Digital influencers: An exploratory study of influencer marketing campaign process on instagram

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Abstract

The evolution of the digital age and the rise of social networking sites brought changes to the consumer behavior. This transformation has led to an increasing number of opportunities and challenges. The increasing importance of digital influencers has been acknowledged by both practitioners and academics. However, due to its contemporaneity, the academic literature regarding this subject faces some limitations. Thus, the present study explored the perceptions of the marketing professionals towards digital influencers and influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram in the light of existing literature as well as to identify the most contemporary issues. This research followed a qualitative approach with a non-probabilistic convenience sampling. To achieve the objective of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the professionals of the beauty sector, who have already contributed to influencer marketing campaigns. The results highlight the importance of digital influencers and the need for their creative freedom, authenticity and credibility. The findings display some of the difficulties the professionals undertake as it comes to measuring return on investment, managing rewards and differentiation of influencer campaigns. The main value of this study is that it documents all stages of the influencer marketing process as well as highlights the challenges and success factors of an influencer campaign.

Keywords: Digital influencers, influencer marketing, influencer marketing campaign, beauty sector.

Introduction

The rise of social media inevitably implied changes in consumer behavior (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Physical and temporal barriers of communication have been abolished in social media, giving the possibility for any consumer to assume the role of protagonist in the content creation and sharing (Booth & Matic, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Wang et al., 2012). Thus, with the digital environment, opinion leaders began to have a global and unlimited audience of social media users, which led to the appearance of the term "digital influencer" (Keller & Fay, 2016; Lyons & Henderson, 2005; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

Digital influencers proved their influence on their followers' purchase intent and started to spark the interest of brand managers, especially in the beauty sector, that quickly integrated them into their marketing strategies (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). However, given that it is a recent practice, the knowledge about planning process of an influencer marketing campaign is still limited (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). Thus, this paper explores the perspective of professionals in the beauty sector regarding the role of digital influencers, and the way they are conducting influencer marketing campaigns. To achieve this aim we stated four research questions for this investigation:

RQ1. What is the importance of digital influencers?

RQ2. What are the phases of the influencer marketing campaign?

RQ3. What are the factors that determine the success of an influencer marketing campaign?

RQ4. What are the main difficulties and challenges the professionals face while implementing the influencer marketing process?

Social Media and Social Networking Sites (SNS)

Grounded on Web 2.0, where the possibility of creating and changing content is available to all users, social media emerged. Social media are defined as a "set of applications based on the Internet and built under the ideology and technology of Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). The Internet and, in particular, social media have destined that interpersonal interaction is no longer dependent on face-to-face communication, abolishing time and space barriers. The low cost of using social media, their convenience and availability, act as facilitators with regard to contact between individuals (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Thus, social media, currently integrated into the daily habits of many of its users, provides the consumer a voice and facilitate access to information on both products as well as brands, influencing the consumer decision process, and consequently, changing the way brands communicate with consumers (Booth & Matic, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2012).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are applications that allow the connection between users through the creation of profiles of personal information and the exchange of messages between them. They also make it possible to share photos, videos and audio files (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The possibility of connecting with other users and sharing information and opinions about products and brands has made these applications an effective vehicle for electronic word of mouth (eWOM), which has significantly altered consumers' purchasing behavior (Chu & Kim, 2011; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). By allowing a constant exchange of information between users, social networking sites are seen simultaneously as a challenge and an opportunity for brands, so marketers are required to explore the feasibility and possibility of integrating these applications in their strategies, in a way to communicate more effectively with its consumers and to strengthen relationships with them (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Although social media and SNS are based on the fundamentals of Web 2.0, the Internet continues to evolve, and innovations have led to Web 3.0, in which the search, sharing and combination of information is facilitated and flows between environments and applications more dynamic and

personalized (Choudhury, 2014). Currently, we are moving towards Web 4.0, in which there is a symbiosis between the human and the machine (Choudhury, 2014). The constant technological innovation leads to an emerging need for adaptation on the part of marketing, which currently also presents its 4.0 version, in line with the challenges of the digital economy. Marketing 4.0 bridges the gap between online and offline, businesses and consumers, benefiting from technological innovations to increase marketing performance and lead to greater consumer involvement in a digital environment in which content is created and shared and it is socially interconnected, without temporal and physical barriers (Kotler et al., 2017). Digital influencers and influencer marketing are, the key concepts for this paper.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

With the constant evolution of the Internet and the ease of creating, publishing and sharing content, consumers take an increasingly active position, ceasing to be passive recipients of messages, while becoming active and participatory content creators (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2011; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014), which made eWOM a key part of marketing strategies (Chu & Kim, 2011; King et al., 2014). According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), eWOM constitutes "the dissemination of messages of a positive or negative character, made by current or potential customers, through the Internet, about a brand or product, which is available to a variety of people" (p. 39). Interestingly, eWOM, which is characterized by the sharing of ideas, experiences and opinions in the digital environment, is perceived by consumers as having greater credibility than the corporate messages of the brands, representing an important source of information for consumers, which if positive has a significant beneficial effect for brands (Gruen et al., 2006; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

Alongside enabling and promoting the sharing of opinions, experiences, interests, as well as lifestyles of users anytime and anywhere, SNS boost the power of eWOM, accelerating and amplifying its reach (Chu & Kim, 2011; Trusov et al., 2009; Veirman et al., 2017). Sharing eWOM in these applications has been found to be one of the most used eWOM formats, having been found to have a positive effect on the attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention of consumers (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Wang et al., 2012). The exponential growth of eWOM in the SNS led the consumer to take an active role in the production and consumption of online content, which increased the possibilities of influencing and being influenced (Booth & Matic, 2011; Chu & Kim, 2011).

It is up to brands to take advantage of the benefits that eWOM can have for the success of their products and/or services and for the acquisition of new customers and explore ways to integrate it into their promotional mix (Trusov et al., 2009). Given that SNS are platforms for eWOM and channels for establishing relationships with consumers, marketers should seek to identify influencers and encourage them to disseminate positive eWOM about their brands as well as products/services (Chu & Kim, 2011). In an environment mediated by the Internet, opinion leaders began to have a global and unlimited audience of social media users, and digital influencers emerged (Lyons & Henderson, 2005).

Digital Influencers

With the current growth of users on social media and arrival of several new platforms, social media influencers have started to gain attention both from academics and professionals. Figure 1 shows how frequently the phrase "digital influencers" was entered into Google search machine in a few passed years (2015-2020).
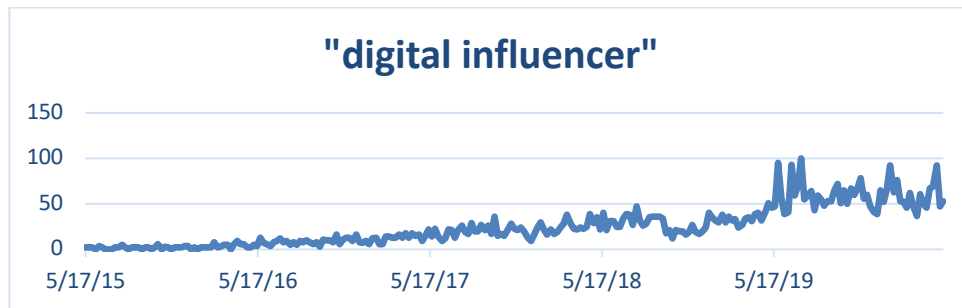

Figure 1. Popularity of The Phrase "Digital influencer"

Digital influencers are perceived as a credible and impartial source that acts in the best interest of their followers, so their followers often end up buying the products mentioned by the opinion leader, effectively making them influencers (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). Digital influencers are consumers who are more likely to seek information, recommend products and/or brands, share their opinions with a significant number of followers on their SNS profiles and who have the ability to cause effects on them, namely behavioral changes (Veirman et al., 2017; Keller & Fay, 2016). They provide current and advanced information to consumers, which can influence their opinion of brands (Lee & Wakins, 2016; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Also, referred in the literature as social media influencers, digital influencers are considered online opinion leaders (Lin et al., 2018; Lyons & Henderson, 2005; Veirman et al., 2017) and are characterized by their knowledge, specialization in a given area and influence power (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

The popularity of digital influencers in social media is only due to their use, presence and activity, unlike traditional celebrities present in social media, whose fame comes from other activities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The profiles of digital influencers in the SNS, namely on Instagram, are considered more powerful than those of traditional celebrities, being given greater credibility, so they represent a great opportunity as a marketing tool (Booth & Matic, 2011; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). Given their ability to influence the attitudes, perceptions and purchasing behavior of their followers, these agents are increasingly valued by brand managers (Uzunoğlu & Kip 2014), who currently recognize and assume the power of digital influencers, looking for ways to relate to them and integrate them into their strategies (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Veirman et al., 2017).

The Role of Digital Influencers in Brand Communication

The evolution of the Internet has led opinion leaders to have a global audience of an unlimited number of users, so opinion leaders online in the face of traditional opinion leaders have a greater reach and a greater chance of influencing the results of marketing campaigns (Lyons & Henderson,

2005). Organizations increasingly recognize that the success of new product launches is often related to the influence of digital influencers on consumers (Launch Metrics, 2018; Lyons & Henderson, 2005).

The endorsement of products by digital influencers is included in their daily narratives in a natural way and has become a common practice that is considered a highly credible form of eWOM (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Veirman et al., 2017). The influence of digital influencers' reviews comes from the fact that they are considered more authentic and accessible to the audience's eyes (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Marketers use digital influencers as message mediators, online brand ambassadors and as storytellers - to establish relationships with consumers and increase the likelihood that they will buy products from their brands (Booth & Matic, 2011; Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Lee & Watkins, 2016; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Veirman et al., 2017). Storytelling in the marketing sphere consists of conveying a message through an engaging and appealing narrative that captures the audience and involves them emotionally, enhancing the relationship between the consumer and the brand (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Thus, through storytelling, digital influencers integrate brand messages into their daily narratives and experiences (Veirman et al., 2017). With the growth of social media platforms, the effectiveness of digital influencers has been consolidated over time, having contributed to the change in the consumer decision-making process, who seeks and shares information about brands and products on Internet (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Social Publi, 2019).

Influencer Marketing

With the growing recognition of digital influencers in brand communication, a new practice in marketing emerged and it is called 'influencer marketing' (Veirman et al., 2017). The influencer marketing consists of identification and selection of digital influencers in order to stimulate the endorsement of products/ services through their activities in the SNS (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Veirman et al., 2017). The perception of the effectiveness of influencer marketing by marketers has been positive, playing an increasingly important role in the marketing strategy of brands (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019; Launch Metrics, 2018; Social Publi, 2019; Veirman et al., 2017). Investment in influencer marketing has been increasing, especially in the fashion and beauty sector (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019; Linqia, 2018; Social Publi, 2019). Bearing in mind the contemporary nature of this practice, planning an influencer marketing campaign is still a challenging process for marketers (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). Thus, the need to better understand how this activity is being put into practice by brands is emerging and will be explored in this paper.

Influencer Marketing Campaign

Given that brands are increasingly investing in the practice of influencer marketing, there is an emerging need to plan these campaigns in a structured way (Launch Metrics, 2018; Social Publi, 2019; Veirman et al., 2017). However, due to the contemporary nature of the practice, the literature on planning influencer marketing campaigns is still limited. According to Lin et al. (2018), the process of using digital influencers to promote a brand's products/services consists of five steps, namely: 1) planning, 2) recognition, 3) alignment, 4) motivation, and 5) coordination. Figure 2 shows the steps of influencer marketing process.
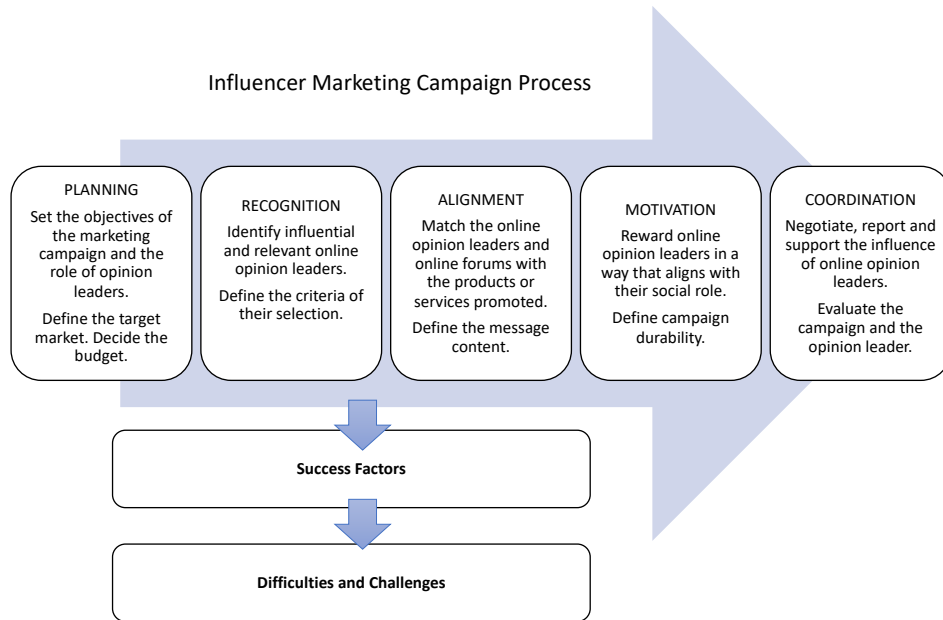
Influencer Marketing Campaign Process

PLANNING	RECOGNITION	ALIGNMENT	MOTIVATION	COORDINATION
Set the objectives of the marketing campaign and the role of opinion leaders.	Identify influential and relevant online opinion leaders.	Match the online opinion leaders and online forums with the products or services promoted.	Reward online opinion leaders in a way that aligns with their social role.	Negotiate, report and support the influence of online opinion leaders.
Define the target market. Decide the budget.	Define the criteria of their selection.	Define the message content.	Define campaign durability.	Evaluate the campaign and the opinion leader.

Success Factors

Difficulties and Challenges

Figure 2. The Steps of Influencer Marketing Process (Based on Lin et al., 2018)

Planning

The first step in an influencer marketing campaign should serve to define the objectives of the campaign and target audience that must be consistent with the company's brand strategy. It should also attend to define of the role of digital influencer and resources available for the campaign (Booth & Matic, 2011; Lin et al., 2018). This first step will serve as a strategic basis for the following decisions, regarding both the selection of digital influencers and the nature and duration of the relationship (Lin et al., 2018). The most recurrent goals associated with influencer marketing are the following: creating or increasing awareness, increasing sales, and creating user generated content (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019; Lin et al., 2018; Social Publi, 2019). The launch of new products is also a very recurrent scenario in which marketers use influencer marketing campaigns (Launch Metrics, 2018; Social Publi, 2019).

Recognition

The second step serves to identify digital influencers relevant to the brand, and the match between the defined campaign's target audience and the audience of digital influencers (Lin et al., 2018). Therefore, the criteria for selecting digital influencers include the "fit" between the brand and the influencer, the tone of communication, the number of followers, the type of content produced, influencer credibility and popularity and a cost of collaboration or compensation (Lin et al., 2018; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Veirman et al., 2017). The selection of the right digital influencers for a campaign is considered challenging by many companies and agencies (Veirman et al., 2017). The number of followers is often the starting point for the identification and selection of digital influencers; however, it does not always translate into true influence (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Veirman et al., 2017). The engagement rate, clicks, frequency of

publication, visualizations and reach are also taken into account when selecting digital influencers (Booth & Matic, 2011; Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019; Launch Metrics, 2018).

Alignment

The third step consists of the match between the selected digital influencers and the products/services to be promoted, as well as the social networking site where they intend to implement the campaign (Lin et al., 2018). The implementation tactics of influencer marketing campaigns can emerge in different forms, according to the defined objectives and content of the brand messages (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). The support of brands to activities organized by digital influencers, such as workshops and gatherings, is also a tactic that allows the creation of a connection with digital influencers and, consequently, an opportunity to communicate brands to their followers (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

The social networking sites through which they communicate, differ according to digital influencers, so the implementation tactics of influencer marketing campaigns also vary according to the preferred SNS (Lin et al., 2018). In the case of Instagram, the most popular SNS for conducting campaigns to influence marketing in the beauty sector (Launch Metrics, 2018; Social Publi, 2019), the endorsement of products through the publication of sponsored posts with the products, the Instagram stories and videos on IG TV with tutorials, reviews and hauls - videos in which digital influencers show followers the products they bought and/or received - are some of the influencer marketing tactics used (Casaló et al., 2018 ; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Pixability, 2018).

Motivation

How the brand will reward digital influencers is planned in the fourth step. Marketers must find ways to continue to encourage and motivate digital influencers to share positive content about the brand and/or products (Lin et al., 2018; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). The decision about the durability of the collaboration must also be considered in this step. Maintaining long-term relationships can benefit the brand, as it guarantees the opportunity to create a consistent and cohesive connection with influencers, who may thus feel more likely to share content about the brand on future occasions (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

Influencer marketing campaigns may or may not include monetary remuneration for the activities of digital influencers. Sending products and invitations to events stimulates the production of content (earned media), however monetary remuneration (paid media) for publications referring to products is also a reality (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Pixability, 2018). Compensation for digital influencers is a topic with little consensus among companies - while 29% of the companies claim to offer monetary compensation frequently, only 12% claim to always pay, 24.4% admit paying only occasionally, and 15.6% claims to never be paying (Launch Metrics, 2018).

Coordination

The fifth and final step includes negotiation, monitoring and support for digital influencers during the campaign and its evaluation (Lin et al., 2018).

The evaluation and measurement of the investment return of the practice of influencer marketing has been presented as a difficulty in influencer marketing campaigns (Launch Metrics, 2018; Linqia, 2018; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). However, in 2019 a study carried out by the Influencer Marketing Hub (2019) found that 70% of companies and agencies surveyed, measure the Return on Investment (ROI) of influencer marketing campaigns.

The metrics used to measure the success of an influencer marketing campaign must be adapted to the specific objectives of each campaign, so if a campaign focuses on awareness, the metrics of visualizations and reach must be applied. Similarly, if the campaign objective is to lead to an action, then the metric should focus on clicks and/or engagement (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019; Social Publi, 2019). Increased traffic to the brand's website, increased sales, press coverage and audience quantity and quality are referred as metrics for measuring the success of an influencer marketing campaign (Launch Metrics, 2018; Social Publi, 2019).

Despite the difficulties on the part of professionals in measuring the return on investment and the impact of this practice, brands continue to make efforts and increase budgets in order to integrate digital influencers in their strategies (Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). In order to develop an effective and successful influencer marketing campaign, digital influencers must be given both creative freedom, to create original content, and the freedom to speak honestly about products, being able to make comparisons and identify flaws, otherwise their authenticity and credibility can be called into question (Casaló et al., 2018; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). Digital influencers have a greater knowledge of the language and content that works best with their own audience, so brands must communicate the campaign's guidelines and objectives without restricting the influencers' creative freedom, so that they can create authentic and original content that is perceived as attractive and credible by audience (Casaló et al., 2018; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017).

Methodology

This investigation applied a qualitative research method, so that the experts' perceptions of the role of digital influencers during the different stages of the influencer marketing campaign process, could be explored and understood on a deeper level (Saunders et al., 2016). As the perceptions and experiences of experts on the research topic are not clearly identified, conducting a qualitative research is appropriate, as it extents the understanding of a phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, qualitative research is the one that best fits the exploratory purpose of this investigation and allows, through a small number of non-representative cases, to acquire greater knowledge about the underlying reasons and motivations (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The study applied a mono-method, focusing on only the qualitative aspect and using a content analysis strategy (Saunders et al., 2016). The sampling technique used in this study was non-probabilistic, intentional and convenience sampling, as interviews were conducted with professionals in the beauty sector with experience in influencer marketing. Since sampling is non-probabilistic, it does not allow generalization of results (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Study Unit of Analysis

The beauty sector represents one of the most relevant sectors in terms of influencer marketing (along with the fashion, retail and entertainment sector), given that consumers, especially younger

people, consume digital influencers content on social media on a daily basis and follow their product recommendations (Marketeer, 2019; Social Publi, 2019). The power and influence of digital influencers on Instagram has been increasing, especially among young women, who are the main consumers of beauty products (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This audience uses Instagram for shopping ideas, discovering brands and products in the sphere of fashion and beauty. Thus, Instagram has stood out as the preferred social network site for the implementation of influencer marketing campaigns (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019), especially in the beauty sector (Launch Metrics, 2018; Social Publi, 2019). Correspondingly, this study aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the perspective of professionals in the beauty sector in relation to digital influencers and influencing marketing, specifically on Instagram.

Sample Characterization

Literature suggested anywhere from five to 50 participants as adequate sample size for a qualitative study (Dworkin, 2012). Indeed, in-depth interviews are not as concerned with formulating generalizations to a larger population and do not incline towards hypothesis testing but tend to be more inductive and aim to create categories from the data and then to analyze the weights and relationships between identified categories. Therefore, a sample size of a qualitative study should be large enough to describe the subject of the study and to achieve saturation which is defined as "the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data" (Dworkin, 2012, p. 1319).

In total, eight semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, three of which were conducted with professionals working for public relations and communication agencies with experience in the beauty sector, one with a digital influencers agency, with agents in the beauty area, two with retailers in the beauty sector, and two to beauty brand representatives. The choice of respondents was based on two criteria: (1) their scope of action was to be the beauty sector, (2) they should have had already carried out campaigns of influencer marketing, specifically in the beauty sector. Those assumptions limited the sample size, but interviews assured a certain level of saturation. Table 1 depicts the sample characterization and the interviews duration in more detail.

Table 1. Sample Characterization

Main Activity/Type	Company Name	Function in the company	Duration of Interview	No of pages of the transcript
Communication Agency	Quiosque PR	Senior Account	55 min	12
	LPM	Project Manager – Social People	40 min	9
	Pondera	Account	54 min	8
Influencers Agency	What About Agency	Account	*online session*	9
Retalist	Perfumes & Companhia	Brand Manager Exclusive Make Up & Skin Care Brands	32 min	7
	Sephora Portugal	Project Manager Sephora Collection & Exclusive Skincare	35 min	6
Brand	L'Oréal Portugal	Digital & Communication Manager	48 min	14
	Inglot	Brand Manager	*online session*	4

Procedure

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured in-depth interviews that, due to their interactive nature, allow greater flexibility in exploring the subject (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The interviews were carried out between the 14th of June and the 13th of July 2019 with professionals in the beauty sector, communication agencies and a digital influencers agency, using an interview guide. The interviews were conducted by the research assistant (two of the interviews were conducted during online sessions) and lasted 32–55 minutes. The interview questions were primary pre-tested and suffered a few subsequent modifications. The interview questions were grouped around the steps of influencer marketing campaign, its difficulties and challenges, and the expectations for the future. Table 2 displays the interview flow, as well as the main codes identified.

Table 2. Interview Structure and Main Codes

Interview Block	Questions/Affirmations	Main Code Categories
Initiation	Presentation; Acknowledgement for participation and contribution; Scope of the interview; Purpose of the investigation; Request for sincerity in answers - there are no right or wrong answers; Request to record the interview for later transcription	
Power of Digital Influencers	Whom do you consider to be a digital influencer?	**Digital influencer definition:** creator of content, has a significant number of followers, influencing power, source of inspiration, storyteller, engagement
	For you, what is the difference between a micro influencer and a macro digital influencer?	**Difference between micro and macro influencer:** number of followers, communication tone, engagement
	Do you consider digital influencers important for brands in the beauty sector? (Why?/Why not?)	**The importance of digital influencers for the beauty sector:** communication vehicle, credibility, opinion leader, experience sharing
Instagram	Instagram has been chosen as the preferred social networking site for the implementation of influencer marketing campaigns in the beauty sector. What do you consider to be the reasons for Instagram's popularity? Why Instagram is seen to have such an importance in influencing marketing campaigns in the sector?	User profile, content instantaneity, built-in statistics, e-commerce, relationship, easiness of interaction, photos and information sharing
Instagram Influencer Marketing Campaign Process	How does the process of an influencer marketing campaign on Instagram work?	Planning, recognition, alignment, motivation, coordinating
Planning	What are the main goals of brands in the beauty sector when working with digital influencers on Instagram?	**Objectives of the campaign:** user generated content, experimentation, awareness, sales
	What do you consider to be the role of digital influencers in brand communication?	**The role of digital influencers:** brand advocacy, mediating, storytelling
	In general, in Instagram influencing marketing campaigns, which target audience do you want to reach?	**Target-market:** generation X, Y, Z; Budgeting, content quality, brand relations, engagement, reach
Recognition	How do you identify digital influencers to carry out influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram? Based on what factors? What are the selection criteria that are used to decide which digital influencers will work in a given campaign?	**Criteria of selection:** available budget, type and quality of content, number and type of followers, relation to brand, brand fit, communication tone, connections with other brands, credibility, content, audience profile, reach

Table 2. Interview Structure and Main Codes (Cont.)

Interview Block	Questions/Affirmations	Main Code Categories
Alignment	Regarding the implementation of the Instagram influencer marketing campaign, in which formats do you usually work? (i.e., Instagram Stories, Sponsored Publications, IG TV). And why?	**Preferred formats:** sponsorship, Insta-stories, sponsored content, IGTV
	What kind of content do you usually employ? (i.e., giveaways, event coverage, hauls, reviews, tutorials, product display? Why?	**Preferred content:** tutorials, reviews, product placement, events covering, giveaways, hauls
Motivation	How does your company usually reward digital influencers?	**Forms of recompensating:** monetary rewards, sending products, invitations for events, brand proximity
	Do you usually work with monetary or non-monetary rewards?	
	How do you motivate digital influencers to continue producing content about the brand after a campaign?	**Campaign durability:** short and long term
	Do you generally bet more on long-term collaborations with certain influencers or on specific actions? (Why?)	
Coordination	How does the negotiation process with digital influencers work?	**Negotiation:** contact with influencer, discussing the content, calendarization, discussing recompensating
	Do you monitor influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram? In what way?	**Monitoring:** likes, comments, post sharing, new followers, sales
	During the campaign, is there any support that your company offers to its digital influencers? In what way you can support the influencers who work in your campaigns?	**Assisting the influencers:** answering their doubts, sending pictures, sending guidelines
	How do you evaluate the results of an influencer marketing campaign on Instagram?	**Evaluation:** visualizations, reach, impressions, likes, engagement, site traffic, comments, sales rate
Success Factors	What are the factors that make an influencer marketing campaign on Instagram a successful campaign?	Creative freedom, influencer involvement, relations brand-influencer, credibility, content quality, engagement, authenticity, reach, briefing
Difficulties and Challenges	What are the current biggest difficulties and challenges of influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram?	Differentiation, mediation, ROI, buying followers, brand expectations management, recompensing management
Future of Influencer Marketing	What is your opinion regarding the future of influencer marketing on Instagram specifically in the beauty sector?	Influencer marketing growth, long-term relationships, influencer selectivity, professionalization, investment increase
Characterization of the Interviewee	What is your role in the company?	Role, function, time, education, company size
	How long have you been working with the company?	
	What is your academic background?	
	How many employees does your company have?	

Analysis and Discussion of Results

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. After importing the transcript of the interviews, the data was analyzed with the resource of MAXQDA software, using a coding-categorizing technique, which involved ordering the data into categories sorted by broader themes, and then assigning codes to the categories. As a consequence, 23 categories and 106 subcategories were identified (with a total of 855 codes).

Importance of Digital Influencers

Given the increasing consumption of content created by digital influencers on Instagram and its impact on the discovery of new brands and products by consumers (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019), digital influencers have assumed an increasingly important role in the marketing strategies of brands. When asked about the relevance of influencers, all interviewees stated that they are important and that they assume even greater significance in the beauty sector.

Sharing experiences and opinions is considered the main reason for the relevance of digital influencers, this is because, through the content they create, they are able to transmit to their audience not only the features of the products, but also their characteristics and functionality. At the same time, the fact that they are perceived as a credible source of information, adds to their importance in the eyes of professionals in the beauty sector, who see their ability to serve as vehicles of communication for different audiences as an advantage. In total, 98 codes were identified as it comes to the definition of digital influencer. Figure 3 shows the most mentioned roles of digital influencers ("number of codes assigned" indicates also the frequency with which the topic was mentioned during interviews).
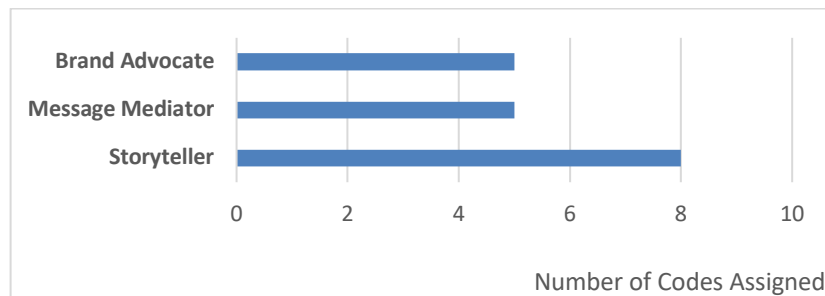

Figure 3. Role of Digital Influencers

Although the number of followers is a mainstay in the definition of a digital influencer, it is possible to verify that, increasingly, the weight given to the type and quality of shared content is greater. Thus, with the evolution of the practice of influencer marketing, this study confirmed that there has been a paradigm shift on the part of professionals in the beauty sector with regard to what they define as a digital influencer, as referred by the Senior Account of Quiosque PR:

> *"The content they share, I think, is the most important for a digital influencer. More important than the number of followers they have"* - Verbatim Senior Account (PR kiosk).

The problem of followers' purchase was a phenomenon that came to discredit the number of followers as the sole criterion for the definition of digital influencer and created the need to look for other factors that could be useful for the definition of a digital influencer. The rate of interactions or engagement has become complementary to the number of followers, in order to assess whether there is actually resonance on the part of followers in relation to the digital influencer and to be able to combat the difficulty of tracking the authenticity of the number of followers, as mentioned by Brand Manager for Inglot:

> "*A digital influencer is someone who, as the name implies, has some influence on his followers. As a rule, this power of influencer is not limited to the number of followers, but to the engagement they create*" - Verbatim Brand Manager (Inglot).

Influencer Marketing on Instagram

Instagram has been chosen as the preferred social site to implement influencer marketing campaigns (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019; Launch Metrics, 2018; Social Publi, 2019). The instantaneousness of the content was the most pointed reason for the popularity of Instagram in the implementation of influencer marketing campaigns. The possibility of sharing audiovisual content was highlighted by the interviewees and corroborates with Piskorski and Brooks (2017), who affirm that the image is the key in the beauty sector, which justifies the popularity of Instagram:

> "*Above all, the first impact of Instagram is the image, and when you work in the beauty sector, the image - the aesthetic, the inspiration and the aspiration – is the most important*"
> - Verbatim Digital & Communication Manager (L'Oréal).

Additionally, the development of e-commerce has made Instagram increasingly attractive to brands. The possibility to tag the brands in the photos and redirect users to the brand profile, as well as the possibility to swipe up to external links and the development of the 'buy button', that allows tagging specific products of the brands, their price and redirecting to purchase, are some of the Instagram features that have aroused the commercial interest of professionals in the beauty sector.

Influencer Marketing Campaign Process on Instagram

As it comes to the influencer marketing campaign, the first issue mentioned by interviewees, was the importance of defining the available budget to reward the digital influencers (resources available for the campaign). All the interviewees affirmed that the campaign should always start with budget and objectives statement, because, at the outset, it determines the type of format and content that will be implemented, as well as the identification and selection of digital influencers, who have different costs:

> "*We have budgets and therefore the Sephora team must first understand what we want to communicate and whom we want to reach. Then, we must understand what kind of influencers fit our type of communication, which ones fit or not with the brand, then we get in touch with them and see if they are interested to make a connection with the product and brand*" - Verbatim Project Manager (Sephora).

The future recompensating of digital influencers appears again in the motivation phase and may include monetary and/or non-monetary remuneration, which has been already defined in accordance with planning, and later negotiated in the coordination phase.

Planning

When asked about the main objectives when working with digital influencers on Instagram, it was unanimous among respondents that the main objective is to create awareness both for a new product/service and for the brand. However, it has been consistently said that sales are inevitably

a goal, especially by brands and retailers. Although it is difficult to measure this conversion directly, it is stated that sales are the ultimate goal of campaigns, even if not verifiable in the short term.

> *"The main objective is to try to create brand awareness about our brands, try to create the biggest buzz possible and make the brand to be known, but always with the ultimate goal of influencing sales"* - Verbatim Project Manager (Sephora).

On the part of the agencies, there is a greater awareness of the difficulty of associating a conversion of direct sales, stating that the main objective must be to work on the brand and products/services awareness, supporting the creation of their reputation, hoping that in the long run term it can be beneficial in terms of sales (in total 12 codes were identified in this category).

Recognition

As it comes to the recognition and choice of influencers, 79 codes were identified in six main categories: available budget, content quality, target-market, relationship with brand, reach and engagement. With regard to the factors that help to identify the digital influencers for a given campaign, the interviewees highlighted more frequently the relationship with the brand, that is, the previous connection and affinity with the brand, which will bring greater authenticity and credibility to the campaign. The quality and type of content, engagement, target audience and reach are also considered. Less frequently, the available budget that determines the selection of digital influencers was mentioned.

The measure that also stood out in the number of counts was "engagement", that is perceived as the interaction rate followed by the number of followers. This reflects the emerging need to decentralize the number of followers, as the main choice factor and to give priority to the interaction and involvement that digital influencers have with their audience. The "fit with the brand" was also mentioned as a relevant selection criterion, and it means: to reflect the values and positioning of the brand, not forgetting the importance of reach. Another criterion mentioned was the "connection to other brands", especially given that most of the brands are betting more and more on digital influencers, which in turn means that the influencers tend to communicate with many brands. Thus, the selection of brands with which digital influencers are related can condition the choice, especially if they are competing brands.

Alignment

In view of the preferred formats in the implementation of influencer marketing campaigns, the interviewees highlighted the "posts" as the format of choice, followed by "Instagram stories". The IGTV, which is a standalone video application by Instagram, was mentioned a few times, as it is beginning to gain strength with digital influencers, but it is still little explored by brands. What drives beauty industry professionals to give preference to "posts" over "stories" seem to be the fugacity of "stories" and the lack of visibility of their metrics to the general public. However, "stories" is a format that is gaining popularity and becomes increasingly used as a complement to "posts", since they impact a larger number of people in a shorter time and have a more informal communication record, which in turn, creates interaction with the audience. In total, 77 categories were coded for the preferred campaign formats and contents (Figures 4 and 5 show the frequency of coded segments – the number of times they were mentioned during the interviews).
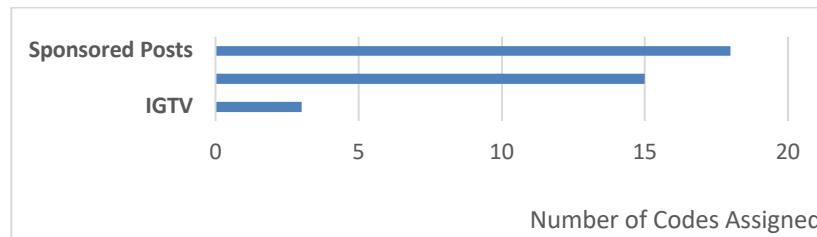
Figure 4. Preferred Formats in Campaign Implementation

The preferred contents in the implementation of influencer marketing campaigns, most mentioned by the respondents, were the giveaways and tutorials. Also mentioned, although less frequently, were the coverages of events, reviews, hauls and product placement (Figure 4).
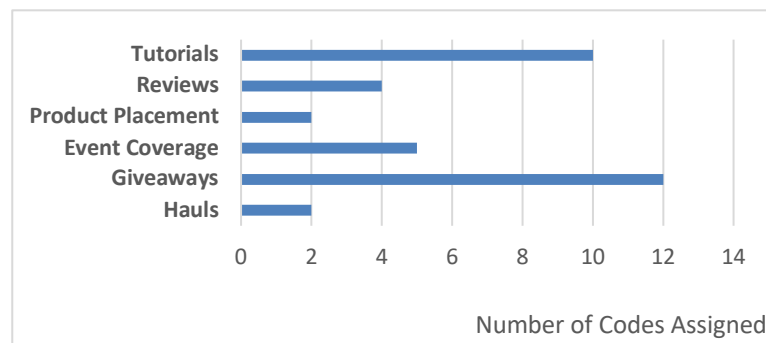

Figure 5. Preferred Content in Campaign Implementation

The reasons why giveaways are given more importance is, according to the interviewees, the possibility of increasing brand awareness, perceiving the followers' interest in the product, creating buzz and increasing the number of followers on the brand's own page. The tutorials are presented by the interviewees as an asset, especially in the beauty sector, since they are an effective way to show the potential of products, their application and their results. The opinion of the interviewees is in line with the study by Piskorski and Brooks (2017), which highlights tutorials as a prominent content for digital influencers in the beauty sector, not only for the usefulness of demonstrating and comparing products, but also for the possibility to interact in the comments and exchange experiences.

Motivation

Regarding the way the companies motivate and reward digital influencers, 89 categories were coded (Figure 6 shows the most frequently mentioned categories). Respondents affirmed that the most frequent way to reward the influencers is to send them products. Also, the monetary remuneration seems to be gaining more importance, given the growth of influencer marketing, its professionalization, and the greater commitment and appreciation of this practice by brand managers (that also goes in accordance with: Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019; Linqia, 2018; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Social Publi, 2019).
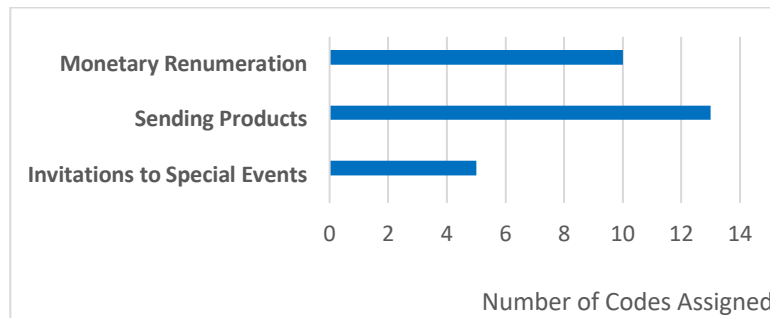
Figure 6. Rewarding Digital Influencers

Other rewards, such as invitations to events and experiences (launch events or even brand trips), were also mentioned, however with a lower weight. As it comes to the ways in which digital influencers are being motivated to continue producing content about the brand, even after a campaign, it was unanimous among the interviewees that the key factor is the close relationship that is created between the digital influencer and the brand during the campaign and over the long term:

> *"Influencers are the ones who feel their identification and relationship with the brand and, of their own free will, produce content and publicize the brand because they feel this relationship with it"* - Verbatim Account (What About Agency).

Campaign Durability

The durability of influencer marketing campaigns with a particular digital influencer (29 codes identified for short and long-term campaign durability) is still mostly punctual, however, there is consciousness on the part of the professionals of the advantages of long-term campaigns:

> *"Still, I think that more and more brands are realizing the benefits of establishing long-term collaborations - because it conveys something much more organic and is more positive in the influencer-brand relationship*" - Verbatim Account (What About Agency).

The reasons given for the fact that there is still a greater focus on shorter campaigns, are fundamentally related to the costs associated with long-term collaboration. However, it was also pointed out that companies are backed on short-term collaborations in accordance with the product novelty - despite the fact that long-term collaborations bring some advantages, they may not make sense for the same digital influencer. Given that, the short-term or "one-off" collaborations can be interesting for brands.

Coordination

Three factors were indicated as crucial for the campaign coordination: 1) negotiation (30 identified codes), 2) monitoring (35 codes), and 3) evaluation (55 codes identified). Negotiation, according to the interviewees, goes through two main points of discussion: the content/format and the reward of digital influencers. In addition to negotiating content, formatting and coordinating activities, and scheduling, the interviewees note the importance of the negotiation of the reward - which is normally discussed and adjusted according to the conditions presented by the digital influencer and the budget available to the brand:

> *"The negotiation process always involves sending a proposal (with value or without it), the influencer responds with his proposed value or accepts the one proposed: Then we start discussing ways of communicating, the content, conditions, what works best, what cannot happen… there is still the negotiation of what content works best"* - Verbatim Account (PR kiosk).

When asked about monitoring, all respondents replied that they monitored the campaigns and consider the enormous relevance of this control during the campaign in order to be able to somehow respond or make any changes if something unforeseen happens, or if something is not implemented according to what was previously negotiated. Regarding the metrics they use to monitor, "likes" and "comments" were highlighted and only one interviewee mentioned that he was shadowing sales as a form of monitoring (Figure 7 shows the categories mentioned more frequently).
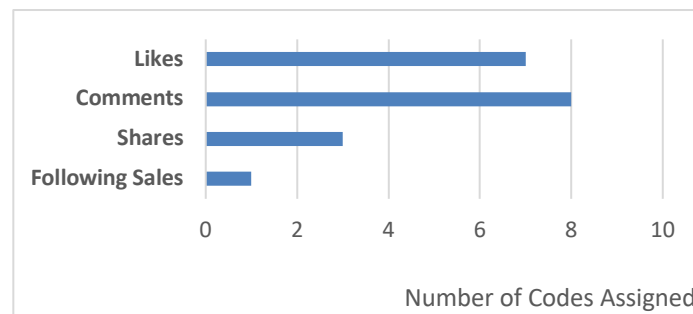

Figure 7. Monitoring

In view of the support given to digital influencers during the campaign, it mostly involves clarifying doubts on the part of professionals, whether it is about the specifics of the product to be communicated, or about specific issues raised by followers. Evaluation is essential to assess the effectiveness of the influencer marketing campaign, to give feedback to digital influencers and, possibly, to make changes in the next campaigns in order to improve results. The metrics most used by respondents to measure campaign results were "reach" and "engagement". Traffic to the brand's website is also considered an important metric. With less weight, but still mentioned a few times, were the number of "views", "comments", "likes" and the estimated conversion into actual sales. However, the metrics can vary according to the objectives established for the campaign.

Success Factors

In order to understand what are the key factors for a campaign success, respondents were asked which factors were essential to achieve the expected objectives of influencer campaign (52 codes were identified for this section and related to: creative freedom, engagement, relationship, credibility, content quality, authenticity, reach, briefing). Relevantly, the most mentioned factor was the "creative freedom" given to digital influencers, what is in line with the studies carried out by Casaló et al. (2018) as well as Piskorski and Brooks (2017), in which the authors emphasize the importance of brands giving a well-structured briefing (a factor also mentioned, although with less weight, by the interviewees) but allowing digital influencers to have the creative freedom to create the content in an authentic, original and consistent way, given that they are the ones who know their audience:

> *"I would say creative freedom and involvement. I think it has to be more than a commissioned job. Monitoring is also very important. And as it comes to the creative freedom, it is very important that they are creative, but within what is intended. That is why it is also important to have a good briefing and then obviously leave room for creativity, follow up on cases of doubt"* - Verbatim Project Manager (LPM).

Credibility and authenticity were also frequently mentioned, followed by the relationship established between the brand and the influencer. Finally, with less relevance, the interviewees mention the involvement of the digital influencer in the project, the engagement that the digital influencer manages to create with his followers within the scope of the campaign, the scope of the content produced for the campaign and the content quality.

Difficulties and Challenges

When asked about the main difficulties and challenges of influencer marketing on Instagram, 30 different codes were identified in five main categories: differentiation, measuring ROI, buying followers, managing expectations, recompensating. Respondents mainly highlighted the difficulty in measuring the return on investment of these campaigns. Undeniably, there is a lot of pressure to explore the measurement metrics and to be able to justify the investments. In accordance with the interviewees, in the long term all the investments are reflected in building increased brand awareness:

> *"Although we have metrics, it is still difficult to evaluate the return on investment. We are very dependent on the algorithms"* - Verbatim Project Manager (LPM).

Furthermore, it was pointed out with the same frequency, that the "management of rewards" and "differentiation" are quite problematic. With regard to the "management of the rewards" (recompensating), the difficulty is due to the luck of practice and the prices charged by different digital influencers for the different campaigns are normally not known, which makes it challenging for professionals to manage rewards. Given the growing commitment to use digital influencers, there is a need of "differentiation": proposing original campaigns that still maintain relevance for the consumer. This issue is considered by the interviewees as a major challenge of the influencer campaigns.

Future of Influencer Marketing

Interviewees predicted that the influencer marketing in the beauty sector will continue to grow and will become more professionalized (29 codes were identified and relate to: expected growth of influencer marketing, establishing long-terms relationships, selectivity in the choice of influencer, professionalization, investment growth). However, given that each time more brands are investing in influencer marketing, respondents believe that this will awaken greater selectivity of digital influencers, with a special caution, so they will not lose their credibility among followers.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of specialists in the beauty sector in relation to digital influencers and the influencer marketing campaign on Instagram. With regard to the RQ1, it was unanimously noted by all professionals, that digital influencers are quite relevant

for brands in the beauty sector due to three factors: 1) the need for product experimentation, which through the sharing of experiences and opinions of digital influencers is filled; 2) the credibility associated with digital influencers that make followers relate to them and trust their opinions, as already proven in previous studies (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Piskorski & Brooks, 2017; Veirman et al., 2017); and finally, 3) their capacity to serve as vehicles of communication, as they can shape the messages of the brands to their narratives, include them in their daily lives in a natural and authentic way and reach different audiences. In view of RQ2 that considers the organization of the influencer marketing campaign process, it was possible to confirm that it goes in accordance with the model proposed by Lin et al. (2018). In RQ3 it was intended to understand which factors were considered fundamental for a successful influencer marketing campaign on Instagram. It can be concluded that the creative freedom given to digital influencers was indicated as the most relevant factor, confirming the postulates of Casaló et al. (2018), Piskorski and Brooks (2017), as well as Social Publi (2019). However, sector professionals reflect the importance of existing guidelines and that the content undergoes approval before publication. Other factors, such as authenticity, credibility and the relationship between brand and digital influencer were also mentioned. In RQ4, considering the difficulties and challenges of influencer marketing, the lack of robust measurement of the return on investment was highlighted (as in the study by Piskorski & Brooks, 2017). The "management of the reward" of digital influencers and the "differentiation" of campaigns were also assumed as difficult and challenging for professionals in the beauty sector, which represents a new and relevant insight. Concluding, this study complements the existing literature on the digital influencer marketing and contributes with guideline for professionals who want to include digital influencers in their strategies.

Study Limitations

The limitations of this study are related with the following issues: (1) the sampling is non-probabilistic and the sample is quite small, which prevents the possibility to extrapolate the data to the population; (2) still limited existing literature on the topic of digital influencer marketing, which limited the quality of the references used; (3) the coding in the MAXQDA software was performed only by the authors, which decreases the reliability of the study and, finally; (4) the beauty sector is highly competitive, which led to the fact that in some questions the professionals of the beauty sector did not elaborate their answers extensively and have limited the information given.

Future Research Suggestions

As the influencer marketing is a feasible theme, it is suggested to conduct more studies in order to ample the existing literature and practice. It is also suggested to conduct a quantitative investigation, with a significant sample of brands, in order to have more comprehensible view and be able to extrapolate the findings. Additionally, it would be recommended to replicate the study in different sectors where the use of influencer marketing might be interesting, namely the fashion, technology and hospitality sectors.

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