

HOW CONSUMERS PERCEIVE VLOGGERS? EXPLORING CONSUMER'S PERCEPTIONS AND PURCHASE INTENTION APPLIED TO BEAUTY AND FASHION INDUSTRY

Ponte, Maria; Afonso, Carolina.

ISEG (Lisbon School of Economics & Management), Universidade de Lisboa.

RESUMEN

Con la evolución de los medios digitales y, en consecuencia, con la aparición de nuevas plataformas, los consumidores son más receptivos al contenido compartido en las redes sociales, como es el caso de YouTube, en busca de información para ayudarles en su toma de decisiones. De esta manera, la industria de la moda y la belleza es darse cuenta de la importancia de invertir en campañas de publicidad y de comunicación digitales y en este canal a través de influenciadores digitales. Por lo tanto, la investigación se centra en la red social YouTube y vloggers, aplicado en Portugal y España. Se persigue el objetivo de comprender la dinámica entre las percepciones de los consumidores sobre el contenido de belleza y moda vídeos y la intención de compra, así como entre la credibilidad de percionada vlogger y intención de compra.

Palabras Clave:

YouTube, influenciadores, vloggers, vlogs, revisión, la intención de compra.

ABSTRACT

With the evolution of the digital age and consequently with the emergence of new platforms, consumers are more receptive to the shared content on social networks, for instance with YouTube, looking for information that helps them in their decision making. In this way, the fashion and beauty industry is realizing the importance of digital media and investing in communication and advertising campaigns with digital influencers. Therefore, the research focuses on the social network YouTube and vloggers, applied in Portugal and Spain. It is intended to understand the dynamics between the perceptions of consumers to the content of fashion and beauty videos and the intention of purchase as well as between the perceived credibility of vlogger and the intention of purchase.

Keywords:

YouTube, influencers, vloggers, vlogs, reviews, purchase intention.

1. Introduction

The number of people watching videos related to fashion and beauty on YouTube has increasingly grown (Coursaris & Osch, 2016). Therefore, according to Google's data, the main topics researched on YouTube are related to fashion and beauty, focusing on searches of tutorials and tips (GBSN Research, 2016a). In addition, fashion and beauty brands are investing in celebrities, bloggers and vloggers in their advertising campaigns and the digital channel is becoming an important source of disclosure and revenue (GBSN Research, 2016). Product reviews, demonstrations of the products used and unboxing of new products are examples of videos created and shared by vloggers on social media, like YouTube. In this context, these videos, known by vlogs, have become very popular in the digital world. The evolution and development of social networks have allowed the sharing of content such as texts, images or videos and the establishment of connections between users (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro, 2012), transforming the way consumers communicate and interact between them and with the brands (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

Influencers emerged and began to play an increasingly important role, notably through social networks, transmitting branding messages quickly and easily (Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014). They are considered the new opinion leaders (Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014; Lyons & Henderson, 2005), sharing information, recommendations and ideas with the public (Keller & Fay, 2016). Therefore, these influencers, more specifically, vloggers, use platforms such as YouTube to produce and share videos (Molyneaux, O'Donnell; Gibson & Singer, 2008) about products they use in their daily routine or their personal life, being able to influence, in a more authentic way, the consumer opinion (Lee & Watkins, 2016), and in this way the advertised and recommended products are quickly run out (GBSN Research, 2016).

On the other hand, consumers usually search information about products and recommendations through the reviews on vlogs made by these influencers, considering these more credible and reliable opinions, compared to the information provided by the brands (Constantinides, 2009). In this sense, reviews are considered to be an extremely effective content since they influence and have a positive impact on consumers' decisions, helping them to make informed decisions and, therefore leading to their purchase intention (Xu, Chen, Santhanam, 2015).

The aim of the present study is to understand the influence that vloggers have on the consumer's purchase intention. More specifically, the objective is to deeply understand the impact of consumers' perceptions of the reviews on vlogs in the intention to buy as well as to analyze whether the credibility of the vloggers influences or not the purchase intention.

2. Objectives and Research Problem

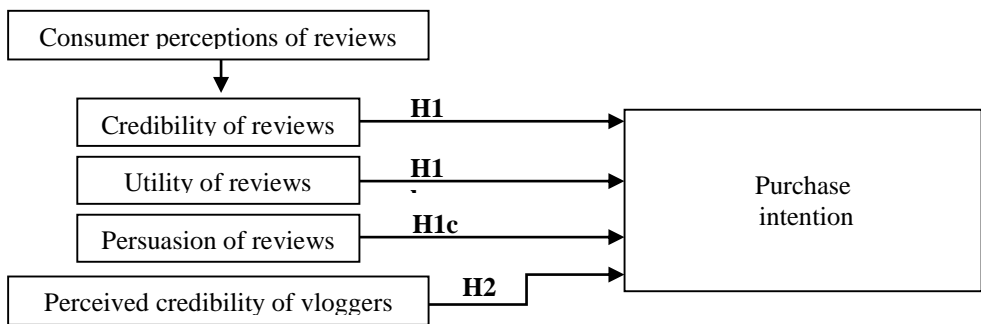
The study focuses on fashion and beauty vloggers with a digital presence in YouTube. The main purpose is to understand if the content produced by vloggers, namely reviews, influence or not the consumer in their purchase intention. The academic relevance of the research is to introduce a model that incorporates constructs that variables that were not yet studied all together, such as the impact of the consumer perceptions of reviews on the purchase intention and the the impact of the perceived credibility of vloggers on the purchase intention. In addition, the intention is to understand the impact of these

aforementioned constructs on the intention to purchase. At managerial level, the objective is to contribute with insights that can enable and marketeers of beauty and and fashion industry to understand how to maximize the investments on digital influencers, namely bloggers. The research questions of the present study are:

- *Research Question 1:* Do consumers' perception of credibility, utility and persuasion have a positive impact on the purchase intention?
- *Research Question 2:* To what an extent does the credibility of the vlogger influence the purchase intention?

Thus, the following conceptual model is presented, being an adaptation of two models from Xu et al. (2015) and Zhang, Zhao, Cheung & Lee (2014).

FIGURE 1: **Research Model.**



According to the research model presented, the research hypotheses are:

- **H1a:** The perception of the credibility of the reviews of the vlogger has a positive impact on purchase intention
- **H1b:** The perception of the utility of the vlogger has a positive impact purchase intention
- **H1c:** The perception of the persuasion vlogger has a positive impact on purchase intention
- **H2:** The higher is the credibility perception of the vlogger by the consumer, the higher is the purchase intention.

3. Expected contributions of the study

The reviews made by consumers have proved to be relevant and convenient not only for consumers and for companies and brands but also as an object of study for several investigations (Zhang et al., 2014; Xu et al., 2015; Chen & Xie, 2004).

These reviews are consider to be an emerging phenomenon and a new element of Marketing communication, taking into account that they assist consumers in collecting

information about the products and consequently their intentions and purchasing decisions. Thus, they play a role as "sales assistants" (Chen & Xie, 2008).

On an academic level, there are some studies related to reviews (Zhang et al., 2014; Xu et al., 2015; Chen & Xie, 2004) but only a few address the subject of reviews performed on YouTube by vloggers (Molyneaux et al., 2008; Lee & Watkins, 2016; Coursaris & Osch, 2016). In addition, to the best of author's knowledge there are no studies that investigate, in a combined form, the variables that the present study proposes to analyze.

However, this research is also interesting for companies, since video reviews are considered to be influencing sales (Xu et al., 2015; Chen & Xie, 2004), with a great impact on consumer perceptions (Xu et al., 2015), improving manager's decision making (Zhang & Watts, 2008). Companies can invest in new communication tools, through vloggers, in order to attract consumers through the opinions, recommendations and ideas of these influencers. Consumers trust and feel that they are receiving branded product/service information from a credible source, therefore contributing to their brand awareness (Gardner & Lehnert, 2016), to increase brand exposure, brand sales and, finally, to generate and create brand agitation and presence at the level of social networks (Ivory Content, 2015). The study will be conducted in Spain and Portugal, since most investigations in the area are carried out in other countries. In this way, it is intended to have a better understanding on how Portugal and Spain perceive the impact of the variables in analysis and the intention of purchase and, further on, a comparison between the studies applied in other countries.

4. Metodology

4.1. Type of study and Sample

In this investigation, a deductive approach is used, since a research strategy is designed to test the previously stated hypotheses and to conclude on the relations between the analyzed variables. Thus, the study is quantitative and explanatory, with the purpose of explaining the relationships between the studied variables, establishing causal relationships between them (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The strategy used is a survey, through an online (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Regarding the time horizon, the study is cross-sectional since the investigation was carried out at a certain point in time (Saunders et al., 2009).

The research population is characterized by users of the YouTube social network, meaning, users who view fashion and beauty videos on YouTube as well as vloggers who produce and share fashion and beauty videos on YouTube, residentes in Spain and Portugal. On a sample level, as in, the population's target group, (Saunders et al., 2009), it consists of individuals with characteristics similar to those of the population. In the present study, the sampling technique used is non-probabilistic for convenience, since the elements of the sample can be selected by the investigator and the sample units are accessible and easy to measure (Saunders et al., 2009; Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

4.2. Data collection

For the data collection, the mono method is used as a single data collection technique. Thus, the questionnaire is the primary data collection technique being used. The questionnaire is structured, self-administered by the respondents and Internet-mediated,

allowing access to a larger sample and answering the research questions formulated (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the questionnaire was developed on the Qualtrics platform and was promoted online and in closer collaboration with local vloggers. In addition to primary data, secondary data was also collected through bibliographic databases and websites related to influencers, vlogs and video trends.

4.3. Questionnaire and Measuring scales

The questionnaire is composed of questions of closed and mandatory response. The questions were elaborated taking into account scales already referenced and tested by authors, and these were adapted to the present investigation. In order to fulfil the research objectives and questions, a dichotomic initial question was included to make sure that all respondents follow vloggers in fashion and beauty on YouTube. This question acted like a filter question. The remain questions were measured on 7 point Likert scale, ranged from 1 - Strongly disagree to 7 - Strongly agree (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

The final data collection has started in May and it is still ongoing. The objective is to collect around 1000 responses from Spain and Portugal.

4.4. Preliminary Data

A pre-test was carried out in April 2017, with a sample of 21 individuals, with the purpose of validating and testing the scales in order to verify the perceptibility of questions.

The results of the pre-test are shown in table 1. The scales that were used proved to be adequate, with good Cronbach's Alpha, except for the scale of the utility of reviews. However, adaptations were made to this scale for the final data collection.

TABLE 1: Pre-test analysis of the questionnaire.

Constructs	Descriptive Statistics		Factor Analysis	Reliability and Internal Consistency Analysis	
	Average (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (S^2)	KMO	Reliability Statistics	
				Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Credibility of reviews	4.88	0.94	0.83	5	0.92
Utility of reviews	5.72	0.55	0.41	3	0.60
Persuasion of reviews	5.08	0.77	0.65	4	0.72
Vloggers credibility	4.59	0.71	0.64	4	0.72
Purchase intention	5.13	0.99	0.76	4	0.89

Source: Self elaboration.

5. Conclusions

This research intend to conclude about the importance of YouTube and the influencers - vloggers - as a platform for sharing content and interaction. Consumer perceptions regarding the utility and persuasion of reviews are expected to be the variables that will

have the greatest impact on the purchase intent, since consumers find the reviews convincing and convenient.

In addition, it is hoped to confirm that the credibility of the vloggers, meaning, the knowledge and trust conveyed by them, will influence and lead to the purchase intention of the products or services advertised in their videos. It is expected to have a better perception of the consumers in Portugal and Spain, regarding the reviews made by vloggers as well as to make comparisons with studies of this thematic in other countries.

On an academic context, it is hoped to contribute with greater knowledge about YouTube, digital influencers and their reviews, as well as to demonstrate relationships between variables that have not been studied combined.

Therefore, on a managerial level, the research aims to demonstrate that influencers have the power to influence consumers through platforms such as YouTube with dynamic and interactive content such as video. In this way, fashion and beauty brands have the opportunity to communicate and interact with consumers more creatively and more closely, increasing their exposure as well as sales and creating excitement and presence on social networks. The research is intended to help fashion and beauty brands gain greater knowledge and understanding of vloggers and their reviews and how they jointly work to reach consumers and sell more effectively.

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