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Chapter 51

The Impact of YouTubers' Credibility and Congruence in Consumers' Attitude Towards the Brand



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Abstract The aim of this study was to measure the impact of YouTubers' credibility and congruence in consumers' attitude towards the brand. The population of the study involved students enrolled in Portuguese higher education in 2019. Among a total of 385,247 students, a non-probabilistic sample for convenience of 1,642 was selected. The results showed that the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand ($t = 17.253$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$), the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer ($t = 4.521$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) and the YouTuber credibility ($t = 4.550$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) are predictors of consumers' attitude towards the brand. Moreover, the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand has shown to be a good predictor of consumers' attitude towards the brand and an even better predictor when compared to the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer and to the YouTuber credibility. Finally, the value of R^2_{Adjusted} shows that these predictors account for 58.6% of consumers' attitude towards the brand. A greater credibility of the influencer, a greater congruence of the influencer with the brand and a greater congruence of the influencer with the consumer are characteristics that assume a decisive and positive role in consumers' attitude towards the brand.

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51.1 Introduction

Massive access to the Internet has enabled the exponential growth of influencer marketing, fostering a change in the marketing paradigm. Influencer marketing is a powerful and essential marketing tool [1], not only for marketers, but also for consumers who want entertainment and ideas about new products and brands [2]. Influencer marketing is usually a marketing strategy that involves low investment and high efficiency, as long as followers trust the influencer and his/her opinion [3, 4]. Influencer marketing is basically a word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing strategy, which is commonly used today due to the growing number of influencers on the Internet [5].

Currently, social value and influence are undoubtedly the most important concepts within the field of Web marketing [5]. The development of the Internet has enabled the appearance of new platforms, in which anyone can produce and share content. Many influencers are just people like us, which is why many individuals, especially the younger ones, trust their opinions on a certain product or service [6]. One of the most widely used platforms is YouTube, where the videos made by users are increasingly more popular [7]. YouTubers are considered to be influencers, opinion-makers and trendsetters. Thus, they stir up more interest from consumers than the marketing developed by the brand itself [8]. Users tend to rely more on informal information regarding products and brands which accounts for consumers' personal experience rather than on traditional advertising directly associated with the brands [9]. From the consumers' point of view, the credibility perceived from WOM is higher than common commercial marketing. Within this framework, YouTube has become one of the platforms most visited by consumers looking for information on products before purchase, and such contents affect the purchase intention significantly [10].

The most successful influencers manage to establish such a high level of trust with their followers that the sponsored content is perceived as authentic and genuine, even when consumers know they are being paid [11]. Trust is paramount in building up a relationship between influencer and follower, especially when the influencer has not yet reached a privileged status within the market and when contact with followers does not take place face to face [12]. Credibility is associated with the tendency to believe or trust somebody. Furthermore, being reliable is being trustworthy, sincere and principled. Also, a reliable individual must have knowledge, skills and experience regarding the product or service they are offering or promoting [13]. On the other hand, the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand is crucial to trigger a positive attitude of the consumer towards the brand [14, 15]. The YouTuber must relate to the brand and share similar values in order to communicate with their followers effectively and successfully [16]. Therefore, it is important that the YouTuber/brand relationship is a win-win one, with positive effects for both parties. Also, besides the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand, the congruence of the influencer with the consumer is also crucial, since the YouTuber ends up personifying the brand and their goal is to gain more and new consumers every day [17]. Thus, the YouTuber will have to succeed in creating a connection with consumers, leading them to relate

to them and become more involved with the brand, making them believe that their choice/purchase will be more beneficial to them than the choice of other brands.

51.2 Methods

This is a quantitative and cross-sectional study, whose aim was to determine the impact of YouTubers' credibility and congruence in consumers' attitude towards the brand. A questionnaire was conducted based on a non-probabilistic sample of 1642 students among a total of 385,247 students enrolled in Portuguese higher education in 2019 [18]. The margin of error was 1.41% with a 95% confidence level.

The questionnaire was developed in digital format using Google Docs. Later, it was sent by e-mail to students attending higher education in Portugal in the 2019/2020 academic year. Students' participation was voluntary and anonymity and data confidentiality were ensured to all participants. The questionnaire was composed of three sections. The first section comprised sociodemographic (nationality, district of residence, gender and age) and academic questions (degree course, attended year and attendance mode); the second one contained questions regarding consumer attitude towards the brand using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Table 51.1).

The third and last section contained questions about the YouTuber's credibility, the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand, and the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Table 51.2).

The statistical data treatment was conducted using the software IBM SPSS version 26.0. Initially, the data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics, namely the calculation of absolute and relative frequencies, as well as the calculation of measures of central tendency (mean, mode and median) and measures of dispersion (maximum, minimum and standard deviation) [23, 24].

For the analysis of the questionnaire's reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. The value must be positive, ranging from 0 to 1. Values higher than 0.9 mean that internal 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 admissible [25].

Table 51.1 Dependent variable

Variables	Items
0. Consumer attitude towards the brand [19]	1. I have an extremely favourable attitude towards this brand 2. I like this brand very much 3. My attitude towards this brand is extremely positive

Table 51.2 Independent variables

Variables	Items
1. YouTuber credibility [20]	1. I think this YouTuber is trustworthy 2. I think this YouTuber is sincere 3. I feel like I trust this YouTuber
2. Congruence of the YouTuber with the brand [21]	4. It makes sense to me that this YouTuber sponsors this brand 5. I understand why this brand is related to this YouTuber 6. It makes sense to me that this brand is associated with this YouTuber 7. When I heard about this partnership, I understand the brand better 8. This YouTuber sponsoring this brand says something about the brand 9. I think it is relevant that this brand is associated with this YouTuber 10. It is sensitive that this brand is associated with this YouTuber 11. I can see the link between the brand and the YouTuber 12. To me, the message the brand wants to send with this partnership is clear
3. Congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer [22]	13. This person shares similar interests with me 14. This person has similar values to me 15. This person is very similar to me

The R-Pearson correlation test was used in the bivariate analysis. This test allows calculating the correlation coefficient R , which varies between -1 (perfect inverted/negative correlation) and 1 (perfect direct/positive correlation). Values close to zero indicate a weak correlation and values close to 1 indicate a strong correlation [23]. It tests the null hypotheses:

H01: YouTuber's credibility is not correlated with the consumer's attitude towards the brand.

H02: The congruence of the YouTuber with the brand is not correlated with the consumer's attitude towards the brand.

H03: The congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer is not correlated with the consumer's attitude towards the brand.

Finally, a multiple linear regression model was estimated so as to determine whether factors such as the YouTuber credibility (X_1), the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand (X_2) and the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer (X_3) are predictors of the consumer's attitude towards the brand (Y) [24].

The multiple linear regression model used is as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon \quad (51.1)$$

where:

- Y Consumer attitude towards the brand
- X_1 YouTuber credibility
- X_2 Congruence of the YouTuber with the brand
- X_3 Congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer
- β_0 Constant
- β_1 Parameter of the YouTuber credibility variable
- β_2 Parameter of congruence of the YouTuber with the brand variable
- β_3 Parameter of congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer variable
- ε Errors or residuals of deviations.

Estimates for the parameters β_0 , β_1 , β_2 and β_3 were calculated by the method of least squares. In this method, estimates of regression parameters are obtained so that errors or residuals of deviations are minimal [24].

The variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated to diagnose multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is a model fit problem that can impact parameter estimation. Generally, the VIF is indicative of multicollinearity problems if $VIF > 5$. The tolerance index was also calculated for the same purpose. Tolerance < 1 reveals no multicollinearity, from 1 to 0.10 indicates acceptable multicollinearity and below 0.10 indicates problematic multicollinearity [24].

In order to verify whether the model is significant, an analysis of variance was conducted to verify whether or not any of the independent variables can influence the dependent variable. The analysis of variance tests the null hypothesis of the parameters being null ($H_0: \beta_0 = \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = 0$) against the alternative hypothesis of not all being null ($H_1: \exists i: \beta_i \neq 0$) [24]. The rejection of the null hypothesis only allows drawing the conclusion that at least one β_i is nonzero. In order to find out which parameter is nonzero, multiple tests must be performed. For this, t -test was used to test the null hypothesis of Y not varying linearly with X ($H_0: \beta_i = 0$) against the alternative hypothesis of Y varying linearly with X ($H_1: \beta_i \neq 0$). Thus, the influence of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable was tested [24].

The quality of the model fit was measured by calculating the adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2). Basically, this coefficient indicates the extent to which the model was able to explain the collected data [24].

For the execution of the analytical study, a degree of confidence $(1 - \alpha)$ of 99% was used, to which the correspondent level of significance (α) is 1%. The statistical decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) when the p -value or significance probability is inferior or equal to α [24].

51.3 Results

The age of the students varied between 17 and 50 years old, being the average age 20.1 (SD = 2.724) years old, and the curricular year they attended varied between 0 and 5, with the median and mode being equal to 1 (Table 51.3).

As shown in Table 51.4, among the total of 1642 respondents, the majority was female (66.3%), Portuguese (87.6%) and attended the first year (51.2%) in an ordinary full-time attendance mode (87.5%). Most students lived in the north of Portugal, namely, Porto (26.8%), Bragança (24.5), Braga (15.9%) and Vila Real (9.2%).

As shown in Fig. 51.1, most students knew and followed a YouTuber (67.7%).

When asked about the influencer they follow the most, the responses were very dispersed. However, Paulo Borges, an entertainer, better known as Wuant was the most referenced influencer. In 1000 respondents, he was referred to in 9% of the answers. Wuant is a YouTuber, Rapper and Portuguese artist, known for his humorous characteristic that is present in most of his projects. Helena Coelho (7.8%), the second most mentioned YouTuber is a Portuguese model and television presenter that operates in the fashion and beauty sectors. Another recurrent name was Filipe Neto (5.7%), an entertainer, YouTuber, businessman, actor, comedian, writer and Portuguese-Brazilian philanthropist. In 931 answers, the brands that respondents associated with the YouTuber they follow the most were Adidas (footwear and sportswear for men and women), Sephora (makeup, beauty and perfumery) and Tezenis (underwear, swimsuits and bikinis for women), as shown in Fig. 51.2.

In all the dimensions analysed, namely YouTuber's credibility, congruence of the YouTuber with the brand, congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer and consumer's attitude towards the brand, the mean point of the answer interval was 4.0. This means that below 4.0, students had a low level of agreement; equal to 4.0, their level of agreement was moderate; and above 4.0, their level of agreement was high. As shown in Table 51.5, all the dimensions registered mean values above the moderate level of agreement, namely consumer's attitude towards the brand (Mean = 5.13; SD = 1.739), YouTuber's credibility (Mean = 5.49; SD = 1.660), congruence of the YouTuber with the brand (Mean = 5.11; SD = 1.743) and congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer (Mean = 4.88; SD = 1.788).

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reveals the reliability of the data collected through the questionnaire. Table 51.5 shows that, for the 15 items of the three dimensions (independent variables), namely YouTuber's credibility (X_1), congruence of the YouTuber with the brand (X_2), congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer (X_3), and for the three questions constituting the dependent variable consumer's attitude towards the brand (Y), the internal consistency was 0.942, 0.959, 0.961 and

Table 51.3 Sociodemographic and academic characterization (quantitative variables)

Variables	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
Age (years)	20.1	2.724	19	18	17	50
Attended year	1.7	0.844	1	1	0	5

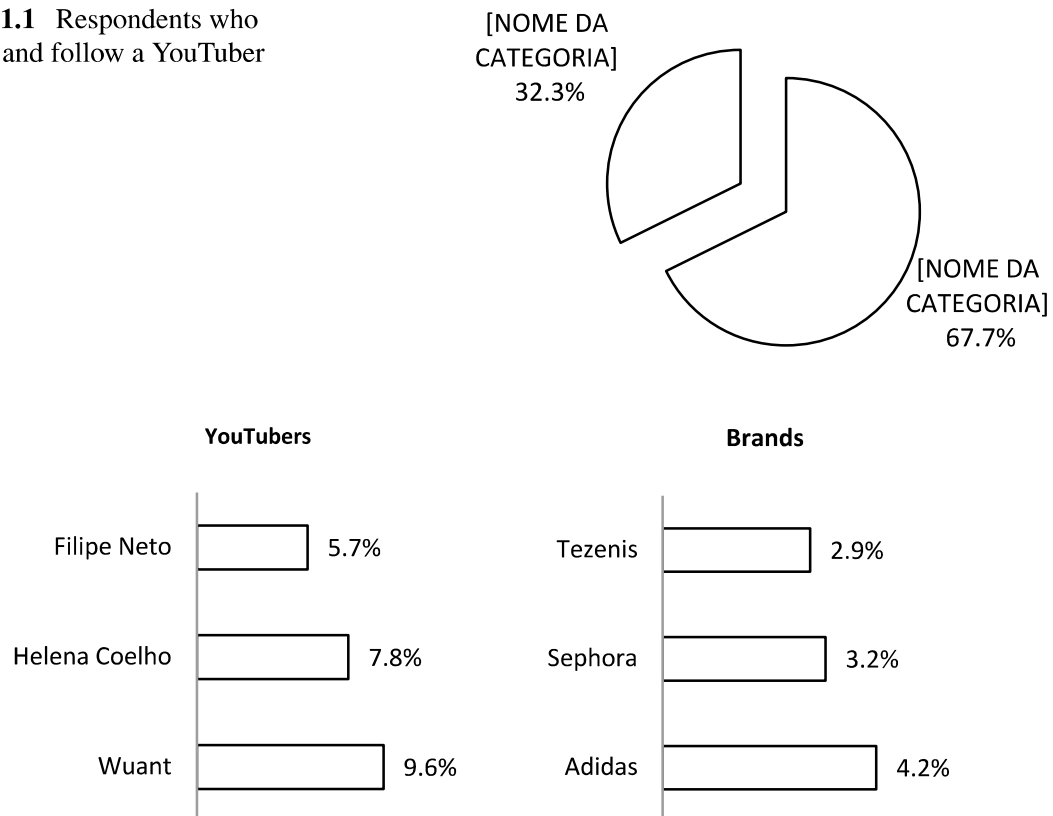
Table 51.4 Sociodemographic and academic characterization (qualitative variables)

Variables	Groups	Frequencies	
		Absolute (<i>n</i>)	Relative (%)
Gender	Female	1088	66.3
	Male	554	33.7
Age classes	17–18 years old	441	26.9
	19–20 years old	734	44.7
	>20 year old	467	28.4
Nationality	Portuguese	1438	87.6
	Other	204	12.4
Other nationality (<i>n</i> = 204)	German	3	1.5
	American	1	0.5
	Angolan	10	4.9
	Brazilian	23	11.3
	Cape Verdean	73	35.8
	Canadian	1	0.5
	Colombian	1	0.5
	Spanish	7	3.4
	French	5	2.5
	Guinean	22	10.8
	Moroccan	1	0.5
	Romanian	1	0.5
	Russian	1	0.5
District of residence (Portugal) (<i>n</i> = 1438)	São Tome and Príncipe	10	4.9
	Switzerland	2	1
	Turkish	3	1.5
	Not specified	40	19.6
	Aveiro	99	6.9
	Braga	229	15.9
	Bragança	352	24.5
	Castelo Branco	37	2.6
	Coimbra	15	1
	Guarda	16	1.1
	Lisboa	54	3.8
	Porto	385	26.8
	Viana do Castelo	25	1.7
	Vila Real	132	9.2
	Viseu	55	3.8

(continued)

Table 51.4 (continued)

Variables	Groups	Frequencies	
		Absolute (n)	Relative (%)
Attended year	Other	37	2.7
	Zero year	5	0.3
	First year	841	51.2
	Second year	485	29.5
	Third year	265	16.1
	Fourth year	39	2.4
	Fifth year	4	0.2
	Missing	3	0.2
Attendance mode	Ordinary	1436	87.5
	Student worker	206	12.5

Fig. 51.1 Respondents who know and follow a YouTuber**Fig. 51.2** Top three YouTubers and brands most referenced by respondents

0.804, respectively. The levels of reliability showed that the dimensions considered in this study are adequate to measure consumer's attitude towards the brand.

Table 51.5 Mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's Alpha and number of items per dimension

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
0. Consumer attitude towards the brand (Y)	5.13	1.739	0.942	3
1. YouTuber's credibility (X_1)	5.49	1.660	0.959	3
2. YouTuber's congruence with the brand (X_2)	5.11	1.743	0.961	9
3. YouTuber's congruence with the consumer (X_3)	4.88	1.788	0.804	3

Table 51.6 Correlation between consumer's attitude towards the brand with YouTuber's credibility, YouTuber's congruence with the brand and YouTuber's congruence with the consumer

Variables	Statistics	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Consumer's attitude towards the brand (0)	R	1.000			
	p -value	—			
YouTuber's credibility (1)	R	0.572	1.000		
	p -value	0.000*	—		
YouTuber's congruence with the brand (2)	R	0.743	0.615	1.000	
	p -value	0.000*	0.000*	—	
YouTuber's congruence with the consumer (3)	R	0.644	0.643	0.747	1.000
	p -value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*	—

*Statistically significant correlation at the significance level of 0.1%

As shown in Table 51.6, the consumer's attitude towards the brand presents a correlation statistically significant, positive and moderate with the YouTuber's credibility ($R = 0.572$; p -value = 0.000) and with the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer ($R = 0.644$; p -value = 0.000). Finally, the correlation between the consumer's attitude towards the brand and the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand is positive and strong ($R = 0.743$; p -value = 0.000).

As shown in Table 51.7, the estimated regression model is statistically significant ($F = 468.671$ and p -value = 0.000 < 0.01). Also, it was found that the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand ($t = 17.253$; p -value = 0.000), the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer ($t = 4.521$; p -value = 0.000) and the YouTuber's credibility ($t = 4.550$; p -value = 0.000) are predictors of consumers' attitude towards the brand. Moreover, the value of R^2_{Adjusted} shows that these predictors account for 58.6% of consumers' attitude towards the brand.

The tolerance index and VIF indicate no multicollinearity problems. That is, the assumptions of the linear regression model were verified. Based on the results obtained (Table 51.7), the equation of the multiple linear regression model is as follows:

$$Y = 0.446 + 0.138X_1 + 0.574X_2 + 0.152X_3 + \varepsilon \quad (51.2)$$

Table 51.7 Multiple linear regression model

Variables	Non-standardized	Standardized		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
	β	Error	β		
Constant	0.446	0.133	—	3.347	0.001*
X_1	0.138	0.030	0.128	4.550	0.000*
X_2	0.574	0.033	0.556	17.253	0.000*
X_3	0.152	0.034	0.150	4.521	0.000*

$N = 991$; $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = 0.586$; $F = 468.671$; p -value = 0.000*; Variance inflation factor (VIF) < 5; Tolerance index >0.1 and <1

Dependent variable: Consumer's attitude towards the brand

*Statistically significant difference at the significance level of 1%

51.4 Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicate that the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand, the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer and YouTuber's credibility are predictors of consumers' attitude towards the brand. Also, the congruence of the YouTuber with the brand has shown to be a good predictor of consumers' attitude towards the brand and an even better predictor when compared to the congruence of the YouTuber with the consumer and to the YouTuber's credibility. These results are in line with those obtained by others authors that concluded when there is congruence of the YouTuber with the brand, consumers display a positive attitude towards the brand [14, 15]. Also, because they increasingly look for a reality similar to their own, consumers assume that digital influencers, YouTubers in this case, have ideas and interests similar to theirs, which triggers their positive attitude towards the brand. A higher influencer's credibility and a closer relationship between the influencer and the followers play an important and positive role in building up consumers' loyalty to the influencer and to the brand [26]. This study contributes to understand the role of digital influencers, common people or celebrities in the construction of a relatable relationship between the YouTuber who represents the brand and consumers.

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