rate for an African country. A thriving tourism industry and the sustained recovery in several other sectors continue to underscore this forecast. Overall, growth in the near to medium term will be driven mainly by the services sectors. Remittance inflows and tourism receipts should continue to improve in this period. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019)

Security and justice are sectors which have been subject to particular attention from the government, and there is a tendency towards downward reversal of violence and improvement in access to justice.

Crime rates in Cape Verde are low for the sub-region, although on a noticeable upward trend. With the growth of tourism and a rise in foreign business visitors, further increases in petty thefts, muggings, and sexual assaults in tourist destinations and resorts can be expected. Violent crime is an increasing problem, linked to armed

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drug-trafficking rings routing shipments through the archipelago, but much of this is confined to disputes between and within criminal networks. Police generally have a good reputation, but logistical constraints, including lack of vehicles, limited communications equipment, and forensic capacity and their limited effectiveness. (World Tourism Organization, 2019)

War risks are minimal. Cabo Verde has strong institutions with good levels of training and no history of military takeovers and maintains peaceful relations with its neighbors'. Moreover, Cabo Verde announced a join program with Portugal in order to establish an improved joint naval presence around the archipelago. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019)

## Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing can be seen as a management process whereby organizations operating in the tourism sector identify and communicate with their current and potential clients in order to understand and influence their needs, wants and motivations. local, regional, national and international levels (Lemos, 2005)

Over the years, the tourism sector has developed continuously due to its focus on tourism diversification, becoming one of the key drivers for the progress of the economic sectors. At the same time, the growth of tourism boosts the economy as well as the construction sector, agriculture and telecommunications, increasing general employability. As a result, this growth allows for increased trade and trade rates between countries, with important cultural implications for visitors to a country (World Tourism Organization, 2019)

Tourism has become one of the main factors in international trade and is seen as a source of income for many developing countries. However, tourism's contribution to economic well-being depends on the quality and revenues of tourism supply (World Tourism Organization, 2019)

At this juncture, tourism marketing is seen as an experience that the consumer has (Moutinho, 1987). In tourism marketing area, the consumer it is considered an extremely important influencer for tourism activity (Mossberg, 2007). Indeed, in the tourism market, communication between organizations and the public has been strongly affected by the ability of consumers to share and influence themselves, which today assume the role that operators previously played. Sometimes consumers act even with a counterpower, challenging and contradicting brand messages (Lemos, 2005)

## Touristic Product

According to this conception, the tourism product consists of a mixture of experiences, services and products acquired before and during the trip. In fact, it is all that one can consume, experience, observe and enjoy during a trip.

Different levels of tourism products are considered in the present paper (Mossberg, 2007): those that are mass-developed and mass-produced - such as souvenirs; others that are sold as a global concept or proposal for the consumer (complete offering of transportation, food, lodging, theme parks, festivals and music); and lastly, tourist products that create added value in services such as design and architecture, which are widely used in hotels, restaurants and attractions made for tourists.

The tourism product has its own characteristics (Moutinho, 1987):

- A high degree of emotion and irrationality at the time of purchase, where the psychographic characteristics of the consumer play a decisive role in the choice;
- Distance - a place of distant consumption that makes the tourist have to rely on available sources of information;
- Depends on seasonality or fluctuation in demand at different times of the year;
- A greater dependence on complementary services, since the act of travel requires the intervention of different service providers, strongly fragmented, all contributing to the final satisfaction of the tourist.

Tourism dynamics are based on the relationship between offer and demand. The offer is made up of various entities, from means of transport linking origin to destination, to entities or organizations that guarantee the functioning and administration mechanisms, whether public or private, and the means and promotional forms that influence and guide the tourist demand.

It is often to segment the demand for tourism products according to the motivations of each target segment. The typology of tourist offer includes proposals such as those in Table 1 (Lemos, 2005)

*Table 1. Touristic product typology*

| Tourism type | Description |
|---|---|
| Sun and Beach Tourism | This type of tourism is part of leisure / rest tourism in beach destinations. |
| Residential Tourism | It is a tourist's choice to purchase a second or third home at another destination outside their usual residence. |
| Sport tourism | This type of tourism may be defined as "active or passive participation in a competitive or recreational sport"). When a tourist chooses this type of tourism, his main motivation is the quality that the chosen destination has for the practice of sports activities. These activities can be: golf, water sports, hiking, tennis, hunting and fishing, water and underwater sports and winter sports. |
| Business or Scientific Tourism. | The main objective of this tourism is to make the tourist participate in a conference, congress, training or meeting. |
| Event Tourism | It is considered the displacement of people with the advantage of participating in events for technical, scientific or professional and cultural knowledge. |
| Urban Tourism | These trips are made to densely populated places or cities. |
| Cultural Tourism | This is the type of tourism where the trip aims to meet artistic, scientific, training and information. |
| Rural tourism | This type of tourism aims to present as attraction the plantations and crops in areas where they may perhaps serve as international reference in the so-called agribusiness. |
| Adventure Tourism | It is defined as the participation of tourists in activities that usually involve physical exertion. |
| Health Tourism | It is defined as the set of trips to places oriented to the physical and emotional well-being that the tourist needs. |
| Spiritual and religious tourism | In this type of tourism, the fundamental motivations are faith, worship and the visit to directly related or spiritual places. |
| Thematic Tourism | It includes trips to theme parks or other attractions related to fun and experiences. |
| Cruises | This type of tourism consists of trips made on cruise ships for leisure purposes, usually at sea. |

## CABO VERDE TOURISM

Cabo Verde is very often considered as a paradise of heaven on turquoise sea. Indeed, Cabo Verde has considerable advantages as tourist location. There are tropical islands paradises, where's possible to have a small tropical island palm-fringed beaches,

turquoise sea, waterfalls, rivers, unique species of birds and plants, and perhaps, most important in an African country, no violence. People from Cabo Verde are kind, friendly and warm, giving the visitor a such experience of discover and life.

Cabo Verde tourism potential may be travel around in five different perspectives: Ecotourism; Beach and Sea; Culture; and, Secure territory. (Turismo de Cabo Verde, 2013)

## Ecotourism

Down literature review it would be possible to find many different definitions for ecotourism. Often appear as related to "responsible", "sustainable" or "green". Nevertheless, the most common explanation shortly and briefly defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (The International Ecotourism Society, 2019)

Ecotourism comprises all forms of tourism whereas tourists' main motivation would be the observation and appreciation of nature, in order to contribute to its preservation and minimize negative impacts on the natural and socio-cultural environment (UNDAF, 2019)

At Cabo Verde ecotourism come into sight as a development strategy given the exceptional richness of fauna and flora as well the natural country resources. Considering World Tourism Organization, ecotourism market has been growing more than 20% each year, while tourism general industry growing rate its around 7,5% per year. During last year's, Cabo Verde ecotourism have been rising from 15% to 25% per year. (World Tourism Organization, 2019)

The ecotourism offers ranges from the sea to the mountain. From sea that will be possible to dive on a bounty of colored fishes and corals. Tourist will have the opportunity to enjoy the sea in many different ways: sports (diving, bodyboard or fishing), observation (dolphins or whales on water or migratory birds)

On mountain side it is possible to the tourist walk around on anyone of the five mountains: Pico do Fogo, Monte Verde, Serra Malagueta, Monte Curral or Pico de Antonia. Anyone of this park offers breathtaking landscapes, virgin forests over rivers and waterfalls. Cabo Verde mountains also permit tourists to go circuits and excursions for bird watching (in some cases it is to watch endemic species) in combination with the possibility to stay overnight.

Beside above possibilities, tourists also have the opportunity to look to experiment the archipelago attractive and unique cultural traditions, seeking to know the natural heritage Cabo Verde.

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## Beach & Sea

Cabo Verde has a magnificent sea and awesome beaches. Those attractions are one of the most relevant for tourism work. Beach and sea arguments lay on archipelago's geography, white sand, clear water, wonderful sightseers with waterfalls or every year permanent mild temperature.

Ocean waters are crystalline and abundant in fish and sea food. Cabo Verde ocean is inhabited by tuna, dolphins, swordfish, barracuda or sharks. Sometimes during the year is often possible to watch some whales traveling around.

Since Cabo Verde's social and economic restrictions, it has been too much difficult to strive side by side with other world tourism destinations. Nevertheless, for the time coming, this country represents an excellent opportunity for visitors to enjoy and to explore an almost virgin territory.

## DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing is defined as the practice of promoting products and services through digital distribution channels (Smith, 2011). Digital marketing is also known as e-marketing, whose strategy includes the use of various tools (Lim, 2012). The internet, the web and digital marketing have been transforming marketing and business, especially since the emergence and vulgarization of websites since 1991, which has had a profound impact on companies and businesses. organizations, for the transformation they have imposed on the way brands relate to their audiences. Millions of people around the world regularly use the internet to search for products and services, as well as to entertain and satisfy a need to "do everything at the same time, now".

Digital Marketing is the combination of marketing and promotional strategies, applied to the web and the new behavior that the consumer displays when navigating. Web marketing isn't not about one particular activity or another, but a coherent and efficient combination of strategies that build a permanent form of contact between a organization and their consumers or clients (Lim, 2012)

Information and communication technologies have a considerable impact on brand awareness, identity building and tourist destination selection (Zheng X., 2010). Tourists like collaborative tools such as blogs and microblogs, online communities, video sharing platforms, images or social bookmarking websites to gather information.

Some authors argue that social media is used in all vacation phases: before, during and after travel (Cohen, Prayag and Moital 2014). Other authors even consider that social media plays a key role in the tourism industry, especially in seeking information and decision-making behaviors (Zeng, 2014). They state that

the promotion of tourism enables the concentration of best practices of interaction with consumers. According to them, there are four new interests related to social media in tourism (Cohen, Prayag and Moital 2014) (Zeng, 2014):

- community involvement
- the overall marketing strategy
- differentiated management of a destination
- legal / ethical issues arising from the use of social media in tourism.

Social media applications or websites were largely accepted by among tourists' consumers and customers (Yoo, 2012) (White, 2007). Moreover, such applications smooth the contents production. Then, web marketing tools provide organizations to develop their business, helping them to spread the message through technology-based communication systems, among communities and networks.

Digital marketing, internet and online marketing are terms commonly used to describe the use of technologies in marketing strategies (Järvinen, 2012).

The digital environment enables two important business opportunities: The first opportunity is that companies have access to the various digital tools that can be used for marketing purposes; The second is that the digital environment helps marketing to improve companies' ability to gather, organize and structure information about their businesses. marketing activities of an organization (Zeng, 2014).

Some of the key benefits of using digital marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012):

§ Identification - consists of consumers using the internet to search what they need;
§ Anticipation - the internet is an additional channel where users can communicate, buy and influence purchases from others;
§ Satisfaction - is a success factor in e-marketing and aims to achieve customer satisfaction through e-channels such as an appealing and easy-to-use website.

Among many digital marketing strategies, the RACE (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage) planning model helps marketing managers to increase the business value of organizations by streamlining their businesses (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) digital marketing strategies to help engage prospects, consumers and fans with the brand throughout the customer lifecycle.

It comprises the following phases (Guarda, Santos, & Filipe Pinto, 2013):

§ Reach - aims to consciously build a brand, its products and services on the website by creating traffic and driving visitors through it. Aims to make the website as wide as possible;

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§ Interact - To engage the audience, the brand must use the platforms of its website, or other online platform, to interact and dialogue with users and customers.

§ Convert - is the phase where you define the marketing objectives that lead to the conversion of leads into customers, and preferably into fans of the brand.

§ Engage - involves achieving customer retention goals through customer relationships


## DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS

## Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social networking site. This kind of social networking are typical applications of what is termed web 2.0, they are web-based platforms that integrate different media, information and communication technologies that allow at least the generation of profiles that display information describing the users, the display of connections (connection list), the establishment of connections between users displayed on their connection lists, and communication between users (Fuchs, 2011).

The essential feature of Facebook is the friendship relation between participants (Catanese, 2012). It consists, mainly, in a permission to consult each other's' friends list and posted content: news, photos, links, blog posts, etc. Such permission is mutual (Catanese, 2012) .

As a social network, Facebook allows registered users to manage their own presence, creating profiles, uploading photos and video, sending messages and keep in touch with their "friendship" network. As main features (Ashley & Rouse, 2013):

§ Fan Page - allow to create and promote a public page built around a specific topic.

§ Marketplace - allow to post, read and respond to classified ads.

§ Groups - allows members who have common interests to find each other and interact.

§ Events - allows members to publicize an event, invite guests and track who plans to attend.

§ Presence technology - allows members to see which contacts are online and chat.

Within each member's personal profile, there are several key networking components. The most popular is arguably the Wall, which is essentially a virtual bulletin board. Messages left on a member's Wall can be text, video or photos. Another popular component is the virtual Photo Album. Photos can be uploaded from the desktop or directly from a cell phone camera. There is no limitation on quantity, but Facebook staff will remove inappropriate or copyrighted images. An interactive album feature allows the member's contacts (who are called generically

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called "friends") to comment on each other's photos and identify (tag) people in the photos. Another popular profile component is Status Updates, a microblogging feature that allows members to broadcast short messages or announcements to their friends. All interactions are published in a newsfeed, which is distributed in real-time to the member's friends (Ashley & Rouse, 2013).

Facebook offers a range of privacy options to its members. A member can make all his communications visible to everyone, he can block specific connections, or he can keep all his communications private. Members can choose whether or not to be searchable, decide which parts of their profile are public, decide what not to put in their newsfeed and determine exactly who can see their posts. For those members who wish to use Facebook to communicate privately, there is a message feature, which closely resembles email (Fuchs, 2011).

Although founded in 2004, Facebook is now an opportunity to contact and engagement with consumers around the world, given the presence of about 1billion active users, of which 50% are daily users (Facebook, 2013).

## Instagram

Instagram is a free photo and video-sharing program and social network. This application service runs on mobile devices and personal computers. It enables users to take a photo or video, apply a digital filter to it, and then share it with other social network users (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other). Instagram has debuted by the end of 2010 as a photo sharing network but implemented support for video on June 2013. Actually, has become part of Facebook Group and has now more than 130 million monthly active users. Those users have shared 16 billion photos on the service since it launched in late 2010 and Liked 1 billion posts every day (Teresa Guarda, 2015).

Instagram users reveals six key trends emerged for application use: sharing, documentation, seeing, community, creativity and therapy. People wanted more than anything to exchange images with others throughout the network, find people with whom they had common interests, document the world around them and see provide "visual status updates" to their friends. A community evolved. People were excited about the visual social interaction and used Instagram as a creative outlet. They also found Instagram to be, in some ways, rather therapeutic (McCune, 2011).

Regarding business purposes Instagram team has developed a set of applications as follows (McCune, 2011):

§ Statisgram: statistics tool and account administration (personal or business). Enables to handle and manage photos easily, to insert comments and publish on other social networks. This tool, presents three main metrics (1) index of

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user involvement with the content, (2) index of user comments on your photos, and (3) rate of involvement of users that do not follow your account.

§ Nitrogram: a management tool. allows users to manage multiple accounts simultaneously. Generates intuitive charts, with data on the geographical distribution of users, tags most used and results among followers.

§ Instablast: sends a notification whenever a photograph is published in the accounts that you define, monitoring users and accounts.

## Forums

Discussion forums or from the beginning, chat rooms, were the very first open community on-line discussion place.

Actually, an Internet forum is an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. Each forum might contain several categories (subject oriented). Each category contains topics or threads (category-oriented discussion focus). Each thread contains individual contributions (posts). Forum contents are created by users or members, themselves hierarchy organized by their role and privileges (e.g., users, moderator or administrator). Also, depending on the access level of a user or the forum set-up, a posted message might need to be approved by a moderator before it becomes visible. Consequently, forum contents or contributions are hierarchical organized (tree structure) (Guarda, Santos, & Filipe Pinto, 2013)

Depending on the forum's settings policies, users can be anonymous or have to register with the forum and then subsequently log in in order to post messages.

The discussion forums are a valuable tool for promoting internet debates about certain themes or subjects. Forums also wholes a privileged space for the ideas exchange and explanations. Often there is a crossing of ideas that build or deconstruct, question or answer feeding, thus the collective intelligence through collaboration.

Mainly discussion forums are characterized by (Guarda, Santos, & Filipe Pinto, 2013):

(i)     an online environment for knowledge construction through contents submission
(ii)    a open space that stimulates the digital communication between participants
(iii)   to provide a space to strengthen interpersonal relationships, such as interactivity, cooperation, collaboration and affection,
(iv)    to be an environment where's one may submit reviews, suggestions, considerations and reflections.

From marketing perspective, forums are very interesting tool for

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(i)    customer support,
(ii)   to customers discuss products or services,
(iii)  to manage projects,
(iv)   for knowledge management (and sometimes, manipulation)

Nevertheless, forums are a very powerful social information media, due is paradigm: everybody contributes having in mind those others users will also post their opinions.

## Blog

Blog is a type of website that presents a framework that enables a quick update from articles or blog posts usually arranged in reverse chronological order. Also, it may be considered as a type of content management system that makes it easy for anyone to publish short articles called posts" (Zarrella, 2014) The popularity of blogging has increased significantly now that virtually anyone with Internet access can easily set up a blog with any of the numerous free tools available (Safko, 2009).

There are essentially three types of blog:

(i)    personnel, who act as online diary,
(ii)   the corporate or organizational and
(iii)  that address particular theme or subject in particular (gender blogs)

A blog has as main function to keep informed their followers, being an inexpensive tool and easy to maintain, with the disadvantage of requiring a constant update time and (Lehtimäki, 2019). The typical blogs combine text, images and links to other blogs or want to webpages related to the topic.

A key component of Blogs is its interaction with the reader, as it allows the constant monitoring and participation through comments.

It is estimated that there are over 152 million blogs (Fagundes, 2010). Relation to users, it is confirmed that more than 389 million people are attending the blogs in more than 13.3 million pages per month. Currently it is posted over 500,000 posts and 400,000 comments made per day (Munar A. M., 2014).

The main themes of blogs are mainly focused on: art, photography and videos or music.

In the business, it is estimated that about 60% of companies worldwide have a blog. However, only 35% of them are updated at least once a month (Munar A. M., 2014). The success of blogs is measured taking into account the number of subscribers and their comments (Lehtimäki, 2019). Actually, many of the marketers are using blogs to access the information what others say about their companies

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and large number of the people are using blogs for their marketing purposes in their marketing strategies (Scott, 2017).

The most common blog platforms are Worldpress, blogger, Tumblr + TypePad Posterous - 16%, and (4th) Others - 6% (Munar A. M., 2014).

## Youtube

YouTube is a web portal application where it's possible to share video clips. It was founded in 2005. YouTube users might upload own videos, see the videos from others and comment on them although there are limitations on how big the videos might be. The videos vary from movie clips, blogging, music videos to ads. To upload videos user must have to be registered and obey to specific terms and conditions. However, everyone may see the videos. Actually, youtube has more than two billion of registered users (youtube, 2019).

YouTube search engine may be used through different criteria such as: relevance, time of upload and rating. YouTube uses what they call "buzz targeting" algorithm. This algorithm determines which video that is about to go viral. It looks at different things such as: acceleration of views, favorites and ratings (Jakobsen, 2009). Advertisers can therefore target their ads specifically to these videos that have high potential to be popular in the future.

Youtube is actually a global society paradigm, it is the 3rd most visited world website and the second search engine used. Everyday people are watching more than one billion of videos on YouTube and uploading hundreds of thousand videos. Every minute more than one hundredhours of video is uploaded. According to statistics page, Youtube had more than 100 million streams and more than more than one billion of unique streams in September 2018. (youtube, 2019)

Within marketing perspective YouTube is an excellent vehicle for communication since enables multimedia for all kinds of circumstances, allowing, as example to an user to access to an illustrative or demonstrative video. One of the best examples are the promotional touristic videos or presentations of products or services.

## Search Engine

Search engines are software programs aggregators and classifiers of all the information available on the web. Simplifying, search engines have a similar function to a librarian on a library: whine ones need to reach a publication or information he knows very well where it is. Instead of asking the librarian, say, Jaguar and having her direct you to those resources, now it's only needed to type in Jaguar, and the search engines respond with links to the resources on that topic available on the web. Those links

(sometimes accomplished with some texts or images) are the Search Engine Results (Hubspot, 2013)

There are two different groups of search engine results: sponsored results (paid results), which is a term for results that an advertiser paid to show up on that page; and there are organic results, which means the entry is there by virtue of the relevance of its web content and the repetition of certain keywords on its web pages (Munar A. M., 2014).

Search Engine Marketing (SEM), a term used to describe all marketing strategies for search. SEM entails both organic and paid search. With paid search, you can pay to list your website on a search engine so that your website shows up when someone types in a specific keyword or phrase (Lutze, 2009) (Munar A. M., 2014). Organic and paid listings both appear on the search engine, but they are displayed in different locations on the page. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the way in which a search marketer attempts to influence the search engines in making their determinations about what constitutes a relevant result for a search. The "optimization" objective concerns a strategy that involves organizing a website properly adapted for search engines. It requires that web masters need to write, to publish and to link contents in optimized for search engines discovery maximizing the chances to get a good position under the search terms where they want to be found. This search process is totally independent from web masters work. They don't have control over whether, where, when, and how to appear on any given results page under any given keyword (Hubspot, 2013). This is much important such as the first set of results receive more than 90% of users' selection (click).

## Chatbot

The chatbot is a program or application that is developed to perform and simulate online conversations with a real person through digital ways (Munar A. M., 2014). Chatbot programs might be developed for a specific purpose (livechat) and particular usage (running within a company's website por instance) or connected to social network, such as Facebook messenger or Whatsapp. Instead of chatting with a live person, chatbots simulate a conversation by asking questions and funneling answers down a pre-determined path. It behaves on the following manner:

§ Chatbots conduct chats in any chat service such as Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Slack or livechat among many other cases.
§ They run scripts that are automatized and operate off of rules – You are essentially chatting with a bot vs. a real person
§ They have a wide variety of applications – They can be used for fun or functionally to help you solve problems.

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Generally, chatbots allows users to quickly and easily navigate to what they want via text. Well-designed chatbots do this in a way that is easier and faster than any automated application system and provide better user experiences.

More sophisticated and well developed chatbot has "conversations" with own programs that uses artificial intelligence to learn and answer users' questions better over time. Depending on that sophistication level, some chatbots can handle open questions or conversations such as "What is my balance?" or "How do I make a chocolate cake?". The promise of chatbots is that they will be able to understand natural language and provide users with an easy way to find what they want. In a perfect world, it should be like talking to a person (although most Chatbots aren't there yet).

Nevertheless, chatbots aren't just a way to automate chat conversations – by using advanced programming they can provide meaningful experiences to users.

## DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY PROPOSAL

The Digital Marketing Strategy Development was created considering the following marketing premises:

(i)   Marketing is a science that thinks the market in order to attain a defined target for some organization purposes;
(ii)  Marketing aims to achieve customers or consumers;
(iii) Nowadays consumers or customers work, communicate, live or share experiences through technology applications;
(iv)  Marketing must be developed towards where consumers or costumers are, that is, on the web.

Therefore, digital marketing would be definitively a possible solution for organizations'with marketing problems. Since digital marketing requires further work besides web sites or applications development, the proposed model is based in three levels (Figure 1):

● Web dots and applications objectives: Web marketing strategy is performed over a set of organizations, product or service "web dots" (e.g. web site, micro site, blog, microblog, landing page, product page, social media page, youtube channel, promotion page among others) where related specifications, promotions or any other information subject is available. Each page, site or application has to have a function within the overall web marketing strategy. That is, while the main Cabo Verde tourism portal represents the institutional

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*Figure 1. Strategy framework overview*



reference acting as a central information delivery, some youtube channel may exist in order to demonstrate some activities or illustration of Cabo Verde territory.

- Contents: Since any website or application needs too much work on backoffice to remain "still alive" throughout the time pass, a contents production approach needs to be developed. Hence, regarding each "dot" belonging to the group, contents needs to be developed. Contents production is technology dependent, e.g. for YouTube channel, video contents should be delivered (Guarda, Santos, & Filipe Pinto, 2013).

- Though its technology dependence, contents are required to act in a context of marketing objective. Thus, regarding each marketing campaign, normally a newly set of contents (re) required to be produced. Main contents items include: text documents (clearly adapted to the web platform or application); video (short or full length movies regarding their purposes); general multimedia contents (animated presentations, video schemas or audio and video objects); reference (adequate contents for sharing or cite purposes, may include some technical reports, demonstration documents or videos among others); rating (get rating results on web related platforms or applications); and, message (improve communication skills through message politics – adapted to technology, platform and targeted audience).

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*Figure 2. digital marketing actions development*
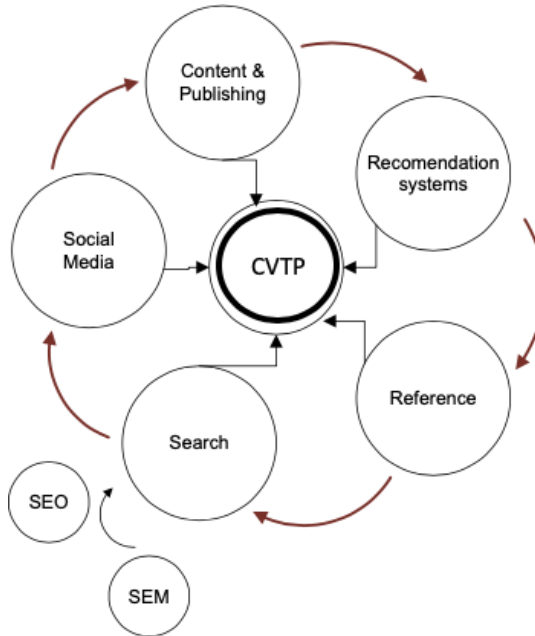


- Dynamics: Dynamics are the oxygen to any web marketing strategy. Without dynamics any web presence success would be fully compromised. Hence, it is compulsory to have an active and actual message feed over the web. It is required to establish a contents dynamic, focusing all organization, product or service "web dot". This dynamics include all kind of link building (links between any other organization web dot or application); opinion author (documented opinion shared and delivered through an important outlook channels); reference statement (positives information gathered from reference sites must be amplified); information (continuously at a reasonable rate target audience feed); landing pages (lead converting pages development); mobile activity (mobile messages, application contents); geo reference actions (get in touch whenever and wherever with context oriented information); or action triggers (preprogrammed set of actions to be activated by target audience in a pre-defined expected action: email click) (T. Guarda, 2017).

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# DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

Once defined a general framework, the next step focuses on the practice based on digital marketing tools. Since the objective of this work it is to study a low cost proposal, there were only considered applications that may be used on the basis of free of charge.

Henceforth, pondered digital marketing tools encompasses two main operational characteristics:

- Low cost resources: mostly of web applications have the possibility to be explored through free access permissions. Often, in many cases, in order to execute some digital marketing tools, it just needs to have access to some applications functionalities which many times are available free of charge.
- Time consuming. Notwithstanding from free of charge, mostly of web applications are extensive time consuming. Hence, the common place for web marketing tools: free of charge but time expensive.

We had considered Cabo Verde as a small country with sparse human, technological or financial resources. Thus, marketing strategy based on web technologies promises to be an interesting and possible way for Cabo Verde tourism agency and local operators.

Cabo Verde tourism digital marketing strategy is conceived on follow strands (Figure 2):

- CVT tourism portal: National Cabo Verde tourism agency has a portal that will gather all information from local or national operators. The tourism portal will act as the heart for all country global communication strategy;
- Content and publishing: nowadays technologies are based on contents consuming. That is users spend most of their time trying to reach the expected information;
- Recommendation systems: one of the most interesting paradigms on the web communities is the possibility of the users to rate their experiences. Therefore, organizations must handle with care most of rating levels posted by users;
- Social Media: probably one the icons of actual web technologies state of the art. Social media encompasses all relations among users connected through social networks. This new social paradigm is a powerful option for those organizations with enough backoffice support ready to accomplish and answer in almost real time;

- Reference: references applications and web sites have become popular since users may rate, evaluate and share their experiences related to some product or service;

- Search engine: search engines embody them self's the actual internet. Nowadays is almost universally assumed that users use search engine applications for almost everything that they want to do but they don't know how to do it. Such mass behavior has empowered search engine results as one of the most important applications on technology society and turned them as a benchmark. Over search engines it is performed two kinds of marketing activities: SEM (search engine marketing: marketing developed within search engine application) and SEO (search engine optimization: web sites presence programming efforts in order to appear on the first search engine organics' results).

Based on above model, the general overview for digital marketing his depicted on Figure 3.

Tourism portal it has to be the digital center for all Cabo Verde's tourism related activity. Hence all published or shared contents should have at the end (or incorporated on it) a link to the CVT tourism portal. Therefore, it would be expectable that all performed marketing activities would conduct targeted audience to the web site.

Regarding Ecotourism marketing activities it is proposed to use the follow platforms: Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Blog

*Figure 3. General digital marketing actions overview*



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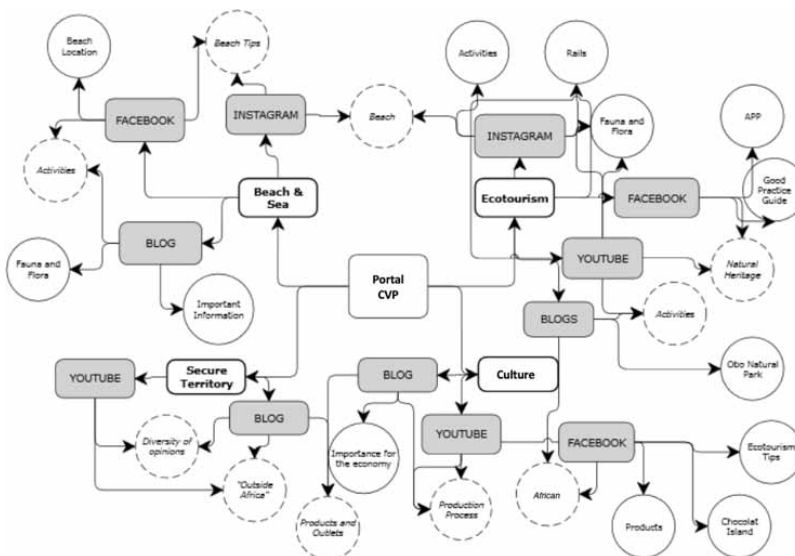
Downing from the theory to the practice it will be used Ecotourism thread (depicted on Figure 4) to demonstrate how does the digital marketing tools work on a Cabo Verde's tourism marketing campaign.

*Figure 4. Ecotourism web technologies adoption*
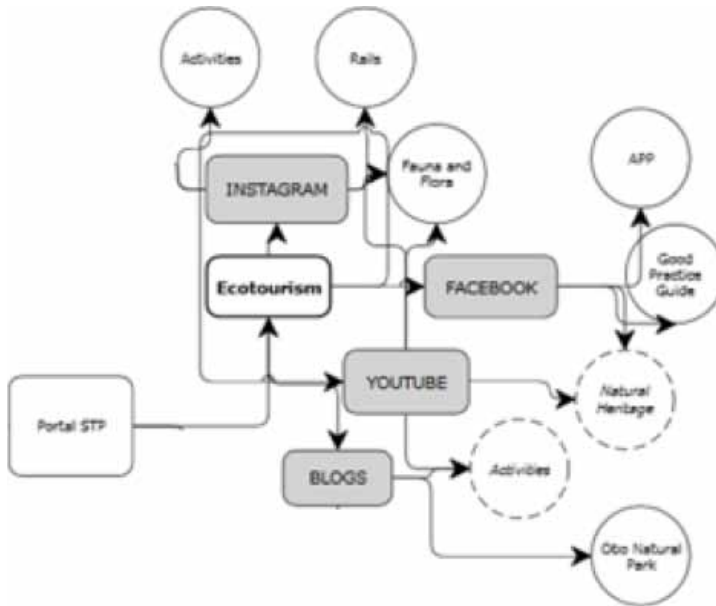


Instagram may reveal a very interesting and powerful marketing instrument for tourism purposes. Using Instagram, the objective focuses on transmitting powerful images of Cabo Verde Fauna, Flora, interesting trails, related sports among many others. Each published photo will have content links for two (at least) others web places blog and YouTube. The former will be used as proper source for more reliable information. YouTube will be considered as destination link of each photo regarding practical place information, such as how to reach the see sight as displayed on photo or a demonstration marketing interests related to the photo contents. By the end of these threaded contents users will always be routed to Cabo Verde tourism portal.

Facebook application platform is very common for tourists' status update or posting. Having such behavior wits, it is suggested to create a set of Cabo Verde tourism Facebook Fan Page and to promote it among a targeted audience in different approaches:

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- Actual or new coming visitors, inviting and urging them to post on their personal page an updated status. This visitor's profile would be target by means of direct communication through hotels, travel agencies or on their arrival at local airport. Regarding the success of such activity a series of rewarded actions would be defined;
- Past visitors, through a contact database created by contacting agencies or hotels where they would have been house during their stay at Cabo Verde. Them, through a direct contact, by email or social media, they would be invited to post, their best images, videos or comments about their Cabo Verde visit;
- Potential visitors, through a specific facebook campaign through ad services or sponsored events. Every post should have a link for specifics' landing pages where potential visitors may register for further information.

Cabo Verde tourism pages would have to have many links and documentation support, such as tourism guides, maps or even specific events for fans.

On YouTube, Cabo Verde tourism authorities would have to start a channel video regarding incoming links from produced contents or incoming links. As such, those videos must be developed with quality enough to be shared or included at any other web site.

The blog system would be the Cabo Verde contents' battle field. Blogging allows to tourism players to reinforce their arguments and introduce their hot points. Regarding Ecotourism, it would be created three different blogs: one for fauna, another for flora and a third for outstanding trips and discovery challenges inside Cabo Verde territory. These blogs should be updated every week with contents and links for each other institutional web dot.

## CONCLUSION

Tourism is a challenge for their actors. As exposed to attract and to get visitors for a touristic place, it is nowadays a global challenge. This work developed a possible tourism strategy for a territory with sparse resources. As explained, such approach uses web technologies and actual paradigms for visitor's engagement in order to explore their word of mouth. Besides, the used strategy also includes a possible strategy to potential visitors, through social media and related applications.

Actually, to the best of our knowledge, there is not any digital strategy for Cabo Verde tourism territory. This study has demonstrated how it would be possible to adopt and develop such strategies with low resources consumption. Regarding research questions, it has been established that it is possible to develop and maintain a digital

marketing strategy for Cabo Verde territory. Also, it has also been revealed how should web tools and techniques be used in order to bring closer users' preferences through promoted dynamics based on contents shared and link building strategy.

Regarding future work, authors expect and increasing web marketing activity from Cabo Verde authorities and therefore the possibility to validate and to refine possible strategies for any others specific sectors.

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Chapter 8

# Marketing to Gamers:
## The Effects of Video Game Streams on Consumer Attitudes and Behaviors

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## ABSTRACT

*Video game streaming has introduced to consumers a new method of creating branded content. Popular streaming platforms receive millions of broadcasters and viewers every month, and the current chapter examines the influence of this type of user-generated content on consumers' attitudes and behaviors. The goal of this study is to understand how video game streams function as a marketing tool. To investigate this, a quantitative survey was designed and measured participants' video gaming habits and their perceptions of credibility, usefulness of content, group identification, and purchase intention. Heavier gaming habits were found to be positively related to perceived credibility in a user-generated stream condition. Group identification and stream familiarity were found to be positively related to perceived credibility. These findings hold implications for using video game streams as a marketing tool as heavier gamers were found to perceive user-generated streams as a credible source of information.*

## INTRODUCTION

Video game streaming has become a popular source of video game information and entertainment, as it allows viewers to see actual video gameplay in real-time. Attracting more than 100 million unique viewers each month, *Twitch* (2016*)* is arguably the most popular streaming platform (About *Twitch*, 2016). *Twitch* (2016) gives video gamers a platform to broadcast feed of their own video game play, which can include commentary from the streamer in the form of voice only or a composited video featuring the streamer. Each stream also has its own chat room, where viewers can interact with other viewers and the streamer. *Twitch* (2016) can be considered a social media, describing itself as a social video platform for gamers.

Game streaming has introduced a new method to consumers for creating branded content (Holt, 2016). Positive, organic, and brand-centric content generated by consumers, such as game streams, is believed to positively influence brand equity and consumer attitudes towards the brand (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Game developers benefit from the marketing streaming provides. Walker (2014) labeled streaming as a form of crowdsourcing by the video game industry, as streamers are essentially providing marketing for video game titles through their streams and blurring the boundaries between consumer and producer (Bauer & Gengenhuber, 2015). However, the most popular streamers can earn income by partnering with *Twitch* (2016) and receiving a portion of ad revenue, sponsorships, and subscriptions and donations from stream viewers (Aaron, 2015).

*Twitch* (2016) and other streaming platforms are popular sources for consumers interested in video games to gather game-related information Streaming platforms have managed to achieve significant engagement levels with video game titles, as millions of people are engaging with video games in real time through playing and spectating (Smith, 2014). Social streaming platforms facilitate brand engagement by allowing consumers to create branded content and socialize around that content. Highly engaging consumer-generated content that is distributed through social media is valuable to brands (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Video game companies should begin incorporating streams into their digital marketing strategy if they have not already, because streams can highly influence consumers' product-purchasing decisions (Pearson, 2014). For example, within the first week of the release of *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* (2014), developed by Activision, there were 75,000 unique broadcasters, 6 million viewers, and a total of 327 million minutes watched on *Twitch* (2016), making it the most streamed console game, at that time, on *Twitch* (2016*)* during its first week of release (Evangelho, 2014). This is significant because video game publisher Activision had 6 million unique earned brand impressions. Streaming could potentially influence consumers' decision to buy a game, and every game stream acts as an advertisement for the game (Harper, 2013).

Streaming is becoming increasingly popular as the technology and software to broadcast game footage is accessible to anyone who owns a computer or the newest generation of gaming consoles. Sony's PlayStation and Microsoft's Xbox have made broadcasting game footage simple with the inclusion of streaming-enabled technology in the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One, which predicted an increase in *Twitch* traffic and time spent on the site (Ewalt, 2013). According to *Twitch's* (2016*)* 2015 Retrospective report, over 1.7 million unique broadcasters streamed in 2015, and over 241 billion minutes were spent watching streamed content. All content on *Twitch* is not strictly video gameplay, however, the majority of content is game-related in some way, whether it be from game developers/publishers, video game media sites, conventions, eSport tournaments, and charity events.

It is evident that video game streaming exposes millions of viewers to branded video game content, and facilitates social interactions between users across the world. However, little research exists on whether or not this branded content affects consumer behavior. The objectives of the current study are to determine whether video game streams influence purchase intentions of viewers, and to assess how video game streams function as a form of marketing for video game titles. Literature on this phenomenon is limited, and this study will help gain insights into the effects that video game streams have on viewers' attitudes and behaviors, and where video game streams fit into a digital marketing strategy.

## User-Generated Content

While little research exists on the effects of video game streaming on consumers' purchase intentions, research has found that user-generated content (UGC) is considered a credible and reliable source of information among consumers (Flanagin et al., 2013; Heinonen, 2011; Zhu & Zhang, 2009). Researchers have also compared the effects of UGC and marketer- and professional-generated content on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Goh et al., 2011; Flanagin et al., 2013). Popularity of UGC and the products at the center of UGC have also been found to influence consumers' perceptions of the message and product (Zhu & Zhang, 2009). This section will review relevant research of variables that influence consumer perceptions of UGC, the influence of UGC compared to content created by marketers and professionals, and the effects of the three types of content on consumer behavior and attitudes.

## Credibility

Several variables have been found to influence the perceived credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of UGC among consumers. Flanagin, Hocevar, and Samahito

(2013) found that group identification is a determining variable in consumers' perceived credibility of UGC, and willingness to act on the information learned. The researchers had undergraduate students visit a social media site containing user-generated content, and examined how group identification affected the students' willingness to contribute information to site and how credible the students perceived the UGC to be. Findings suggested that the students found information contributed by others similar to them more credible, and are more likely to act on the given information. Students were also more motivated to contribute information if they knew users would be similar to them. These findings are significant and noteworthy for the current study because audiences who play games may be more likely to perceive streams as an accurate portrayal of the video game if they identify with the streamer. Heinonen (2011) also found that consumers perceived UGC to be a reliable source of information, and sought UGC for product information, to collect factual information, share information and experiences, news surveillance, and applying knowledge. UGC was determined to be a reliable source to get opinions of products, and the researcher concluded that as the influence of UGC increases, the influence of marketing communication decreases. If these conclusions stand true, video game streams may be a more influential form of marketing compared to traditional marketing content developed by the brand.

Consumers' experience with Internet has also been found to affect perceived credibility of UGC. To understand how online consumer reviews impacted video game sales, Zhu and Zhang (2009) collected data from player reviews on a popular gaming site. Online reviews were found to be more influential for consumers who had greater experience with the Internet, as users with more Internet experience are better able to determine if the information is reliable and credible compared to consumers with little Internet experience. Applying this finding to the context of video game streams, it is possible regular stream viewers may be better able to accurately determine reliability and credibility of streams compared to those who have less experience viewing video game streams.

## UGC v. Marketer-Generated Content

While UGC has been found to be a reliable, trustworthy, and credible source among consumers, researchers have compared how UGC and marketer-generated content (MGC) functions with consumers. Goh, Heng, and Lin (2013) compared the effects of content generated by the brand and UGC on consumers' purchase intentions in the context of social media. The researchers examined interactions on an apparel retailer's social media page, observing posts and comments made by consumers and the brand. First, the researchers found that engagement with brand communities on social media affected consumers' purchase behavior. UGC and content generated from

the brand differ in that consumers used both informative and persuasive techniques to influence other consumers, whereas brand-generated content primarily used persuasive techniques to influence consumers. UGC was found to be 22 times more effective in persuading consumers. However, since the two types of content function differently for the consumer, the researchers suggested that marketers should find the right combination of both types of content for an effective marketing strategy.

Researchers have also studied the influence of professional opinions on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Cox and Kaimann (2014) compared the influence of reviews from both professional critics and regular consumers on video game sales by collecting data for 1,480 games from the review site Metacritic. Contradictory to other findings on UGC and word-of-mouth advertising, the researchers found that reviews from professional critics had a greater effect on consumer behavior than consumer reviews and attributed this finding to the possibility that reviews from professional critics are often available before the release of a video game. Consumer reviews, however, are only available after the game has been released. Another possible explanation is that content generated by professionals are neither considered user-generated nor marketer-generated. Content generated by professionals may have its own influence on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

Research has also found that consumers become more critical of advertisements if given information signifying the creator of the ad (Steyn, Ewing, Heerden, Pitt, & Windiwsh, 2011). To understand how source effects influence consumers' perceptions of advertisements, the researchers played the same advertisement for six test groups, but the ads were labeled differently to test for the influence of source effects. Groups were given labels that signified the ad was either created by consumers or marketers. The researchers found that respondents were more critical of the ad when they were given information that signified who created the ad and their motivation for creating it, and respondents were less critical when the label did not signify the creator or motive. Results did not suggest that consumers were more critical of consumer ads than marketer ads or vice versa. For the current study, it will be critical to provide participants with information signifying to who created the content to earn a more critical response from participants.

## Popularity of UGC

The popularity of consumer-generated advertisements has been found to influence consumer behavior. Steyn et al. (2011) also examined the influence of popularity on consumers' perceptions of advertisements. Participants who viewed the ad with a label signifying that the ad was unpopular consequently evaluated the ad more negatively, whereas ads that were labeled as popular were evaluated more positively.

In relation to the current study, it could mean that popular streams may have more of an influence on viewers' purchase intentions than less popular streams.

Not only does popularity of the UGC influence consumer attitudes, but the popularity of the advertised product also affects consumer attitudes. Dhar and Chang (2009) examined the impact of UGC on album sales by observing the amount of blog chatter that was generated regarding the album, prior to the album's release date. A positive correlation was found between the amount of blog chatter and album sales. Whether the artist was signed to a major label or not was also a predictor of album sales, where artists signed to major labels sold more albums than those signed to independent labels. The researchers attribute this finding partly to the popularity of the artist, and suggest that record labels use blogs as a predictor of future album sales. Research has also found that UGC has influenced sales of less popular video games more so than popular video games (Zhu & Zhang, 2009). These studies hold important implications for the video game industry. The amount of Internet chatter surrounding video game titles before their release date may help predict sales. Streaming may also more positively influence sales of less popular or lesser-known game titles compared to more popular titles.

## Streaming

Little research exists on the effects of streamed video game content on consumers' purchase intentions, but researchers have studied the characteristics of streams and streamers, and spectators' motives for viewing streams. The following section will review existing literature on stream and streamer characteristics, as well as viewers' motives for watching streams.

## Stream and Streamer Characteristics

Understanding the various types of streams and streamers is important when examining how consumer behavior is potentially influenced. Researchers have identified three types of streaming communities: eSports, Let's Play, and Speedrunning (Smith, Obrist, & Wright, 2013). The most popular live-streaming community is the eSports community, where viewers watch highly competitive matches or tournaments, often played by professional video game players who belong to professional leagues. eSports and professional gamers are often the center *Twitch* (2016) featured channels, where larger organizations broadcast tournaments, league games, or a daily show. The second most popular streaming community is Let's Play. Let's Play videos are often more casual that than eSport, where the skill level of the player is not as important as the experience the streamer provides for viewers. Lastly, the third most popular

streaming community is Speedrunning, which consists of players racing to beat a game in as little time as possible.

Different types of streamers exist within these streaming communities. Walker (2014) posited that streamers exist on a continuum from passive to active, where active streamers are those who invest time, money, and effort into their stream to create an engaging and entertaining atmosphere. Active streamers are those who have installed additional technology and software that enable special effects, commentary, and composited videos of the streamer. On the other end of the continuum lies passive streamers who broadcast their gameplay with minimum equipment necessary. Passive streamers are those who may simply broadcast their gameplay from their gaming console with no added effects nor commentary.

## Motives for Viewing Streams

Streams function differently among viewers. To understand who viewers are and why they view video gameplay, Cheung and Huang (2011) collected data from viewers of Blizzard Entertainment's *StarCraft* (1998), a popular real-time strategy game and eSport. The researchers discovered several motives for viewing video game streams. Motives for watching streams included, but were not limited to, learning about a game, socializing with the streamer and/or other viewers, and entertainment. These findings are mentionable and relevant to the current study, as they illustrate that streams act as a source of information for viewers interested in a game, and could possibly influence whether the viewer purchases a game.

Video game streams have also been recognized as platforms that facilitate socialization among those with shared identities, and communities build around streams that vary in size, from intimate to massive, and from amateur to professional (Hamilton, Garretson, & Kerne, 2014). Stream communities form around shared identities, and streams help facilitate interaction between those who share an identity. As Rodriguez (2015) stated, "gamers are passionate and have strong online communities" (para.18). Since research has found that group identification influences perceived credibility of UGC, group identification may be a variable that influences viewers' perceived credibility of a video game streams.

## Gamer Identities

When examining the effects of video game streams on viewers, it is also critical to define and understand the different types of gamer identities. Shaw (2012) sought to understand factors that determine if people who play games identify as gamers. Through interviews conducted with "hardcore gamers, casual gamers, and everyone in between" (p.32), the researcher found that other factors such as gender, race, and

sexuality determined whether people who played video games identified as a gamer. Gender was shown to have more influence on who identified as a gamer than the other two variables. Males were more likely to identify as gamers. Negative connotations that surround the term 'gamer' also influenced how interviewees self-identified, as the term 'gamer' has been somewhat stigmatized in the past.

However, the stereotype of gaming is alleviating as video games are permeating more households (Rodriguez, 2015). According the Entertainment Software Association's (2018) annual report on sales, demographic, and usage data in the video game industry, there are 2.6 billion video game players worldwide and $29.1 billion was spent on games in 2017. Fifty-five percent of those players were male, and players 18 and older made up 70 percent of the gamer population. The ESA's 2015 data also showed that word of mouth and product reviews on video game websites influenced decisions to purchase video games. Marketing to gamers requires a new strategy, as the gamer audience is "extremely media literate and highly cynical about conventional marketing ploys...gamers are, by their very nature, proactive and think of themselves as different from their passive, TV-viewing parents and grandparents" (Farrand, Nichols, Rowley, & Avery, 2006, p.10).

Games and gamers can vary from casual to hardcore. Tuten and Solomon (2015) assert that casual games are easy to learn, easy to access, and require minimum skill levels and minimum time commitment. The Nintendo Wii has been labeled a gaming system for casual gamers, and games like *Guitar Hero* (2005) from Harmonix can be considered casual games (Juul, 2010). Mobile and downloadable games have also revolutionized casual gaming, such as King's *Candy Crush* (2012) and *Bejeweled* (2001) by PopCap Games, While easy-to-play game systems and games have distorted the lines between casual gamers and from hardcore gamers, hardcore gamers often spend many consecutive hours playing games, sometimes the same game (PR Newswire, 2007; Loporcaro, Ortega, & Egnoto, 2014). Hardcore games require a much greater time commitment, higher skill level, and are much more immersive. Ip and Jacobs (2004) differentiated between the two groups by measuring gaming knowledge and attitudes, playing habits, and buying habits among gamers. Hardcore gamers were characterized by having high levels of knowledge about the video game industry and a desire for game-related information. The researchers also discovered that hardcore gamers find exhilaration in the process of defeating a game, engage in discussions about games in online forums, and take creative their own creative liberties by modifying or extending games. It is also believed that hardcore gamers are a small, elite segment of the gaming culture (Loporcaro et al, 2014).

Along with hardcore and casual gamer identities, Neys, Jansz, and Tan (2014) identify a third type gamer identity: the heavy gamer. The researchers measured gamers' Gamer Identity Strength (GIS), where gamer identities were assigned based on the number of hours played per day and number of days played per week. On

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average, hardcore gamers were discovered to play video games 26 hours per week, heavy gamers played approximately 18.5 hours per week, and casual gamers spent approximately 9.5 hours per week playing video games. Hardcore gamers played games on approximately six days in a week, heavy gamers played on approximately five days per week, and casual gamers played on approximately 3.5 days per week.

It is important to keep in mind that game types and gamer identities exist on a continuum, and each gamer does not neatly fit into a category. Juul (2010) notes that some gamers who would typically be considered casual, play casual games for lengths of time that mirror hardcore habits. Also, some video games are neither considered casual or hardcore, but exist somewhere in the middle. Open world and non-linear games such as *Grand Theft Auto V* (2013) by Rockstar Games and *Skyrim* (2011) by Bethesda Softworks allow casual and hardcore players to essentially do whatever they want in the game, and play the game for however long they desire.

## Marketing in the Video Game Industry

It has been illustrated that different gaming audiences exist within the video game culture, therefore it is also critical to examine how each market is being reached by the video game industry. Several studies have yielded results that holds managerial implications for marketing to the different types of gamers in the video game industry. Video games should be marketed to gamers based on their gaming habits, attitudes, and experience with video games. Ips and Jacob (2004) suggest that the marketing to gamers should not only be based on whether they are casual or hardcore, but each group's attitudes and experiences should also be taken into consideration when marketing video games.

While attitudes and experiences are valuable, researchers have found that different types of gamers prefer different genres of games. After studying casual and hardcore gamers' genre preferences and gratifications in gaming, Scharkow, Festl, Vogelgesang, and Quandt (2015) found that strategy games were the most popular among all types of gamers. However, the researchers ascertain action and shooter games were more highly-preferred by hardcore gamers, while puzzle and card games were preferred more by casual gamers. Similarly, Loporcaro, Ortega, & Egnoto (2014) believe that hardcore gamers tend to play first-person shooter games, violent games, and games with a formidable main character, and are least likely to play puzzle games, family games, or games with a non-intimidating main character. Fritsch, Voight, and Schiller (2006) also characterize hardcore players as playing real-time strategy games such as *League of Legends* (2009) from Riot Games, online multiplayer role playing games like *World of Warcraft* (2004) from Blizzard Entertainment, and first-person shooters such as *Counter Strike: Global Offensive* (2012) by Hidden Path Entertainment and Valve Corporation.

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Types of genres preferred were also found to be dependent on age and gender (Scharkow et al., 2015). Older gamers mostly preferred puzzle and card games, while younger gamers displayed stronger preferences toward all other genres. Young male players showed stronger preferences towards action and shooting games, while older females preferred puzzle and card games. It was also discovered that males in general preferred strategy, sport, simulation, and action games more so than females. Researchers have also reiterated that motives to use games vary among gamers, and the motives dictate what types of games are played, Kim, Park, Kim, Moon, and Chun (2002) identified sociability and entertainment the two most prominent motives in playing online games. Gamers were motivated to play multiplayer and role-playing games because they allow players to socialize. Shooting games were primarily played because they entertained the player. Simulation games were played for both social and entertainment purposes. This information is useful to marketers of online games, as the researchers suggest that marketers should seek to understand consumer motives and what motivates consumers to play specific types of games.

While gamers should be targeted by marketers based on gaming habits, motives, experiences, attitudes, and preferences, it is also important to understand how the video game industry is utilizing consumer-generated content as a marketing tool. As previously stated, online reviews have been found to be more influential for less popular games, perhaps because of the absence of information on less popular games (Zhu & Zhang, 2009). The researchers suggest that marketers of less popular games should invest more resources into online consumer reviews. Also, while consoles are now offering games that are only available digitally, consumers seek information online regarding the products and "it is therefore crucial for niche product producers to devote their marketing effort to online review systems when they take advantage of online channels to sell their products" (p.28). Kimura (2015) examined the effects of word of mouth advertising, traditional advertising, forward serialization, and backward serialization on video games series sales. The researcher defines forward serialization as an instance in which the first game in a series influences first-week sales of the second game, and backward serialization as an instance in which sales of subsequent games in a series affect sales of the first game (p.67). Word-of-mouth advertising on social media was found to be more influential for the first game in a video game series, and was unlikely to affect sales of the second game title. Sales of the second title were more heavily influenced by forward serialization and traditional advertising. Kimura (2015) suggests that marketers create social media campaigns to generate word-of-mouth advertising for the first title in a game series, but use traditional advertising strategies to promote a second title in a series. These findings hold implications for the current study, as *Twitch* streams could act as a form of word-of-mouth advertising for video games. Streamers could potentially act as reviewers for video games that influence consumers' purchase intentions.

## Elaboration Likelihood Model

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) can be used to understand consumers' attitudes towards streams, and their purchase intentions after viewing streams. ELM suggests that different methods of persuasion should be used depending on whether the elaboration likelihood of the communication interaction is high or low, and "as an issue or product increases in personal relevance or consequences, it becomes more important and adaptive to forming a reasoned and veridical opinion" (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983, p.137).

There are two routes of processing that are used for high and low elaboration likelihood, which are the central route and peripheral route, respectively. Audiences viewing persuasive messages using the central route to persuasion exert a high amount of cognitive effort to process the message by referring to prior experience or knowledge regarding the subject and carefully scrutinizing all evidence presented (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). The peripheral route to persuasion is used when audiences exert little cognitive effort when viewing a message, and "simple cues in the persuasion context can influence attitudes" (p.135). Cheng and Ho (2015) define the central route to persuasion as argument quality, and the peripheral route to persuasion as source credibility.

Many researchers have used the framework of ELM to guide their studies, but little research exists on the persuasive effects of video game streams on viewers' willingness to buy the video game. However, researchers have employed ELM to study the effects consumers' perceptions of UGC. Source effects such as creator of ads and the motive for creation have been found to affect the peripheral route to persuasion, and consumers became more critical of ads when they were given clues as to who created ads and the motive for creation (Steyn et al., 2011). Consumers are less critical of ads if the creator and motive are unknown, however, several factors have been found to influence consumers' perceptions of UGC and the effects of UGC on consumers' behavior and attitudes. After performing a content analysis on 1000 online restaurant reviews, Cheng and Ho (2015) concluded that the peripheral route, or source credibility, was more useful to consumers than the central route, or argument quality, when reading online restaurant reviews. The researchers also found that trustworthiness and expertise influenced perceived credibility. The more followers' reviewers had, the more trustworthy they were perceived to be. Reviewers that demonstrated a high level of expertise were also perceived to be more useful. Even though source credibility was found to be more important to consumers compared to argument quality, perceived usefulness of a review in terms of argument quality was positively correlated with the number of images and words used.

These findings are consistent with Wu and Wang's (2010) findings that indicated source credibility in electronic word-of-mouth communication influences consumers'

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brand trust, brand attitudes, brand affection, and purchase intention. The researchers examined the influence of rational and emotional appeals contained in electronic word-of-mouth advertisements and source credibility on consumers' brand attitudes. The degree of product involvement was also found to influence consumers' perceptions of a message, where messages with rational appeals that use the central route to persuasion are more effective for consumers with high product involvement. Neither rational nor emotional appeals were found to have a significant difference on consumers' brand attitudes with low product involvement.

ELM and the routes to persuasion can be applied to the current study to understand if video game streams influence consumers' purchase intentions. The central route to persuasion requires consumers to have prior knowledge and experience regarding the product, and consumers require more evidence than simple cues before forming an attitude towards the product. It is possible that video game streams are a credible source of information among gamers, whereas the peripheral route may be more influential among casual or non-gamers. Gamers may be more apt to form an attitude towards a video game after viewing a user-generated stream that displays different aspects of the video game. On the other hand, casual or non-gamers who are less involved with video games may be more influenced by traditional advertising or marketer-generated content.

Reviews of relevant literature illustrates that user-generated content (UGC) is often perceived as more credible, reliable, and trustworthy compared to content created by the brand (Heinonen, 2011). The objective of the current study is to learn if video game streams has the potential to influence consumer behavior and attitudes. To learn how viewers will perceive the streams, it is important to learn each viewer's gamer identity and how each identity can be influenced.

It is critical to identify types of gamers when seeking to learn how video game streams affect their purchase intentions. Researchers have established casual, heavy, and hardcore as primary gamer identities. On one end of the continuum lies casual gamers who tend to play games that are easy to learn, easy to access, and require minimum skill levels and time commitment (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Casual gamers spend the least amount of time playing games compared to the other types of gamers, averaging 9.5 hours of gameplay per week (Neys et al., 2014). Gamers who play more than casual gamers but less than hardcore gamers have been classified as heavy gamers, who tend to average 18.5 hours of gameplay per week. Finally, at the end of the continuum lies the most extreme gamers, or hardcore gamers. Hardcore gamers tend to average 26 hours of gameplay per week, and usually play games that are highly immersive and require a substantial time commitment and skill level (Neys et al., 2014; Tuten & Solmon, 2015). The current study will examine the effects of user-generated and marketer-generated video game streams on non-gamers, casual gamers, heavy gamers, and hardcore gamers.

Drawing from Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), it is reasonable to suggest that heavy and hardcore gamers will find the UGC more credible, reliable, and trustworthy. Heavy and hardcore gamers may reason using the central route of persuasion, which requires consumers to have experience and knowledge of the product (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). Heavy and hardcore gamers may also require that streams require more evidence of the game before forming an attitude about it. These gamer types may find the user-generated stream more useful in forming their attitudes towards the game and purchase intention by perceiving the user-generated stream to provide more evidence compared to the marketer-generated stream. On the other hand, casual and non-gamers may take the peripheral route to persuasion, which does not require much cognitive effort and consumer attitudes can be influenced by simple cues. Since these gamer types, have little to know knowledge and experience with video games, they may find the marketer-generated stream to be more credible, reliable, and trustworthy. It is also possible that the marketer-generated stream will more highly influence casual and non-gamers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Thus, the researchers pose the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Heavier gaming will be positively related to credibility in the user-generated condition.

**H2:** More casual gaming will be positively related to credibility in marketer-generated condition.

**H3:** Heavier gaming will be positively related to the perceived usefulness of content in the user-generated condition.

**H4.** More casual gaming will be positively related to the perceived usefulness of content in the marketer-generated condition.

**H5.** Heavier gaming will be positively related to purchase intentions in the user-generated condition.

**H6.** More casual gaming will be positively related to purchase intentions in the marketer-generated condition.

While researchers have found consumers often find UGC more credible, reliable, and trustworthy compared to MGC, other variables have been found to affect consumers' perceptions of UGC. Group identification has been shown to influence perceived credibility of UGC, where those who are able to identify with UGC creators perceive the creator to be more credible (Flanagin, et al., 2013). Video game streams have been recognized by researchers as a platform for community and socialization, where those with shared identities can connect (Hamilton, Garretson, and Kerne, 2014). If viewers are able to identify with the streamer, they may perceive the streamer to be more credible, reliable and trustworthy. Therefore, the researchers pose RQ1:

**RQ1:** Will group identification influence perceptions of credibility?

Consumers' experience with Internet has also been found to affect perceived credibility of UGC (Zhu & Zhang, 2009). Consumers who have more Internet experience are able to more accurately determine if UGC is credible, reliable, and trustworthy compared to those with less experience. Applying this finding to the current study, one could suggest that viewers who are familiar with video game streams will perceive them to be more credible, reliable, and trustworthy compared to viewers who are unfamiliar with video game streams. Therefore, the researchers pose RQ2:

**RQ2:** Will video game stream familiarity influence perceptions of credibility?

## Method

In order to examine the influence of video game streams on viewers' perceptions of credibility, usefulness of content, and purchase intentions, an online experiment and survey were designed. The survey consisted of three parts. First, participants were asked to indicate their video gaming habits and stream familiarity. Next, participants were assigned to one of two experimental conditions by watching either a user-generated stream or marketer-generated stream of a popular video game title. Finally, participants were asked questions about their perceptions of credibility, usefulness of content, and purchase intention after having viewed the stream.

## Participants and Procedure

Convenience sampling was used to gather participation from students at a medium-sized southeastern university. The survey was built using survey software, and students from undergraduate psychology and communication courses were recruited via a participant pool. Survey respondents were given a notice of consent before beginning the online survey. Respondents indicated that consent was given by continuing with the survey. Students were awarded extra credit points in courses as compensation for research participation.

A total of 111 participants began the online survey, however, 24 participants did not complete the survey. Of the 87 participants who completed the survey, 29 were male (33.3%) and 57 were female (65.5%). Age of respondents ranged from 18 to 45 years old, with a mode of 19 years of age. Participants completed an online survey that consisted of three parts. Part one contained questions that measured the participant's video gaming habits and stream familiarity. Part one also contained two demographic questions concerning age and gender. In part two of the survey,

participants viewed a five-minute pre-recorded stream of Treyarch and Activision's *Call of Duty: Black Ops III* (2015). Participants were assigned to one of two conditions by either viewing a user-generated stream from the streamer Pootie33, or a stream from the game's developer Treyarch. The streams can both be classified as "Let's Play," and each stream displayed the game content. Part three contained questions that measured perceptions of credibility, usefulness of content, and purchase intention. Part three also contained items that measured group identification.

## MEASURES

### Days of video games played

To understand how frequently participants played video games, four multiple-choice items were adapted from Kollock (2004). Participants were asked to indicate the typical number of days in a week they played video games. Participants who indicated they typically play video games less than once per week were asked to estimate the number of times they played video games per month. Participants who indicated they typically played less than once per month were asked to estimate the frequency of video game play per year. Participants were then asked indicate how long their typical playing session lasted, and the genres of video games they most often played. These questions are displayed in Appendix A.

### Stream Familiarity

Two items were developed by the researchers to measure how familiar participants were to video game streams, and how frequently participants watched video game streams. Participants were asked to indicate whether they have ever watched a game stream. Those who indicated they had viewed a game stream were then asked to describe how frequently they viewed video game streams. Stream familiarity questions are displayed in Appendix A

### Usefulness of Content

Drawing from Yang, Zhou, and Zhou (2005), five Likert-scale items were used to examine participants' perceptions of the usefulness of the content contained in the game stream. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. Two statements inquired about the relevance and helpfulness of information contained in the game stream to a potential buyer of the game. Two items inquired about the

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accuracy and valuableness of information in terms of the game itself. The last item inquired about whether or not the stream contained enough information to help make a decision about purchasing the game. Cronbach's alpha (1951) was used to determine the reliability of the scale. The usefulness of content measures were reliable with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 85$. The usefulness of content section is displayed in Appendix A.

## Credibility

An 11-item survey containing semantic differential scales were used to measure perceived credibility of the streamer by participants (Wu & Wang, 2011). Participants were asked to rate the source from one to seven in the following categories: expertise, experience, knowledge, qualification, skill, dependableness, honesty, reliability, sincerity, trustworthiness, and popularity. Cronbach's alpha (1951) was used to evaluate the reliability of the scale. The items measuring credibility were reliable with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 90$. Items used to measure credibility are displayed in Appendix A.

## Group Identification

Four Likert-scale items were adopted from Kim (2014), which were used to assess whether participants identified with the streamer. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. The statements measured how much participants identified with the streamer in terms of thoughts, behaviors, similarity, and likeness. Cronbach's alpha (1951) was used to determine the reliability of the scale and was found to be reliable with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 95$. The group identification section is displayed in Appendix A.

## Purchase Intention

To measure whether or not participants already own or play the video game, the researchers developed two yes-or-no questions. Participants were asked to indicate if they currently own or have previously owned the game, and if they currently play the game or have previously played the game. Four Likert-scale items were derived from Wu and Wang (2011) to measure participants' intent to play and/or purchase the game in the future. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha (1951) was used to evaluate the reliability of the scale. The

items measuring purchase intention were reliable with a reliability coefficient of α=.98. The purchase intention section is displayed in Appendix A.

## RESULTS

This study was aimed to examine the effects of video game streams on viewers' perceptions of credibility, usefulness of content, and their intent to purchase. 111 participants began the survey, however, 24 participants did not complete the survey. Of the 87 participants who completed the online survey, 29 (33.3%) were male and 57 (65.5%) were female. Ages ranged from 18-45 with a mode age of 19. For the experiment, 38 respondents were randomly assigned to the first condition where the marketer-generated stream was viewed, and 49 participants were randomly assigned to the second condition where the user-generated stream was viewed. Table 1 illustrates the number of days of played video games per week, as indicated by participants.

## HYPOTHESES RESULTS

### Credibility

H1 predicted that heavier gaming would be positively related to credibility in the user-generated condition. H1 was tested using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between how many days a week a person played games and game stream credibility. Participants in the user-generated condition were analyzed and a significant positive relationship was found ($F(1,47) = 5.68$, $p = .02$), with an $R^2$ of .11. Thus, H1 was supported.

H2 predicted that more casual gaming would be positively related to credibility in the marketer-generated condition. H2 was tested using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between how many days a week a person played games and game stream credibility. Participants in the marketer-generated condition were analyzed and no relationship was found ($F(1,36) = .01$, $p = .91$), with an $R^2$ of .00. Thus, H2 was not supported.

### Usefulness of Content

H3 predicted that heavier gaming would be positively related to perceived usefulness of the content in the user-generated stream. H3 was tested using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between how many days a week a person played games and usefulness of content. Participants in the user-generated

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condition were analyzed and no relationship was found ($F(1,47) = .21$, $p = .65$), with an $R^2$ of .00. Thus, H3 was not supported.

H4 predicted that casual gaming would be positively related to perceived usefulness of the content in the marketer-generated stream. H4 was tested using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between how many days a week a person played games and usefulness of content. Participants in the marketer-generated condition were analyzed and no relationship was found ($F(1,36) = .49$, $p = .49$), with an $R^2$ of .01.

**Purchase Intentions.** H5 predicted that heavier gaming would be positively related to purchase intention in the user-generated condition. H5 was tested using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between gaming habits and perceived usefulness of content. Participants in the user-generated condition were analyzed and no significant relationship was found ($F(1,47) = 3.08$, $p = .09$), with an $R^2$ of .06. While H5 was not supported, the relationship between gaming habits and purchase intention in the user-generated condition did, however, approach significance.

H6 predicted that more casual gaming would be positively related to purchase intention in the marketer-generated condition. H6 was tested using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between how many days a week a person played games and perceived usefulness of content. Participants in the marketer-generated condition were analyzed and no relationship was found ($F(1,36) = .09$, $p = .77$), with an $R^2$ of .00. Thus, H6 was not supported.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESULTS

The research questions in the study sought to examine the relationship between group identification and stream familiarity on perceived credibility.

### Group Identification

RQ1 asked whether or not group identification would influence participants' perceptions of credibility. To explore RQ1, the researcher conducting a simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between group identification and perceived credibility. Participants in both conditions were analyzed and a positive correlation was found ($F(1,85) = 10.04$, $p = .00$), with an $R^2$ of .11. Thus, it would appear that the more the viewer identified with the streamer, the more credible the streamer was perceived to be.

## Stream Familiarity

RQ2 asked whether or not stream familiarity would influence participants' perceptions of credibility. To explore RQ2, the researcher conducted an independent sample t-test to determine if there was a significant difference between participants who had viewed game streams before and those who had not. The test revealed a marginally significant difference between the two groups ($t(85) = 1.97$, $p = .052$). Those who had viewed video game streams before ($M. = 4.91$, $S.D. = 1.04$) were slightly more likely to find them credible than those who had not ($M. = 4.51$, $S.D. = .77$). Thus, that participants who were more familiar with video game streams perceived the streamer to be more credible.

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this research project was to examine the influence of video game streams on viewers' attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, the researcher sought to explore the effects of video game streams on perceptions of credibility and usefulness of content, and purchase intentions. The researcher also sought to understand the influence of group identification and stream familiarity on perceived credibility. The body of literature regarding the influence of video game streaming on consumers is limited. Thus, this study explores the effects of video game streaming on consumers' perceptions of credibility and usefulness of content, and purchase intentions.

H1 predicted that heavier gaming habits would be positively related to perceived credibility in the user-generated condition. A significant positive relationship was found to support H1. Heavier gaming habits have been defined as playing video games on an average of five days per week, averaging approximately 18 hours of gameplay per week (Neys et al., 2014). The current study found that participants who reported heavier gaming habits found the user-generated stream to be a more credible source of information. This finding is consistent with what one would expect to find using Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as a framework, where heavier gamers likely found the user-generated stream more credible because of their experience and knowledge of video games. Because of this, it is likely that heavier gamers were better able to notice the streamer's skills and knowledge of the game, which positively influenced the streamer's credibility. This finding is also in line with past research on perceived credibility of user-generated content, where consumers tend to find product information in user-generated content credible (Heinonen, 2011). Another possible explanation for this finding is that heavier gamers have been found to more highly prefer shooter games, and the stream featured in the experiment contained footage of a shooter game (Scharkow et al., 2015).

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H2 predicted that more casual gaming habits would be positively related to perceived credibility in the marketer-generated stream, however, no difference was found. Casual gamers have been defined as playing video games approximately three days per week and nine hours per week on average (Neys et al., 2014). Since casual and non-gamers do not have as much experience with video games, it is possible that more casual or non-gamers had no prior experience with or knowledge of the game or game developer. This could be explained by previous research that has found more casual games prefer strategy, puzzle, and card games (Sharkow et al., 2015). If the streamed game had a game of a genre that casual gamers were more familiar with, they may have perceived a stream from the brand to be more credible.

H3 predicted that heavier gaming habits would be positively related to the perceived usefulness of the content in the user-generated condition, however, results did not support this hypothesis. This could be explained by considering the streamer's skill level and knowledge of the game. The streamer demonstrated a high level of skill, and heavier gamers may have recognized that this was not an accurate portrayal of the average game player or game session. Another possible reason that heavier gamers did not find the content useful could be because the stream did not showcase the game's variety. The five-minute stream featured only one round of gameplay. Heavier gamers may have recognized that more details of the game were needed before conclusions about the accuracy, value, relevance, and helpfulness of the stream were made. Researchers have found that streams function differently among participants, therefore it is also possible that participants did not perceive this stream as useful in making a purchase decision (Cheung & Huang, 2011).

H4 predicted that more casual gaming habits would be positively related to the perceived usefulness of the content in the marketer-generated condition, however, no supporting evidence was found. The lack of knowledge and experience with the game and/or game genre could be one reason casual and non-gamers did not perceive the content to be useful. It is possible that this audience would not know what kind of information would be needed in order to make a decision about purchasing the game.

H5 predicted that heavier gaming habits would be positively related to purchase intentions in the user-generated condition. While a significant positive relationship was not found, the relationship was found to be approaching significance. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that heavier gaming could be positively related to purchase intentions in the user-generated condition. One explanation that a clear relationship was not found could be because heavier gamers have already purchased or played this game, and have no intention of purchasing or playing it again in the future. Another reason significance was not found could be that heavier gamers are already familiar with the game, and simply have no desire to play or purchase the game in the future. Past research has found that consumer purchase behaviors after viewing user-generated content on social media are influenced by engagement in brand

communities, and user-generated content serves as more of an informative source of information rather than persuasive (Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013). It is possible that purchase intentions of participants in the current study could have been more influenced if they had the opportunity to actively engage with the stream community, and informative content by others and persuasive content by the game developer.

H6 predicted that more casual gaming habits would be positively related to purchase intentions in the game-developer condition. No evidence was found to support this hypothesis. Casual or non-gamers may not be interested in this game and/or have no desire to buy or play this game in the future. If the stream had shown a game of a genre that casual gamers have been found to prefer, they may have indicated otherwise.

Two variables were found to influence perceived credibility. The researcher was interested in examining the influence of group identification on perceived credibility. RQ1 asked if group identification would influence perceived credibility of the streamer, and evidence that group identification does influence credibility was found. Participants who indicated a shared identity with the streamer were more likely to find the streamer more credible. This finding is consistent with Flanagin, Hocevar, and Samahito (2013), where participants found information contributed by someone similar to themselves more credible.

The researcher was also interested in examining the influence of stream familiarity on perceived credibility. RQ2 asked if stream familiarity would influence perceptions of credibility. Results suggested a possible significance between stream familiarity and perceived credibility. Those who have viewed video game streams previously may be more likely to perceive the streamer as a credible source of information. This finding would be in line with Zhu and Zhang (2009), who found Internet experience influenced perceived credibility. Those who are familiar with streams may be better able to determine the credibility of a stream because of their past experience(s) viewing streams. Simply knowing exactly what a game stream is and being able to identify how many views and followers a streamer has could help determine the streamer's credibility. Cues about the number of views and followers the streamers had were given to participants, which may have influenced perceptions of credibility.

The findings in this study hold several implications for marketing in the video game industry. Video game streaming should be incorporated into a digital marketing strategy in order to affectively reach heavier gaming audiences. Video gaming habits were found to positively correlate to perceived credibility of user-generated content, therefore, video game titles and genres that appeal to heavier gaming audiences may be influenced by user-generated content in the form of game streams. Game developers who wish to target heavier gamers could reach this audience through sponsoring user-generated streams, or featuring user-generated streams on their

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website and social media. Heavier gaming audiences should find this to be a credible form of marketing by the brand.

While the current study found that gaming habits were indicative of perceived credibility of user-generated streams, two factors were found to influence perceived credibility. Participants who indicated they identified with the streamer in terms of behaviors, similarities, and thoughts were more likely to perceive the streamer as credible. Previous research on video game streaming has found that streams serve as social platforms for those with shared identities to connect around a common interest (Hamilton, Garretson, & Kerne, 2014). If video game streams are used as a marketing tool, it is critical that the streamer be similar to the target audience. The audience will believe the streamer to be credible if viewers perceive they share an identity with the streamer. Brand communities form around game streams when viewers share an identity with the streamer and other viewers, and therefore it is important for video game marketers monitor how the brand is being portrayed and how the community is engaging with the brand. Stream familiarity was also found to influence perceived credibility of user-generated streams, where those who previously viewed streams perceived the streamer to be a more credible source of information. Video game marketers should be targeting frequent stream viewers through user-generated streams to promote their brand among.

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# APPENDIX

*Table 1 Frequency of Days of Video Games Per Week*

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Less than once per week | 29 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
|  | 1 | 8 | 9.2 | 9.2 | 42.5 |
|  | 2 | 7 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 50.6 |
|  | 3 | 9 | 10.3 | 10.3 | 60.9 |
|  | 4 | 7 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 69.0 |
|  | 5 | 11 | 12.6 | 12.6 | 81.6 |
|  | 6 | 4 | 4.6 | 4.6 | 86.2 |
|  | 7 | 12 | 13.8 | 13.8 | 100.0 |
|  | Total | 87 | 100.0 | 100.0 |  |

# Chapter 9

# What Makes People Share?
## The Effects of Online Ads on Consumers' Sharing Intentions

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## ABSTRACT

*Digital marketing has become an important tool for businesses to reach a wider audience. Many companies, therefore, apply online ads in order to gain new customers. However, since the number of companies that try to benefit from digital marketing is very high, the online ads sector is now more competitive. Drawing consumers' attention is not easy anymore. Therefore, this study focused on the factors that make people share. For this purpose, this study conducted a survey with 253 consumers. The results show that attitudes toward online ads, search intention, and social media product browsing have positive impacts on consumers' sharing intentions. In this study, the authors also wondered, how do online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability? To understand this, this study did 15 face-to-face interviews and found that consumers prefer to share online ads with text and image rather than video ads. Easiness to share, brief information, and being understandable are the three factors that lead consumers to prefer to share text and image-based online ads.*

## INTRODUCTION

The appearance of the Internet has generated numerous opportunities to reach millions of people easily. Along with this, the fast increase in usage of the Internet has radically altered the way people obtain information (Li et al., 2015). Thus, some crucial developments have occurred in internet marketing such as allocating more budget on online advertisements. The online advertising budget is getting bigger every day. While global online advertising expenditures equalled to $209 billion in 2017 (Kafka and Molla 2017), it reached $333.25 billion in 2019 (eMarketer,2019). Moreover, the latest statistics reported that online advertisement constitutes approximately half of all advertising budget (eMarketer, 2019). Therefore, the tools regarding online advertisements have also expanded remarkably (Liu-Thompkins, 2019). As a result of this expansion, online advertising has turned into roughly indispensable tool for both companies and consumers (Li et al., 2015). Hence, this unexpected expansion of online advertisements has drawn an academic attraction, expecting to ascertain the antecedents and consequences that reveal online ads (Souiden et al., 2017).

Earlier studies focused mostly on the impact of online advertisement on purchase intention, to examine the attitudes toward online ads (Kim et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2009). However, the scholars have ignored the other behavioural intentions such as sharing intention in the online advertisement context. Whereas, according to the theory of planned behaviour, intentions are as vital as real actions, and in some circumstances they are a robust predictor for future consequences (Mikalef et al., 2013). Hence, the intention to share ought also to be important as much as purchase intention. In the context of online ads, sharing intention occurs when consumers enjoy the products taken place in online ads and having positive recommendations. Consumers sometimes have a good time while even watching online ads. This is also another motivation to have sharing intentions with other people. When compared to purchase intention, sharing intention requires interaction among people. This is possible to occur in an online environment. Especially, after being the continuous increase on the Internet and in social media penetration, sharing intention has gained more importance.

However, despite the importance and its relevance of sharing intention in online ads, there are almost no studies examining what factors lead to share intention related to online ads. Whereas, drawing consumers' attention is not easy anymore. Yet, when the ads are liked and shared by consumers, they might be more effective than the ones shared by companies. In this study, we, therefore, focused on the factors that make people share. The specific aims of the current study are twofold: first, it investigates what factors lead to people to share online ads. The answer to this question is worthy for marketing managers besides scholars since this research will exhibit which factors have an impact on sharing intention. In this research, hence,

we empirically test the conceptual model involving attitudes towards online ads, search intention, social media product browsing and sharing intention. To do so, we conducted a survey. Furthermore, the second study examines how online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability. We conducted 15 depth-interviews in order to find an answer to the question and provide additional information. In the coming parts, we start with a short literature review about attitudes towards online ads, and then we introduce Study 1 and 2. Subsequently, we will provide the theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Online Advertisements

Advertising on the Internet is considered more effective and practical when compared with traditional media (Rastogi and Khan, 2015). Online advertising nowadays constitute of necessary part of marketing strategies for marketers (Li et al., 2015). It also helps consumers to learn more about the alternative products. The Internet provides consumers for getting numerous opportunities regarding the product or the service such as ascertaining some information about them. Moreover, because of steady growth penetration in the Internet, the brands and marketers also have spent huge number of budgets on online ads (Souiden et al., 2017). Online ads are therefore highly used by the brands and marketers.

Due to all these reasons, prior researchers have focused on figuring out the factors shaping consumers' attitudes towards online advertisements. Some researchers found that advertising saturation (Cho and Cheon, 2004) and irritation (Chang and Morimoto, 2003; Ducoffe, 1996) affect attitudes towards online ads adversely. Whereas, other researchers realize that some factors like entertainment, informativeness, and being amusing have a positive impact on attitudes towards online ads (Ducoffe, 1996; Tutaj and Reijmersdal, 2012). Apart from these factors, some scholars approach online ads in a different way. They highlight that psychological factors might be utilized to explain consumers' attitudes toward online advertising (Jin and Villegas, 2007; Yoon and Steege, 2013). This is because, they consider that characteristics of people might have an impact on their attitudes or behaviours in the online environment (Souiden et al., 2017).

In the extant literature, as stated above, online ads have been mostly examined in terms of attitudes and behaviours. Even though the antecedents of attitude towards online ads were investigated, there are only a few studies focusing on the consequences of attitude towards online ads in depth. These studies examine the relationship between attitude toward online ads and purchase intention. (Korgaonkar

and Wolin, 2002; Stevenson et al., 2000). Yet, in the online environment, there are other behavioural intentions needed to be examined such as sharing intention or search intention. In order to fill this gap in the literature, we focus on examining the relationship between attitude towards online ads, search intention, social media product browsing and sharing intention. From the practical perspective, examining the mentioned relationships between those constructs would be a guidance for online ads managers.

## METHOD

In this study, we first used a survey method in order to test our hypotheses. Among the 278 questionnaires collected, 253 were found valid and suitable for the analysis. Participants were chosen from university students. University students are deemed appropriate since the majority of the age group of university students are Internet users. Then, to answer our second research question, we did 15 face-to-face interviews. Below, you will initially find the details about the quantitative part (study 1), then you will obtain the findings from the qualitative part (study 2).

## STUDY 1

In order to find what makes people share online ads, we first identify the factors that might affect consumers' sharing intentions, and then build the hypotheses of the study based on the identified factors.

### The Research Model and Hypotheses Development

#### Attitudes Towards Online Ads & Search Intention

Attitude toward online ads is described as "the aggregation of evaluations of perceived attributes and benefits [cognitive and affective] of online advertising" (Wang & Sun, 2010, p. 334). It is based on consumers' all evaluations and beliefs regarding online advertising. Attitude towards online ads is one of the important antecedents in order to understand consumers' ideas and to predict their behavioural intentions in an online environment. However, these behavioural intentions may not conclude with purchase intention as like in the traditional way. In an online environment, consumers might perform given other online behaviours such as search intention or sharing intention (Kim et al., 2010). On the other side, search intention is the preceding stage in the decision-making process which causes the real purchase

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(Shim et al., 2001). In the previous literature, Klein's model (1998) asserted that consumer features and attributes regarding media significantly have an impact on the search process. Hence, we posit that online ads also may influence the search intention. Most studies have put forth that attitude towards online ads has an impact on consumers' behavioural intentions such as purchase intention (Drossos et al., 2013; Tsang et al., 2004). However, there is almost no studies examining the effects of attitude towards online ads on search intention. Considering this;

H1: Attitudes toward online ads is positively related to search intention.

## Attitudes Towards Online Ads & Sharing Intention

Since attitude is one of the important antecedents that affect any specific behavioural intentions, it is a concept that should be examined in every field of marketing. Sharing intention can be described as willingness to share in the online environment. This can be an information or entertaining content-based video or image. In this circumstance, online ads can be thought as one of the significant marketing communication tools in order to share the information. But the inadequate efforts have been applied to examining the effect of attitude towards online ads on sharing information intention. Knowing this relationship would not only broaden the scholars' horizons theoretically but enables online ads practitioners to have more useful marketing strategies in the online environment. Moreover, even though there are some studies focusing on the relationship between attitudes towards online ads and purchase intention (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 2002; Wang et al., 2009). We therefore expect the following relationship and hypothesize;

H2: Attitudes toward online ads is positively related to sharing intention.

## Attitudes Towards Online Ads & Social Media Product Browsing

Attitude toward online ads is one of the most important antecedents of consumers' reactions, ideas, and beliefs regarding online ads (Wang et al., 2009). Hence, this issue also affects consumers' behavioural intentions related to online ads. Besides search intention and share intention, social media product browsing might be considered as one of the most common behavioural intentions that consumers have in the online environment. This behaviour is described as the consequence of both a "goal-oriented" and a "search-oriented" behaviour (Janiszewski, 1998). In the existing literature, it is accepted as one of the behavioural intentions through the Internet (Mikalef et al., 2013; Moe, 2003). From the attitudes perspective, since it is highly related to behavioural intentions, we consider that attitudes toward online ads can also have influence over social media product browsing. Based on this, we hypothesize that;

H3: Attitudes toward online ads is positively related to social media product browsing.

## Search Intention & Sharing Intention

Online ads are one of the most recent tools for consumers to get information about products and services. When looking from the managerial perspective, search intention is acknowledged as the main component to figure out and forecast the consumer's intention in the online environment (Kim et al., 2004). When consumers find relevant information regarding any product or service, they they might have an intention to share it with their friends or acquaintance (Mikalef et al., 2013). The search intention can lead them to have a sharing intention. We therefore hypothesize that;

H4: Search intention is positively related to sharing intention.

## Social Media Product Browsing & Sharing Intention

In the online environment, product browsing is a way for consumers to collect information regarding any specific products. It is also one of the most crucial online behaviours. Previous researchers found that there is a strong relationship between product browsing and purchase intention (Mikalef et al., 2013). They claim that before the purchasing process, browsing products are should be initiated by consumers. Hence, in the online environment, social media product browsing is considered as one of the robust antecedent of purchase intention. However, we consider that before creating the purchase intention stage, in the online environment, consumers can have different behavioural intentions such as sharing intention. That is, if somebody browses any product, he or she is likely to share it with family or friends at the first stage. This is because she or he can want to some advice from them or discuss the other alternatives. Despite the importance in the online environment, the relationship between social media product browsing and sharing intention is ignored by the scholars in the existing literature. By considering this, we hypothesize;

H5: Social media product browsing is positively related to sharing intention.

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*Figure 1. The Research Model*
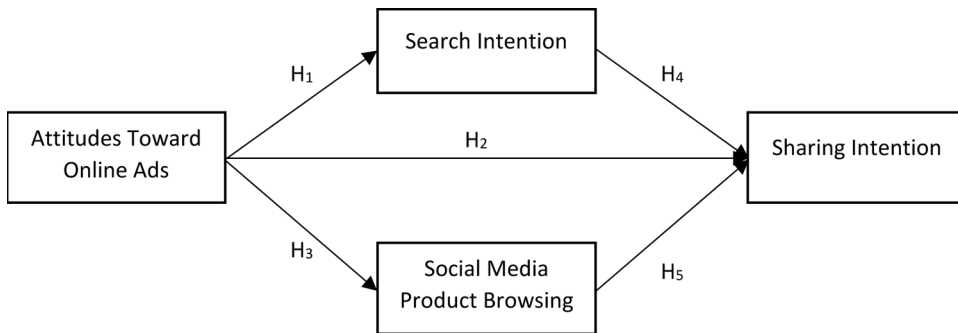


## Sample

The present study consists of responses from university students who were social media users. The students were voluntary, and the participants were ensured that the information gathered would be kept private. Among the 278 questionnaires collected, 253 were found valid and suitable for the analysis.

## Measures

This research utilizes a multi-item approach in the design of the questionnaire form. All latent constructs are measured with well-validated and formerly published scales. Attitude towards online ads with the six-item scale used by Park et al. (2007). Sharing intention and search intention are measured with the four-item and the three-item scale developed by Mikalef et al. (2013) respectively. Lastly, social media product browsing is measured with the four items used by Mikalef et al. (2013). All of the items utilize 5-Likert type scale vary from "1=strongly disagree" to 5=strongly agree".

## Results

A structural equation modelling (SEM) method was utilized to test the hypotheses of this research. SEM approach is found appropriate for testing any theories (Iacobucci, 2009). Especially, SEM approach is good for predictive models (Bentler and Chou, 1987) and hence it is used for this research.

## Measurement Model

The research model was examined, using AMOS 21 software. Firstly, for each scale, the reliability analysis and the validity analysis were applied. And then, in order to

understand the relationships of items within the scale (Hair et al., 2010), we also tested convergent validity. To evaluate the convergent validity of the measurements, for each construct, composite reliability should be higher than 0.70 (CR > 0.70) while the average variance extracted should be higher than 0.50 (AVE > 0.50) (Fornell and Larcker,1981). Table 1 illustrates that all variables are extremely greater than the minimum threshold level of CR. Also, all variables are bigger than the minimum threshold level of AVE. Lastly, all items exceed the minimum factor loading level which is 0.70. Factor loadings for each items are higher than 0.80.

*Table 1.Results of Reliability and Validity Analysis*

| Factors | | Factor Loadings | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sharing Intention (SHI)** | SHI1 | 0.912 | 0.946 | 0.813 |
| | SHI2 | 0.909 | | |
| | SHI3 | 0.897 | | |
| | SHI4 | 0.881 | | |
| **Attitude Toward Online Ads (ATOA)** | ATOA1 | 0.935 | 0.967 | 0.880 |
| | ATOA2 | 0.957 | | |
| | ATOA3 | 0.931 | | |
| | ATOA4 | 0.927 | | |
| **Search Intention (SEI)** | SEI1 | 0.952 | 0.967 | 0.907 |
| | SEI2 | 0.965 | | |
| | SEI3 | 0.941 | | |
| **Social Media Product Browsing (SMPB)** | SMPB1 | 0.931 | 0.963 | 0.868 |
| | SMPB2 | 0.947 | | |
| | SMPB3 | 0.930 | | |
| | SMPB4 | 0.921 | | |

In order to understand whether the measurement is a representation of any other measurement (Hair et al., 2010) we utilized the discriminant validity test. According to Fornell and Larcker's (1981) discriminant validity test, the value of the square root of AVE for each variable ought to be higher than the other correlation coefficients. Table 2 displays that discriminant validity is achieved according to the criteria mentioned above.

*Table 2. Analysis of Discriminant Validity*

|  | **Sharing Intention** | **Attitude Toward Online Ads** | **Search Intention** | **Social Media Product Browsing** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sharing Intention** | **0,902** | | | |
| **Attitude Toward Online Ads** | 0,780 | **0,938** | | |
| **Search Intention** | 0,621 | 0,531 | **0,952** | |
| **Social Media Product Browsing** | 0,877 | 0,781 | 0,616 | **0,932** |

## Structural Model Evaluation

Based on Table 3, there are significant and positive relationships between the variables of five hypotheses. Attitudes towards online ads was found to have a significant and positive impact on search intention (H1: $\beta = 0.543$) and sharing intention (H2: $\beta = 0.229$) respectively. Moreover, attitude towards online ads was found to have a significant and positive influence on social media product browsing (H3: $\beta = 0.786$). Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between search intention and sharing intention; hence, H4 was also supported (H4: $\beta = 0.126$). Lastly, social media product browsing has also significant and positive impact on sharing intention (H5: $\beta = 0.632$). As a result, H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5 are supported. Besides, goodness-of-fit (GIF) indices illustrate that the model suits well the data $\chi^2$ / d.f.= 2.228; p < 0.05; GFI =0.911; AGFI =0.873; CFI = 0.980; RMSEA = 0.070. Table 3 also provides both the goodness-of-fit indices of the structural model along with the hypotheses results.

## STUDY 2

In order to find how do online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability, we conducted 15 face-to-face interviews. We used an exploratory approach in this study, and found valuable information.

*Table 3. Hypotheses Results and Test of Model-Fit*

| | Hypotheses | | Std RW | C.R | *p*-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H$_1$ | Attitudes Toward Online Ads | Search Intention | 0.543 | 9.405 | *** |
| H$_2$ | Attitudes Toward Online Ads | Sharing Intention | 0.229 | 3.577 | *** |
| H$_3$ | Attitudes Toward Online Ads | S. Media Product Browsing | 0.786 | 15.764 | *** |
| H$_4$ | Search Intention | Sharing Intention | 0.126 | 3.023 | 0.003 |
| H$_5$ | S. Media Product Browsing | Sharing Intention | 0.632 | 9.875 | *** |
| Goodness-of-fit Indices | | | | | |
| $X^2$ / *d.f.*<br>Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)<br>Adjusted GFI (AGFI)<br>Comparative fit index (CFI)<br>RMSEA | 2.228<br>0.911<br>0.873<br>0.980<br>0.070 | | | | |
| Note: *** *p* < 0.001.<br>Std RW – Standardized Regression Weights, C.R – Critical Ratio. | | | | | |

## Sample

The data was collected, with benefiting from 15 semi-structured and in-depth interviews with university students (7 females and 8 males). Because of the nature of the exploratory approach itself, the convenience sampling method was used (Esterberg, 2002). Interviews reached theoretical saturation with the 15th interview (Morse 1994). At this stage, the data gathering process was ended. The data was openly codified by the authors during the interviews and some of the appeared themes were noted. After completing the interviews, the copies were reviewed via thematic analysis to classify important themes in the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). In the last stage, a particular coding was implemented to identify potential quotes to provide the results (Fielding 2005). Findings show three important themes emerged from the data.

## Findings

In study 2, we attempt to understand how online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability. Findings show that consumers prefer to share text and image based online ads rather than video based online ads due to three main reasons. The reasons are categorized and outlined as follows: easiness to share, being understandable, and brief information.

## Easiness to Share

Most of the interviewees highlighted the convenience of sharing text and image based online ads. They expressed that they do not share video-based online advertisements in the online environment since it takes too much time. Also, sharing video-based online ads cost more than sharing the other types of ads. Moreover, some interviewees indicated that due to the fact that video based online ads are too long, they avoid watching them. Therefore, easiness to share is one of the most crucial reasons for preferring to share text or image based online ads.

I am sending funny, fun, and short ads in gif style. Video ads are too long. I don't think anybody is watching the video ads. (ID:4)

I am sharing the online ads which are in the form of images and stories. I usually do not come across the ads with videos. Even if I see, it's really hard to share videos. (ID:13)

I usually share the image and text based online ads. Especially, if online ads are useful for my friends as content, I am sharing with them. This is because such kind of ads are easy to share rather than video-based online ads. Video-based online ads might be too long to download to the phone or the computer. (ID:2)

## Being Understandable

People prefer to share the ads which are easy to understand. Most interviewees expressed that those text and image based online ads are more understandable than video-based online ads. However, in some circumstances, if the company or the brand wants to give a social message via online ads, it is found attractive by the small number of interviewees. Whereas during the interviews, most of the participants highlight that online ads including text and image are easier to understand than video-based online ads.

Image-based online ads are more effective in terms of being understandable since it is short, abstract and more colourful. Thus, I usually share such kind of online ads with my friends. (ID:5)

I think text and image advertisements are effective and easier to understand because watching video is a very time-consuming thing. Especially, when video-based ads are too long, they also confuse me to understand the whole message (ID:11)

Text or image-based online advertisements give a short message to us. Hence, it is much easier to understand the message that online ads conveyed. (ID:14)

## Brief Information

Interviewees also consider whether the information provided at online advertisements is brief or not. They believe that when they watch video based online ads, information is not conveyed properly. In other words, they anticipate lots of unnecessary information within video-based online ads. Hence, brief information is one of the most important justifications for preferring to share a text or image based online ads.

I always prefer sharing image and text based online ads since they have more functional information. On the other hand, I am not sending the video-based online ads because they are too long and they have too much information. (ID:1)

I do not share the video-based online ads. I always share online ads, including functional information. For instance; if my friend wants to buy a flight ticket, and I see such kind of ads, I share it with him or her. (ID:9)

Text-based online ads contain short and brief information. Hence, I prefer to share them with my parents or friends. Whereas, video-based online ads are too long and it is difficult to understand the content of the video ads (ID: 3)

## DISCUSSION

In the first part of this research, we examine the effects of online ads on consumers' sharing intentions. With this purpose, a conceptual model was built. The results illustrate that attitude towards online ads, search intention, and social media product browsing are influential on consumers' sharing intentions. The conceptual model of the current research tests four constructs: (1) attitude towards online ads, (2) search intention, (3) social media product browsing and (4) sharing intention. All hypotheses of this research were approved. The first hypothesis of the study confirms the influence of attitudes towards online ads on search intention (H1). This finding supports the specified relationship which was at the same line with prior studies (Drossos et al., 2013; Tsang et al., 2004). Moreover, the second and third hypotheses of the study confirm the influence of attitude towards online ads on sharing intention (H2) and social media product browsing (H3). These results are congruent with (Kolekofski and Heminger, 2003; Mikalef et al., 2013). Moreover, For H4, like expectedly, there is a significant relationship between search intention and sharing intention in the context of online ads. This finding is in the same line with the previous research (Kim et al., 2004) illustrating the impact of search intention on behavioural intention such as purchasing intention. This research is one of the initial studies focusing on the relationship between search intention and sharing intention in online ads context. Therefore, this finding contributes to the literature. Moreover, if practitioners design the ads according to the search process, consumers can have the intention to share

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the online ads. Finally, the last hypothesis of this research recommends the positive influence of social media product browsing on sharing intention; which means that H5 was supported. One of the significant previous studies also illustrates that there is an effect of social media product browsing on behavioural intentions like purchasing intention (Mikalef et al., 2013).

In the second part of this research, we found how online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability. Findings show that consumers prefer to share text and image based online ads rather than video based online ads due to three main reasons. The reasons are categorized and outlined as follows: easiness to share, being understandable, and brief information. "Easiness to share" was appeared as the most important matter for the consumers since sharing video is a more difficult process. This finding is in line with the prior research clarifying text based websites such as blogs in the context of the easiness to share (Singh et al., 2008). Another important reason is understandability. In the advertisement context, sending a proper message to consumers might be the ultimate goal. Most of the participants specified that video-based online ads might be confusing or difficult to understand the context immediately. Hence, text and image based online ads are more favoured. Understandability is also considered as one of the important determinants of advertisement effectiveness in the existing literature (Ramalingam et al., 2006; Sanayei et al., 2013). Finally, consumers give high importance to the brief information. Most of the interviewees highlight that text and image based online ads are short and brief. Hence, they prefer sharing text and image based online ads rather than video based online ads. This finding can be linked with the prior research which demonstrates the "brief information" as one of the significant reasons to follow online ads (Penning, 2011; Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000).

## CONCLUSION

In this research we aim to understand what makes people share online ads. With this aim, we conducted two studies. In the first study we found that attitudes towards online ads, search intention, and social media product browsing are the factors that affect consumers' sharing intentions. In the second study we found that consumers prefer to share text and image based online ads rather than video based online ads due to three main reasons. The reasons are categorized and outlined as follows: easiness to share, being understandable, and brief information.

This research contributes to online ads literature by looking from a wider perspective. Some prior studies explored the factors affecting attitudes towards online ads (Souiden et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2009; Wang and Sun, 2010). However, the consequences of attitudes towards online ads had not been known. This research

therefore enlightens the specified gap with an empirical method. Furthermore, we introduce novel constructs for the scholars; findings resulted from in-depth interviews (easiness to share, being understandable and brief information) can also be tested as new constructs of the new conceptual models in the future studies. In the light of practical significance, the findings of study 1 illustrates the impacts of attitude towards online ads on different behavioural intentions such as sharing or search intention. These findings are precious for the advertisers and marketing managers who want to benefit from online ads as a marketing tool. Additionally, the findings of study 2 underlines how online ad types differ from each other in terms of shareability. Marketers who want to conduct a campaign through video based online ads should consider our findings.

Even though this study enables researchers and practitioners to have valuable implications, there are some limitations that should be noted. First, this study was conducted with respondents who are university students. Although they compose the bulk of online ads watchers and are more familiar with the online environment, they may not exactly exhibit the entire population. Moreover, this study was conducted only in Turkey, which might bring some challenges to generalize results for other countries. Furthermore, we examined the impact of online ads in general; but not specified like YouTube ads, mobile ads etc. Hence, it would be wise if future research investigates online ads separately.

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