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The influence of digital content creators on purchase

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Abstract: Currently, with the rapid development of technological innovation, human beings are living in an era where the digital environment is completely part of their daily lives. This change is increasingly technological and digital and for that reason, digital marketing has been a strong bet for companies to increase their sales. In this sense, digital content creators have been one of the ways for companies to reach their consumers more easily. With this technological evolution, the public has become more receptive to the content that is disseminated on social networks and for this reason digital content creators have been a bet for companies to increase their sales. In this context, the objective of this article is to analyze the influence of digital content creators on the purchase of products and services by consumers. Based on this assumption, a quantitative methodology was followed, through the development and application of a questionnaire to respond to the objectives of this study.

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The results indicated that the number of social networks that content is watched depends on age, but not on salary. It was also possible to determine, with 95% confidence, that the average number of hours spent watching content in which influencers recommend products/services is between 2.94 and 6.03 hours. Regarding the social network, who has Instagram as the most used social network, mostly follows some creator of digital content. As for the average age, it is lower for those who follow and higher for those who do not follow a digital content creator (33.22 years compared to 43.54 years). On the other hand, people who watch more hours of content on average are those who buy more products and services advertised by influencers (6.26 hours compared to 1.80 hours).

Keywords: Content Creators; Influence; Purchase Behavior; Digital.

1. Introduction

The 21st century has been marked by numerous digital transformations, it is possible to observe that there has been a change in the way brands have been marketing their products and services. The internet has made possible the development of a digital environment, in which social networks have a fundamental role in brand communication. In light of this, digital influencers emerged as powerful vehicles of information about brands, products, and services [1]. In [2], the author claims that inbound marketing and the creation of content can drive engagement, pulling customers to the firm. According to [3], communication and advertising that is done on social networks such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook are more effective when compared to traditional advertising. This made brands change their marketing methods and adopt this new approach that allows for proximity to the consumer. That is why digital influencers appeared and gave voice to brands on social networks, managing to expose them more quickly and reach a greater number of people [4].

Digital Marketing had (and still have) an essential role in the evolution and transformation of more traditional Marketing. It managed to open to consumers a truly expanded range of articles, services, prices, suppliers, and faster and more immediate means of purchase. Companies can use digital content marketing as an effective strategy to improve its digital operations and the sustainability of its communication actions. Moreover, companies that invest in the development of digital contents marketing need to allocate fewer resources to distribution and production, making their online actions more sustainable [5].

In [6], the authors refer that the consumer suffers psychological, social, cultural, and personal influences that are fundamental in the decision-making process. It is in these influences that digital content creators play an important role, as it is these people who

can establish a connection of trust and proximity with the public, bridging the gap between the product or service and the consumer and through their credibility arouse the desire to purchase in consumers. The use of the internet in marketing processes makes it possible to respond more appropriately and quickly to the needs of consumers, offering an improvement in the market situation, greater reach, cost reduction, time reduction and differentiation from the competition. From this perspective, the aim of the study is to analyze, through an online questionnaire and anonymously, the influence of digital content creators on the purchase of products and services by consumers.

2. Methodology

The questionnaire was applied online during October-November of 2022. The target public was the general population and the participation was anonymous and voluntary. The structure of the questionnaire (Table 1) presents a first part with sociodemographic questions, a second part with questions related to the use of social networks and about digital content creators, and finally 7 questions that implied a response in the form of a Likert scale with 5 points, considering that 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

Table 1. Questionnaire.

ID	Question	Scale
Q1	Gender	
Q2	Age	Numeric
Q3	Academic qualifications	Ordinal
Q4	Net monthly salary (approximately)	Numeric
Q5	Do you use social networks?	Yes/No
Q6	What is the most used social network?	
Q7	Do you access social networks daily?	Yes/No
Q8	Are you a follower of any digital content creator (Influencer)?	Yes/No
Q9	How many hours a week, on average, do you watch digital content in which influencers review or recommend products?	Numeric
Q10	How many social networks do you watch this content on?	Numeric
Q11	Have you ever bought any product advertised by an "influencer"?	Yes/No
Q12	If yes, what kind of product?	
Q13	I am inclined to agree with opinions about products/services made by digital content creators.	Likert Scale 1-5
Q14	The knowledge that the digital content creator has about a certain product/service that he recommends is fundamental for me to decide to buy.	Likert Scale 1-5

ID	Question	Scale
Q15	I like to buy products/services that have been recommended on social media.	Likert Scale 1-5
Q16	The probability of buying products/services recommended by digital content creators is high.	Likert Scale 1-5
Q17	When deciding to buy a product/service, I will search on social networks if any digital content creators have reviewed this product/service.	Likert Scale 1-5
Q18	I have already looked for a product/service in a shop, after it was published on social networks.	Likert Scale 1-5
Q19	I only decide to buy a product/service after it has been suggested by a digital content creator.	Likert Scale 1-5

The study begun with an analysis of reliability and factor analysis of the questions answered through the Likert scale. Next, the correlation between the number of social networks to which one watches content (Q10) with age (Q2) and net monthly salary (Q4), was calculated. Then, with the variable how many hours per week on average the respondents watch digital content in which influencers analyze or recommend products (Q9) confidence intervals were applied. Afterwards, with the variable which social network is the most used (Q6), a boxplot was used.

Finally, we tried to understand if there were significant differences between the average of ages (Q2) for those who are and those who are not followers of any digital content creator (Q8) and also if there were significant differences between the average of hours, per week, spent watching digital content in which influencers analyze or recommend products (Q9) and those who buy or not products recommended by influencers (Q11). For these two analyses parametric tests were applied, namely the independent samples test.

Sample Characterization

Of the 100 responses obtained, 74 (74%) are female and 26 are male (26%). Ages vary between 19 and 65 years, with the highest incidence being 39 years. The mean age is 37.04 years and the mode 39 years.

Regarding academic qualifications, more than half of the sample (56%) have a degree, then 26% have a secondary education, 15% have a degree, 2% the 3rd cycle of basic education and 1% a PhD.

About monthly net wages, the average is €1280, the median €1000. It has a minimum of 0€ which corresponds to an unemployed person and a maximum of €25000, which results in a severe outlier since it is an atypical value.

3. Results

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested and a Cronbach's Alpha = 0.920 was obtained, which means that the internal reliability of the Likert scale questions is very good.

Factor analysis was applied to questions Q14, Q16-Q19, Q8 and Q11, using Principal Component Analysis as the extraction method. The value of the KMO statistic is 0.893; being close to 1, means that it presents a good quality for factor analysis, and therefore there is a good correlation between the variables.

Analyzing the commonalities, in the first 5 items (those of the Likert scale), the percentage of explained variability is 100%, in the variable "Have you ever bought any product promoted by any "influencer"?" (Q11) is 80.1% and in the variable "Are you a follower of any digital content creator (Influencer)?" (Q8) is 79.8%. Since all values of commonalities are >0.5, it is verified that all variables have a strong relationship with the retained components.

Table 2. Principal Components Analysis and Total Variance Explained.

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.041	72.008	72.008	5.041	72.008	72.008
2	1.559	22.267	94.275	1.559	22.267	94.275
3	.401	5.725	100.000			
4	1.070E-6	1.529E-5	100.000			
5	9.833E-7	1.405E-5	100.000			
6	6.645E-7	9.493E-6	100.000			
7	4.662E-7	6.660E-6	100.000			

In this case, the Kaiser criterion was used, in which only the 2 main components were retained, as well as the eigenvalues are greater than 1. Following this criterion, it is possible to explain 94.3% of the total variance (Table 2).

Rotation by the VARIMAX method was done to clarify the assignment of the variables to the retained factors. Factor 1 consists of the first 5 variables in Table 3, the 5 positively correlated. A suggestive name for this factor could be: *Importance of influencers in the purchase of products/services*. Factor 2 consists of the last two variables

in Table 3, which are positively correlated. A suggestive name for this factor could be: *Influencers' persuasion.*

Table 3. Rotated component matrix. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Variables	Component	
	1	2
Q14 - The knowledge that the digital content creator has about a certain product/service that he recommends is fundamental for me to decide to buy.	0.998	-0.066
Q16 - The probability of buying products/services recommended by digital content creators is high.	0.998	-0.066
Q17 - When deciding to buy a product/service, I will search on social networks if any digital content creators have reviewed this product/service.	0.998	-0.066
Q18 - I have already looked for a product/service in a store, after it was published on social networks.	0.998	-0.066
Q19 - I only decide to buy a product/service after it has been suggested by a digital content creator.	0.998	-0.066
Q11 - Have you ever bought any product advertised by an "influencer"?	-0.044	0.894
Q8 - Are you a follower of any digital content creator (Influencer)?	-0.074	0.891

Afterwards, an attempt was made to understand the correlation between the number of social networks that content is watched (Q10) with age (Q2) and the net monthly salary (Q4). The correlation between age and the number of social networks that content is watched is the only significant association, but it is weak, since the value obtained from Pearson's correlation is -0.288. Being a negative value, it means that the variables vary in the opposite direction, so, when age increases, the number of social networks that content is watched decreases.

Analyzing Q9, "How many hours a week, on average, respondents watch digital content in which influencers review or recommend products", it was also possible to verify, with 95% confidence, that the average number of hours spent watching content in which influencers recommend products/services is between 2.94 and 6.03 hours.

Through Figure 1, it is possible to verify that the social network TikTok is the social network most used by younger people, while LinkedIn is the most used by older respondents. It can also be seen that Instagram is the most used social network of all, with a total of 56 responses. YouTube is more used by people in their 30s and 40s, although there are exceptions (outliers).

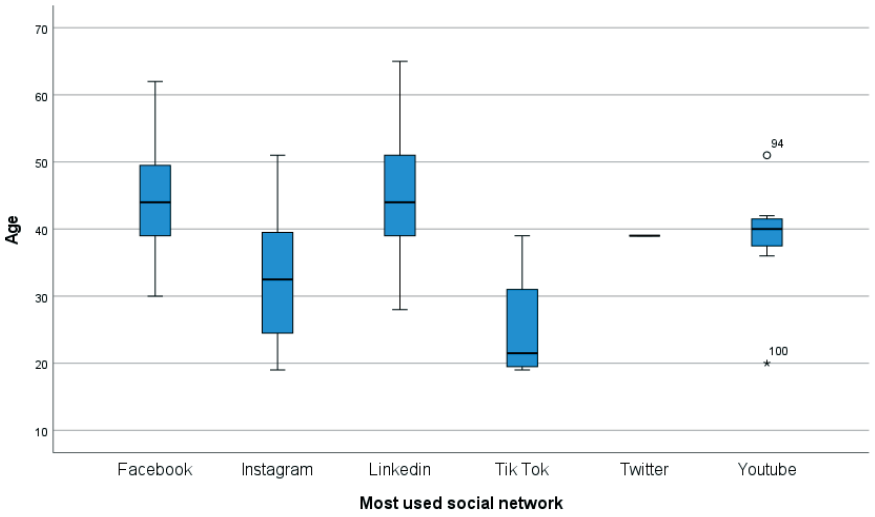

Figure 1. Most used social network and Age

Those who have Instagram as their most used social network mostly follow (N=44) some digital content creator. On Facebook and YouTube, it is divided. Everyone that chose TikTok and Twitter follows some creator and everyone who chose LinkedIn follows none.

Another statistical technique was applied to see if there were significant differences between the average ages for those who are and for those who are not followers of a digital content creator. As the sample is large (> 30) in both groups, it is not necessary to check normality, so it is assumed that a parametric test can be performed, namely the independent samples *t* test. The results ($t = 5.229$, $p<0.001$) show that the average ages are significantly different for those who are followers and for those who are not followers of a digital content creator. In fact, as can be seen in Table 4, the average age is lower for those who follow and higher for those who do not follow a digital content creator (33.22 years compared to 43.54 years).

Table 4. Statistical data between age and being a follower of a digital content creator.

Are you following any influencer?	N	Mean age	SD_{age}	T-Test
No	37	43.54	10.200	t=5.229 p<0.001
Yes	63	33.22	9.115	

Finally, to understand whether there were significant differences between the average number of hours per week spent watching digital content in which influencers review or recommend products and who does or does not buy products recommended by influencers. The results ($t = -3.496$, $p<0.001$) show that the average hours are different for those who buy and for those who do not buy products advertised by influencers. As shown in Table 5, people who watch more hours of content are those who buy more products and services advertised by influencers (6.26 hours compared to 1.80 hours).

Table 5. Statistical data between hours and product purchase.

Have you ever bought a product advertised by an influencer?	N	Mean hours	SD_{hours}	T-Test
No	35	1.80	2.533	t=-3.496 p<0.001
Yes	55	6.26	8.910	

4. Conclusions

After carrying out this investigation, it was concluded that the internal reliability of the questionnaire is excellent. Furthermore, about the factorial analysis, using 7 variables, it was found that there is indeed a correlation between them and that these can be grouped into two new variables.

Regarding the correlation between the "number of social networks that digital content is watched" with the age and salary of the respondents, it was concluded that the number of social networks that content is watched depends on age, but not on salary. In the sense that, as age increases, the number of social networks on which content is watched decreases. Something that can be justified by the fact that the new generations have grown up in the digital age.

Regarding social networks and age, it was found that the social network TikTok is the platform most used by young people, while LinkedIn is used by older people. Instagram is the most used platform and YouTube is most used by generation Y. This conclusion can be important for brands because they can direct their product to the most convenient platform.

It was also concluded that the most used social network is dependent on following a digital content creator. Those who have Instagram as their most used social network mostly follow a digital content creator. On Facebook and YouTube, it is divided. Everyone who chose TikTok and Twitter follows a creator and everyone who chose LinkedIn follows none.

Finally, it can be mentioned that the average age of people who follow a digital content creator is lower than those who do not and that people who watch more hours of content on average are the ones who buy more products and services advertised by influencers.

For future work, it is proposed to implement a study in a larger and more homogeneous sample, since in this investigation most of the respondents (74%) are female. Another suggestion can be to narrow down the study to the influence of a specific product or service.

The limitation of this study was that it was based on a convenience sample, it was not uniform nor representative of the approached scenario. Nevertheless, this analysis is a contribution to the deepening of such a relevant actual subject.

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