

**CAN NATIVE ADVERTISING AND BRANDED CONTENT ON
INSTAGRAM AFFECT BRAND EQUITY LEVELS?**

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The end. The closure of my academic journey is now here. I cannot believe that only five years ago I was entering ISCTE with a lot of hopes and insecurities. I managed to overcome all the challenges along the way successfully and developed new sides to my personality that made me the woman I am today.

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I started by saying this is the end. What if this is just the beginning? A new period is about to start and I feel like I now have the knowledge and the tools to be whoever and whatever I want to be. The future starts now.

Thank you.

ABSTRACT

The central aim of this dissertation is to identify and test the effects of combined digital content marketing formats to leverage brand equity through Instagram communication strategies.

The whole picture is set on the acutely digital environment we live in, where social media is dominating human connections and interactions. Marketeers have been adapting to this new trend, moving alongside the changes, swapping their communication strategies from traditional to digital.

With the development of digital content marketing, several formats emerged, among whom native advertising and branded content. These offer consumers different advertisement exposition as well as a transversal approach to a brand's communication, integrating messages across tools and formats.

Ultimately, in order to raise its consumer value, a brand can capitalize the efforts of several marketing activities in order to improve equity. Its two key drivers, Brand Awareness and Brand Image, according to Keller's conceptual model, will generate a new degree of brand knowledge and consequently brand equity.

To check the validity of the research question, four hypothesis were set and an online survey was conducted to test their statistical evidence.

By the end of the study, we concluded that indeed native ads and branded content on Instagram together influence brand equity. Positive effects come from brand awareness and overall brand knowledge, while brand image becomes neutral. Instagram is also growing to be a source of information on firms and their products.

Key Terms: Social Media, Digital Content Marketing, Consumer-Based Brand Equity

JEL Classification System:

M31 – Marketing

M37 – Advertising

RESUMO

O propósito central desta dissertação é identificar e testar efeitos dos formatos de marketing de conteúdos digital para alavancar o valor de marca através de estratégias de comunicação no *Instagram*.

A pesquisa baseia-se no ambiente fortemente digital em que vivemos, onde as redes sociais dominam as conexões e interações humanas. *Marketeers* têm vindo a adaptar-se a esta tendência, acompanhando as mudanças, trocando estratégias tradicionais por digitais.

Com o desenvolvimento de marketing de conteúdos digital, vários formatos emergiram, entre os quais publicidade nativa e conteúdo de marca. Estes oferecem aos consumidores exposição a publicidade mas também uma abordagem transversal à comunicação da marca, com mensagens integradas em diversas ferramentas e formatos.

Em última análise, de forma a elevar o valor para os consumidores, a marca pode capitalizar os esforços de várias atividades de marketing no intuito de melhorar o seu *equity*. Os dois ativos principais, imagem de marca e *awareness* de marca, conforme o modelo de Keller, irão gerar novo conhecimento de marca e, conseqüentemente, novo *equity* (valor) de marca.

Para validar a questão de pesquisa, quatro hipóteses foram criadas e um questionário *online* utilizado para testar a sua evidência estatística.

Ao terminar o estudo, concluiu-se que publicidade nativa e conteúdo de marca no *Instagram* em conjunto influenciam o valor de marca. O efeito positivo advém de *awareness* de conhecimento geral de marca, enquanto o fator imagem de marca tem influência neutra. O *Instagram* caminha para cada vez mais ser fonte de informação sobre empresas e os seus produtos.

Palavras-chave: Redes Sociais, Marketing de Conteúdos Digital, Valor de Marca baseado no Consumidor

Sistema de Classificação JEL:

M31 – Marketing

M37 – Publicidade

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2. Glossary

- IG → Instagram
- B2B → Business to Business
- B2C → Business to Consumer
- SNS → Social Networking Site
- CBBE → Consumer-Based Brand Equity
- FBBE → Financial-Based Brand Equity
- BC → Brande Content
- BA → Brand Awareness
- BI → Brand Image
- BK → Brand Knowledge
- MMA → Mobile Marketing Association
- TM → Traditional Media
- IMC → Integrated Marketing Communications
- SN → Social Network
- CMI → Content Marketing Institute
- IAB → Interactive Advertising Bureau
- FTC → Federal Trade Commission
- CLV → Customer Lifetime Value

3.Introduction – Digital Era, IMC and New Digital Targets

With the digital development and mobile expansion over the years, is fair to say that we've been living a social media era, both on individual and business levels.

Community-driven platforms have developed over the years, shaping users' interaction habits and needs as well as promoting active engagement on global on-line conversations (Bihr, 2018). The social networking paradigm has been switching from desktop to mobile, allowing higher rates of social media time presence along with real-time content creation and consumption. The proof is global internet consumers spend about 135 minutes on social platforms daily (Statista g), 2018), considering that in 2018 the global number of social media users is around 3.196 billion, increasing 13% per year, among which 2.958 billion are active mobile social users (Chaffey, 2018).

The human capital presence on social media mobile platforms has led companies to take advantage of the time people spend on these tools not to mention the screen space they have available to capitalize marketing and communication efforts (Statista g), 2018).

Having campaigns on traditional media and with the variety of digital communication tools, companies developed integrated marketing communication (from now on will be referred as IMC) strategies that allowed to leverage the effects of omni-channel campaigns to provide a valuable message to their target audiences across multiple channels (Agarwal, 2018). IMC is a colossal driver of immediate financial performance and brand value construction in the long run (Batra and Keller, 2016). The main benefit from adopting IMC strategies is to deliver tailored messages in a much more accurate way, not possible with traditional media. Although companies still find traditional media (from now on will be referred as TM) relevant, especially in raising brand awareness levels, it is proven that TM combined with digital media communication messages improved free brand recall levels along with financial performance (Batra and Keller, 2016; Snyder and Garcia-Garcia, 2016). It is relevant not to forget that the secret for good IMC relies on consistency and cohesiveness of unified messages, making the audience feel the brand has one powerful voice, while helping firms to deliver an optimal promotions' combination by virtue of a customer-oriented standpoint (Batra and Keller, 2016; Valos *et al.*, 2016).

The emergence of content marketing and consumer avoidance of unwanted advertising (mainly in digital media) made the focus switched from 'what content to produce' to 'how to get content viewed by the right and interested audience'. Exploiting the evidence that consumers are now actively seeking information on brands instead of passively waiting for their

traditional media approaches, marketers then started to produce their own content as a way of conveying a brand personality as well as maintaining an open dialogue with the fan base. Later, optimizing placement, timing, and reach, native advertising enabled the same content to get viewed by a broader audience through new paid media formats, which produces positive effects on existing followers and touts potential new ones. The main key aspect of this new approach is that it keeps the creative control on the brand side, through generation of new data pools for consumer and market research, while raising brand engagement levels from followers.

Despite the prominence of Facebook among the social network (from now on will be referred as SN) assortment, Instagram has been gaining a lot of importance during the recent past. It has now reached the 1 billion monthly user landmark (Constine, 2018) and is in third place when it comes to user base increase, behind Facebook and WhatsApp (Chaffey, 2018). Besides, it has the highest average interactions per post, way above Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. In terms of brand presence on Instagram (from now on will be referred as IG), as of March 2016, according to Statista (2018), 98% of fashion brands in the US had an IG own page and 89% of B2B marketers deliver content on social media as main communication strategy (Smith, 2018). The amount of money spent on mobile social ads exceeds by double the desktop ad expenditure (Statista, 2018).

With social media playing a relevant part not only in the users' lives but also in being a preferable communication channel for corporates to get their 'brand voice' heard, customer-based brand equity has a lot of its value nowadays on this communication tactic. Brand awareness and brand image are affected by the brand exposure through content on social media, especially on Instagram, enabling marketers to build the brand personality on the minds of the main audiences. Brand equity levels are expected to be affected by new and stronger associations, improving brand-consumer relationships (Šerić *et al.*, 2014).

4.Literature Review

4.1.Social Media

Because we live in a fully technologically advanced and constantly adapting environment, more tools are entering the lives of individuals and businesses that allow them to keep in touch and develop new communication channels and contact points to reach targets. This is the case of social media that, especially but not only, to digital native generations have become a crucial part of their socialization processes and how they connect with the people and situations. Therefore, businesses, as content communicators, are also including this type of

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communication channel to grab their target's attention and nourish long-lasting B2C relationships.

According to Constantinides (2014) to completely understand the social media concept definition, we have to tap into the Web 2.0 concept. It is described as “*a collection of interactive, open source and user-controlled Internet applications enhancing the experiences, collaboration, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes*” (Constantinides, 2014: 42). The applications within this concept allow the existence of informal networks where users can share a stream of ideas and knowledge, encouraging innovation and creativity through the development and broadcasting of content in an efficient way. Social media differs from Web 2.0 in the sense that it is the group of applications that enable this user-generated content creation, edition and distribution.

Another interesting definition for social media is the one provided by Luchman, Bergstrom and Krulikowski: “*Internet communications where more than one user can publish or post information within a community of users*” (2014: 137). They built this definition based on previous ones, where a common aspect is paramount – the online network and participation environments that allow collaboration and communication to produce user-generated content. The authors state this is a more broad definition since it encompasses organizational and individual goals and does not undertake a goal specificity. Moreover, the key factor here is interaction, which can vary in intensity and implies solely consumption as well as action within a community.

One last conceptualization defines social media as “*communication systems that allow their social actors to communicate along dyadic ties*” (Peters et al., 2013: 282). By this definition, it is “*multi-way, immediate and contingent*”. This last aspect is also significant in terms of difference across social media platforms.

In conclusion, and taking into account what Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated, we have to look at social media from a perspective that portrays it as a foundation of Web 2.0, that allows the participants to be active in creating content while simultaneously communicating within a community on an internet-based application.

On a managerial level, the success of introducing social media into the communication channels and placement is dependent on the ability the marketers have to determine where potential targets are and what behaviours can trigger the development of two-way interactions. There is not a winning formula to measure that success, mostly because the metrics used will vary according to platform, target and communication/content format. They can either be more specific (related with customer relationship management data or brand management elements)

or more general (reflected in market shares, revenues, etc.) (Peters *et al.*, 2013). Either way, the market, i.e. targets or industries, sends out stimulus that need to be managed by organizations accounting for motives, content, social roles and interactions, and network structures, in order to produce an outcome that seemly fits in with the initial stimulus, promoting a never-ending cycle of B2C communications constantly improving.

4.1.1.Social Media Classification

In order to use social media as a marketing tool, marketers must understand what each application within the concept implies and how their specificities can be beneficial to their communication strategy.

Let's start with the classification that Constantinides (2014) proposed based on previous literature of several scholars based on the usage of social media as an engaging tool for B2C communication. He first started his conceptualization with two main approaches: the passive approach (social media as a marketers' source for customer voice, including market trends and needs or customer testimonies on experiences) and the active approach (where communication and interaction action is taken to acquire and retain potential customers).

- The Passive Approach: This approach is about listening to what the consumer has to say and that is why the author finds blogs, content communities and forums the most appropriate applications to get to this goal. Market issues and prospects can be assessed in these domains on a low cost basis and in a more trustable way since individuals are profoundly interested in interacting with other users honestly about businesses (brands, products and services). The key aspect is to track down where the business is being talked about and in which context.
- The Active Approach: On the active side, the firm actually engages in the online conversations and interactions through 4 main tools.
 1. “*Applications as company public relations and direct marketing tools (blogs, forums, content communities and content aggregators)*” (Constantinides, 2014: 46)

Through these means, corporates are somehow in a relative control of the online conversation and can start a favourable dialogue to their goals. This is also a way of being in constant and direct contact with the consumer in order to react almost in real-time. In the case of corporate blogs, businesses are providing consumers a platform to develop an online community. Moreover, content communities such as video sharing platforms (ex:

YouTube) are great ways of developing channels and profiles where corporates can share publicity material.

2. *“Engaging Social Media personalities as product or brand advocates (blogs, forums)”* (Constantinides, 2014: 47)

To be able to engage your business or brand through online opinion leaders and influencers is key. The outcome will be getting a lot of opinion traffic and free publicity through e-WOM. In the end, if marketers get influencers to endorse their new products in their platforms, they can have a pivotal part in the buying decision and adoption of those products.

3. *“Using Social Media for personalizing the customer’s online experience and allowing product customization (Web 2.0-enabled company website with sponsored online forums and social networking capabilities)”* (Constantinides, 2014: 48)

If a firm is able to offer their customers a personalized product/service and online involvement, it can more easily increase engagement and consequently develop customer loyalty. Through this strategy, marketers are addressing the market needs for customization and can improve the B2C relationship through branding efficiency, making customers ‘come back for more’ (customer retention).

4. *“Harnessing the crowd intelligence and creativity: Engaging the customer as contributor of product reviews, advertising concepts and as part of the innovation process (interactive E-Commerce sites allowing customer to provide product reviews and ratings; also corporate social sites allowing customer networking and community forming)”* (Constantinides, 2014: 48)

We come to the stage where marketeers will make use of the customer voice mentioned in the passive approach. By focusing on behavioural targeting and the general feeling of an audience finding peer to peer (P2P) recommendations more reliable and relatable than information produced by the brands or experts, the communication is more effective and addresses the common feelings and needs of the buying community. Nevertheless, means such as customer-generated advertising, crowdsourcing or co-creation put the consumer as innovator – he/she can be the project conceptualiser, designer, marketeer, etc. This is a win-win situation: the company is benefiting from advice and expertise of the real users of the products, saving R&D costs and taking advantage of the P2P strategic importance; the customers can become business partners of their own ideas, feel a sense of belongingness to the brand and are actually consuming something totally suitable to their experiences.

The second classification framework we will use is based on the challenges and opportunities social media can provide. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest a categorization of social media by doing trade-offs between its two key elements: media-related elements (social presence/media richness) and social dimension elements (self-presentation/self-disclosure).

Social presence is “*defined as the acoustic, visual, and physical contact that can be achieved*” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61), related with the degree to which an interaction between two parts can emerge. If social presence is high, the communication actors will have a bigger effect and impact on each other’s conduct and behaviour. Highly connected with social presence is the idea of degree of media richness: “*the amount of information they allow to be transmitted in a given time interval*” and the “*resolution of ambiguity and the reduction of uncertainty*” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61). Therefore, different social media have different levels of efficiency.

On the social dimensions side, self-presentation means the extent to which an intervenient in any social interaction has the yearning to somehow control and regulate other intervenient impressions. What they are trying to achieve is a congruence between the image they create and their personal identity, and gaining a return such as delivering a positive impression to gain more respect in future interactions. Also connected with this concept is self-disclosure: “*the conscious or unconscious revelation of personal information that is consistent with the image one would like to give*” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 62). Self-disclosure is the mean through which one can develop their personal web space and how they wish to be presented and perceived by others.

With the explanation of the concepts out the way, the authors delivered the following framework, with six main classifications of social media.

Table 1. Social media classification (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010)

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

- Blogs

Considered the social media version of a personal web page, they can appear in a variation of different formats, depending on the topic of the content the author/manager of the

page is producing. A blog is a collaborative project in the sense that allows viewers' opinions to be introduced in the format of comments (either for positive or negative aspects). Self-presentation/self-disclosure is high because the page will be a reflection of the authors experience and the portrait of its personality; social presence/media richness will be low since, in comparison with other social media, the interaction among parts and the information is not delivered in such fast pace as other social media allow.

- Collaborative Projects

In collaborative projects, the group-generated content is key. Self-presentation/self-disclosure is low because users most of the times are anonymous or don't need a profile with personal information to deliver content. Low social presence/media richness reflects the image these platforms have as mere source of information to consumers, they do not imply debate or a regular interaction. That's mainly why they are named the "*most democratic manifestation of UCG*" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 62).

- Social Networking Sites

The connections occurring on these applications are due to the users being able to create profiles and interact with each other where they present their personality with a certain amount of personal/private information. The content published can take various formats (photo, video, text, etc.) and can be accessed by friends that where invited by the profile manager or, in the case of a public profile, by any user that comes across the page. These are the reasons why self-presentation/self-disclosure is high (although dependant on the level of publicness of the profile and the amount of information) and the social presence/media richness is medium because the content diffusion velocity and relevance is considerable, especially if within the friend base of the page.

- Content Communities

These are quite attractive to marketers as communication and contact points with consumers on a regular basis and allow them to rapidly propagate media content among the platform users. BookCrossing, YouTube or Flickr are examples that reflect the diversity of media formats shared and spread that corporates can take advantage of. Social presence/media richness is therefore quite considerable, but self-presentation/self-disclosure is not that impactful since the star of the platform is the content, and not so much who produces it.

- Virtual Social Worlds & Virtual Game Worlds

These final categories are less relevant for the purpose of this dissertation, but still important in the social media concept understanding. Social worlds have high social

presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure since there are fewer or no restrictions in terms of the interactions that can take place due to the way users behave in these platforms, much closer to their conduct in real life (personality traits are more exposed). Game worlds allow the creation of a personalized avatar to interact with other users according to a strict set of rules for the execution of the role-playing. Hence, high level of social presence/media richness but low self-presentation/self-disclosure.

4.1.2. User Typology

Although motivations to use social media dictate why an individual is in a certain platform, they do not explain and categorize how a user behaves and interacts with the social media peers.

A social media user typology is quite important in marketing: the segmentation of social media targets and the interpretation of online databases can only happen if one can after infer a behaviour and how, where and when to respond to it.

A lot of theories and typologies were developed in order to understand user profiles on different social media. However, as Brandtzæg and Heim (2011) explain in their research, most of the previous studies focused solely on ‘media behaviour’ expressed through frequency of use, ignoring the real actions occurring during the usage stage. That is why the authors decided to develop a study in which ‘usage’ is translated into “*users’ level of participation (intensity of use) and participation mode (objective and direction of participation) in the SNS*” (Brandtzæg and Heim, 2011: 30). Intensity ranges from low to high, whereas participation mode can vary between an informational or recreational orientation. They were able to identify five types of social media users by comparing the usage profiles on four very distinct Norwegian social networks. It may look like the results are not significant considering the limitations of the sample, but in fact, as explained by the authors themselves, their conceptualization can actually be adapted in general since it captures a bit of all the previous studies’ results.

- Type #1: Sporadics (19% of the sample)

Users that visit the online community on a sporadic basis, instead of having a regular visiting routine. Hence, the participation level is low. Regarding participation mode, they are in the informational side of the spectre since they mostly show up to “*check their status and see if somebody has contacted them*” (Brandtzæg and Heim, 2011: 41).

- Type #2: Lurkers (27% of the sample)

The Lurkers demonstrate low levels of participation and mostly towards recreational interactions, being considered less likely to produce user-generated content: they participate in numerous activities, but only to a passive or small level of involvement.

- Type #3: Socialisers (25% of the sample)

Highly recreational-oriented user type, Socialisers are keen on communication with social media peers and their behaviour is reflected in “small talk” actions in a high participation level.

- Type #4: Debaters (11% of the sample)

The socializing of this type of consumers is achieved through their high involvement in content formation contributions, on an informational dimension.

- Type #5: Actives (18% of the sample)

The most versatile group. These users engage with almost all actions and events in the social media community (from recreational to informative) and participate a lot by sharing and posting.

The advantage of such typology for marketers is the understanding it provides of the fragmented clusters spread among different social media in order to target them, instead of assuming they can all fit into broader and simpler categories. Social networking sites will then adapt to the majority of user type they serve and, therefore, companies that wish to participate in that site will have also to deliver content and communication voices suitable for the specific platform requirements.

4.1.3.Motivations

In order to deliver content to the right audience, in the right place, at the right time, it is crucial to understand what motivates the content consumer to engage with it. If a company is placing its content across social media platforms, has to know why the users are there and what makes them come back to it.

In 2011, Lin and Lu made a research to unravel aspects that may influence users to join and continue to use a social networking site, based on network externalities and the motivation theory. Network externalities are conceived as the valuable outcome a user will get from a product/service that will increase and improve with the rise of users, meaning that once a certain number of users is reached, the external advantage will emerge and drag other users. They can either be direct (related directly with user increase) or indirect (with user increase, the value a

user gets can increase due to complementary products). The motivation theory is used “to explain individual’s behaviour of accepting information technology” (Lin and Lu, 2011: 1153). Motivations can be separated into extrinsic and intrinsic ones. Extrinsic are related with doing an action for a perceived external strengthening and usefulness to achieve an end value, while intrinsic are related with the amusement and importance of the action itself.

The main results of this research show that network externalities and the extrinsic (usefulness) and intrinsic (enjoyment) motivations do play a significant role in triggering the usage of social media. For users, the intention to join and further have a continued use of social networking sites is highly affected by enjoyment and the pleasure-oriented context. After enjoyment, the apparent quantity and anticipation of peers connecting with the social networking sites increases the continued aim to use the application. In terms of usefulness, the key point is in the efficiency of content diffusion and the circle of friends’ perceived improvement. In conclusion: “*The number of peers (peer network externalities) and perceived complementarity (indirect network externalities) are more influential on extrinsic benefit (usefulness) than the number of members (direct network externalities)*” (Lin and Lu, 2011: 1159).

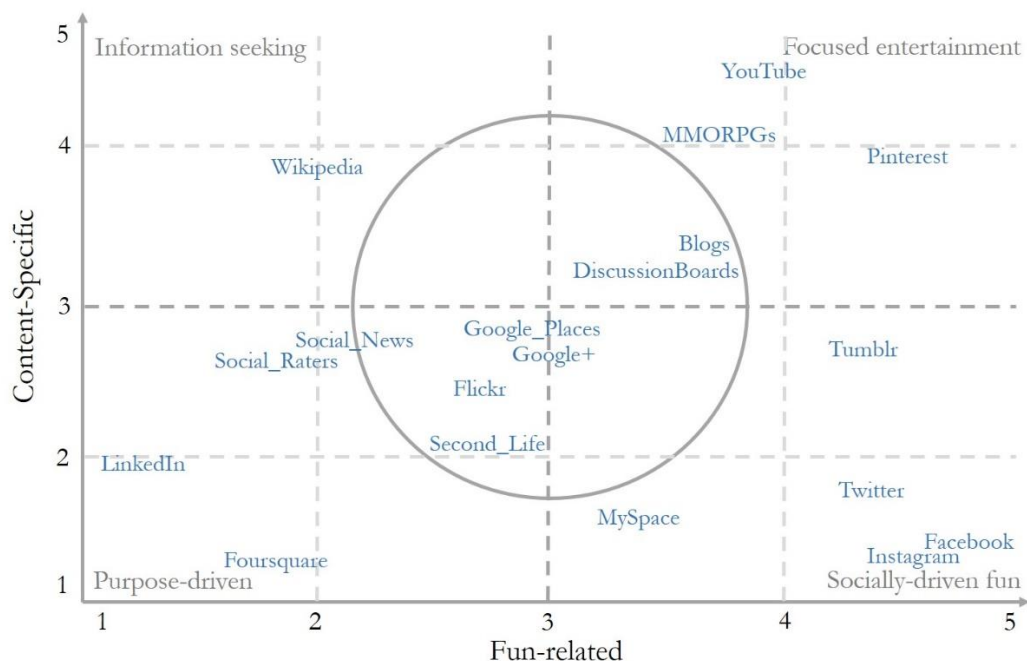
Another perspective is provided by Luchman, Bergstrom and Krulikowski (2014) through a survey of young Americans (that can be, however, generalized to other populations). The authors base their study in the usage motivations and, then, developed a framework (Figure 1) based on two dimensions (fun-related and content-specific) and five segments (information seeking, focused entertainment, purpose-driven, socially-driven fun and ‘in the middle’). Along the spectre of the dimensions, different motivations will arise from the segments in which they fall in. To better understand the framework, some examples of social media applications were placed in the different segments connecting the usage motivation with types of platforms.

- Dimension #1: Fun-related → Implies the diffusion of fun-related content, associated with amusement and regular constant updates on a daily-basis.
- Dimension #2: Content-specific → The more information to improve the ability to do something one can get access to and demonstrates knowledge-building compartments, the more involved he/she is in the content-specific dimension.
- Segment #1: Information seeking → Data collecting is the central focus on this segment. Getting user engagement in P2P interactions or entertain them is not the point here.

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- Segment #2: Focused entertainment → Although these are also used to search for information and improve activities, there's an entertainment and fun foundation mainly related with the content format in which that information is accessed.
- Segment #3: Purpose-driven → These sites are used to “*seek or share information that is instrumental in achieving something*” (Luchman *et al.*, 2014: 140). Interactions are mainly focused on getting to know more about something, based on the “*non-knowledge and skills-related information*” (Luchman *et al.*, 2014: 140) provided.
- Segment #4: Socially-driven fun → To share, entertain and life updates are the main activities in these websites and the content produced in such platforms is wide-ranging because there's not a specific content topic or format to post.
- Segment #5: ‘In the middle’ → These applications are in centre of the dimensions spectre and therefore address a mix of segments’ elements. “*The mix of information provided, entertainment value, and opinions within these sites varies greatly*” (Luchman *et al.*, 2014: 140).

Figure 1. Motives Framework (Luchman *et al.*, 2014)



Once again, the valuable outcome of these studies will provide information on how to get a target triggered to go to a certain platform where a marketer will have content available to boost user participation and involvement.

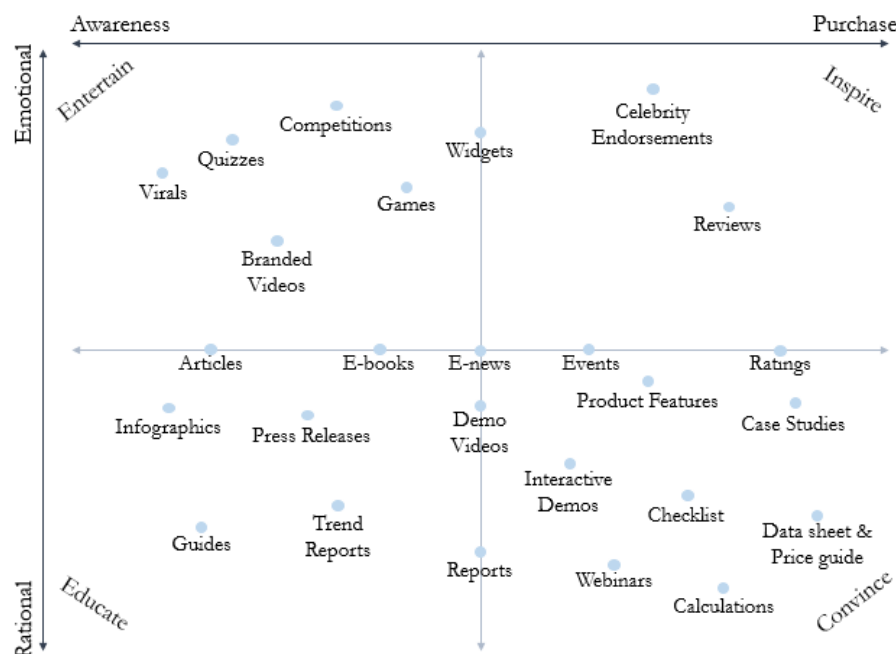
4.2.Digital Content Marketing

From a marketing and communication point-of-view, it is easy to understand that we cannot have successful market reach without delivering interesting, compelling and relevant content.

According to the Content Marketing Institute (2015), content marketing is the ‘better way’ when it comes to fighting traditional advertising and using a future oriented approach. Therefore, CMI defines the concept as strategic marketing tactic motivated by producing and delivering content that is truly valuable to a defined target audience that will be converted into profitable revenues. The foundation of content marketing relies on getting away from directly publicize products/services and, instead, provide the consumers with educating and informative content.

In order to figure out which content will best fit in the different marketing funnel stages and also in making sure the consumer returns to the brand, Chaffey and Bosomworth (2013) created a Content Marketing Matrix (Figure 2) that allows to understand content development from awareness to purchase stages combined with the level of emotion/rationality of the content itself. This way, the content type will fall into one of the four sections of content goals of the matrix: Entertain, Inspire, Educate and Convince. Then, depending on which principle the brand wants to achieve, the type of content is chosen.

Figure 2. Content Marketing Matrix by Smart Insights (Chaffey and Bosomworth, 2013)



If we take a look at another content marketing definition, provided by, MandLoys Web Design Agency (2013), we also get the perspective of content marketing being a continuous applied process because “*the content must be consistently provided to maintain or change the behaviour of customers*”. What this means is that not only the brand must keep its brand voice updated and truthful to the brand image, but also needs to keep track of the changing demands of the industries and consumers. Only through this principle it can be truly relevant in acquiring a new customer base but also retaining the existing one.

The content marketing industry is a big one for companies: by 2014, nine out of ten were marketing their targets with content where the enhancement of the brand was the central goal (Jutkowitz, 2014). One key aspect of this ‘boom’ is that content marketing chases consumer’s preferences – actually, 70% of people prefer to be reached by an organization through an article than through an ad (MandLoys Web Design Agency, 2013). A key aspect is also mentioned by Jutkowitz (2014): the internet era was the best that could have happened to content marketing. The web, social media platforms and the global knowledge diffusion put organisations that choose to communicate through content to be in the position of information distributors, allowing to a better legacy for the future.

Marketeers need to focus not only on producing valuable content but content that can also stand out from the ‘noise’ that is surrounding it (Campbell and Marks, 2015). And segmentation is everything, which is why knowing where your segments are is the key to placement and consequent success.

4.2.1.Branded Content

A natural extension of content marketing is obviously the production of branded content. Due to the digital development, this type of content marketing gained more and more attention by marketeers and turned out to be an important tool when it comes to grab the audiences’ attention.

In order to maintain a never-stopping business to consumer dialogue, marketeers had to come up with additional touchpoints where the marketed target was present. Social media presence offer the needed variety of options that allowed this dialogue to be maintained overtime. Not only the brand got to communicate with the consumers, but also the consumers were invited to share their perspective on the brands. If a brand was able to provide some good storytelling and to create a tie with consumers in real time, then they would opt to consume that brand’s content (Holt, 2016). Here’s the main difference that branded content has brought to

the digital marketing game: instead of firms buying their way to consumers on overly controlled traditional media channels, brands are now allowing audiences to choose if they want to consume the content that has been developed on the platforms where they're present (Holt, 2016). The brand will ultimately become its own publisher in the sense that the developed material gets to be distributed in unpaid media channels (Choi, 2015). So the consumer now has a voice and gets to decide if they want to consume the information and can interact with it if they wish to – this is the idea of active engagement that goes along with the differentiation from advertising through the non-interruption approach that turns branded content into a pull strategy (Asmussen *et al.*, 2016). Hence, to face this new marketing advent, firms started to offer data about their brands in digital platforms, taking advantage of the communication potential they had marketing wise (Wagner *et al.*, 2017).

Branded content, analysed from a holistic point-of-view, is defined as '*any manifestation associated with a particular brand in the eye of the beholder*' (Asmussen *et al.*, 2016: 10). A manifestation is translated in any evident brand expression. Moreover, under the same point-of-view, the control of the content is no longer solely on the firm side, as the targets are now part of the process.

From Ashley and Tuten's research (2015), it was clear that the brand relationships were enhanced, enabling the discovery of the mainstream matters in consumer feedback as well as understanding what could really influence audience's engagement with the provided content. To achieve a greater level of interaction with the consumer, entering a network through the development of a brand persona enabled the introduction of the branded content within social media (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

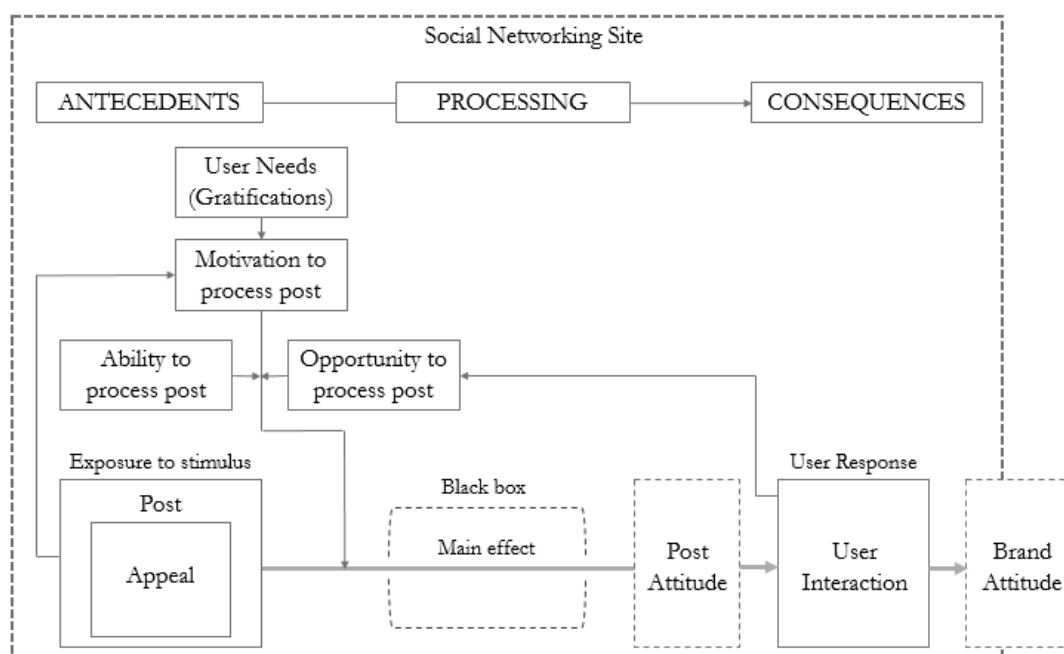
Having this in mind, the complexity of putting branded content out is related with what content to produce that will generate higher levels of brand awareness, brand loyalty and, ultimately, increase audiences' traffic to brand sites on and offline. In other words, when used to its full potential, branded content '*may trigger the audience to engage*' (Ashley and Tuten, 2015: 17), therefore driving better brand equity in the end.

To develop an understanding of the concept in depth, one must find in branded content an extension of the brand. If the content produced does not naturally resonates the core of the brand, then the audiences will not be able to associate the attributes of the brand they're familiar with and therefore will not be able to participate in it (Asmussen *et al.*, 2016). However, this extension of the brand can be translated in different ways when combined with a multi-channel strategy: in different channels, there can be presented a different facet of the brand adapted to the different audiences, without ever losing its essence.

To produce branded content, marketers should be able to identify a creative strategy to put it in place. Creative strategies are seen as *‘the executional factors and message strategies used to bridge the gap between what the marketer wants to say and what the consumer needs to hear’* (Ashley and Tuten, 2015: 18). There are two types of creative strategies: emotional/transformational and functional/informative. The first type concerns the congruence between the brand aspirations message delivered and the consumer’s aspirations. The second one is related with more objective information that can be absorbed rationally by the audience. To achieve these creative strategies, the brand’s focus can be on one of the three following benefits: *‘unique to the brand’* (unique selling proposition); *‘superior for the brand’* (competitive advantage compared to the competition); *‘undifferentiated in the product class’* (generic to the product category were the brand’s included) (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

Wagner and his colleagues (2017) tried to explore user reactions and interactions based on the brand post appeals. A conceptual framework (Figure 3) was developed by them where the antecedents (users’ motivations and social media usage) affect the post processing (the process between content publication and user interaction) and dictates the consequences and outcomes of the content consumption.

Figure 3. Post processing on SNS conceptual framework (Wagner *et al.*, 2017)



Why are post appeals so important though? Because in order to put the creative strategies into practice, there will be a need to turn to the purpose of the post itself. The content

appeal will translate the meaning and nature of it and is what will be perceived by the receivers of the message (Wagner *et al.*, 2017). Like the creative strategies, the appeals can reflect an utilitarian or hedonic approach.

On this research, a light was shed on what appeals are more effective in generating positive consumer attitudes. From their literature review, and probably coming as a surprise, generally rational content appeals work better among the audiences than emotional ones. This might be due to the fact that most of the products within the advertising spectrum convey more functional benefits than emotional ones. Moreover, the appeal needs to be adapted to the product type: a rational approach may benefit more utilitarian products and emotional approaches may work better for hedonic consumption products.

After defining the creative strategies and appeals to produce branded content with the desired outcome, it is important to examine the popularity of the posted content. Characteristics of the content post will impact the popularity and acceptance, translated after in likes, shares and fan base numbers of the brand page (Lin *et al.*, 2017).

From Lin's research (2017) as well as Schultz take on how to propose to the brand's fans (2017), a set of 5 characteristics were presented to get brand posts popularity increased on social media. They are: vividness, practicality, interest, personalization and interactivity.

- Vividness

'Vividness refers to the way brand post appeals to an individual's senses' (Lin *et al.*, 2017: 623) and also *'the degree to which information addresses various senses'* (Schultz, 2017: 24). The objective is to make the post and its content as noticeable as possible, because the more vividness you deliver the higher the level of recognition from consumers.

- Practicality

'Brand posts must be practical and accessible for consumers to engage with the post' (Lin *et al.*, 2017: 623). Time and efficiency of the post are very relevant when you want to deliver effectiveness. Nonetheless, the ideal timing to post content varies depending on targeted markets and brands. Hence, an in depth analysis of the social media activity and presence of the audiences must be done to identify what will work for a specific brand.

- Interest

When it comes to the interest of the post, an optimal balance between informative and entertaining content should be attained in order to hold the audience's attention that can be later transformed into engagement.

- Personalization

This aspect *‘refers to targeted messages, offers, and recommendations by brands on social media’* (Lin et al., 2017: 624). To get this personalization effect, a behavioural study of the target audience will be performed to assess patterns that can be used to shape the message the brand is delivering.

- Interactivity

‘Interactivity refers to the degree to which brand posts animate users to respond’ (Schultz, 2017: 25). Since the base of branded content is to maintain the brand-consumer dialogue, interactivity is essential to get your customer involved in the content consumption and development. Allow your target base to provide feedback, new ideas and participate in the brand as a community.

Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) summarize the actions that should be taken into account when producing branded content on brand social pages. All managers interviewed for their study stated that hand-in-hand with the content itself, the inclusion of competitions with prizes that could benefit the audience are quite common and relevant when managing brand’s social media. Another important activity is the introduction of new products/services via the brand pages where companies are providing the information first-hand right where the fan base is, there are no intermediaries in the way. Finally, a first level customer-service ends up appearing in these brand owned pages, since consumers will use them to express their feedback either negative or positive. Therefore, it’s important that companies combine the platforms both for content display as well as tools to manage customer relationships.

4.2.2. Native Advertising

Within the content marketing scope, the native advertising concept is quite debatable and therefore a single universal definition for it wasn’t found by advertisers, publishers and companies (Manic, 2015). But why a common classification wasn’t found? Mainly because it’s analysed from different perspectives and goal-seeking strategies depending on the intervenient in the communication ecosystem (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013).

However, some authors and organizations tried to state what native advertising represented to them:

“Native advertising is a form of converged media that combines paid and owned media into a form of commercial messaging that is fully integrated into, and often unique to, a specific delivery platform.” (Lieb, 2013: 3)

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“Native advertising is a concept encompassing both an aspiration as well as a suite of ad products. It is clear that most advertisers and publishers aspire to deliver paid ads that are so cohesive with the page content, assimilated into the design, and consistent with the platform behavior that the viewer simply feels that they belong.” (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013: 3)

“At a general level, native advertising is a term used to describe a spectrum of new online advertising forms that share a focus on minimizing disruption to a consumer’s online experience by appearing in-stream.” (Campbell and Marks, 2015: 600)

Generically, we can say that native advertising is paid media presented as online content that do not disrupt the experience of the users on the platform it is placed in, because that content fits organically into the surrounding non-advertising content (Mobile Native Advertising Committee, 2015; Wojdyski, 2016).

Native advertising conception is, therefore, dependant on two aspects – form and function (Mobile Native Advertising Committee, 2015) or format and content (Wojdyski, 2016). Combining both:

- Form/Format – how well does the ad match the aspects of the visual involvement the platform provides the user in order to get the look and feel of the organic content;
- Function/Content – the content delivered in the ad is able to behave in a cohesive and consistent way with the user’s experience, having the same function as the surrounding content.

In order to be successful in the native field, one must combine and get the best possible outcome of these two aspects.

The market for this type of advertising has had the biggest growth of implementation and investment in 2014, after in 2013 the trend was introduced and developed (Sebastian, 2014). According to the CEO of Chartbeat, Tony Haile, the quality of the sponsored content produced as native advertising is reflected in the percentage of readers that scrolled down on native ads on publisher sites (24%) in comparison with the percentage that scrolled down on organic content (71%) – this means native ads are noticeable and capture viewers’ attention (Lazauskas, 2014).

Business Insider (Boland, 2016) showed that native advertising was taking over the digital advertising world and estimated that its revenue in the US (including in-feed on publishers’ websites and social platforms) will account for 74% of total display ad revenue by 2021, around \$36 billion. This value is 56% above the estimated value at the time for 2016 which was \$16.8 billion. Within the native ad revenue, social platforms will continually grow

its dominant position on revenue production, especially on mobile devices. Digital advertising spending (the biggest portion of native advertising spending through social media platforms) grew 13.3% solely in 2016 (Statista, 2017). And, according to HubSpot (2017), the channels that companies want to add to their marketing distribution are mainly Youtube (48%), Facebook Video (39%) and Instagram (33%).

These statistics again reveal the dominance of digital platforms, social networks more specifically, to be the centre of attention when it comes to improving online communications and publication of web content to meet consumers' expectations and take native advertising even to a higher level of development and effectiveness.

4.2.2.1. Native Advertising Formats

Just as the concept itself, the native ad formats are categorized differently by several sources.

The Mobile Marketing Association – MMA (Mobile Native Advertising Committee, 2015) groups the ad units into eight clusters mobile-oriented: In-Feed Social, In-Feed Content, In-Feed Commerce, In-Map; In-Game, Paid Search, Recommendation Widgets and Custom. Although they are specifically defined in a mobile context, most of them also occur in desktop formats in similar ways.

- In-Feed Social: the ad is inserted in and merges with the social network feed, and the network capabilities (such as liking or sharing a post) are available to that content too. The main end goal is reaching the potential consumer to create awareness and engagement.
- In-Feed Content: similar to the previous category, but instead of placing the ad into a social network the ad is placed in a website where it will match the visuals (fonts or graphics) of a more editorial feed composed by several formats of both paid and unpaid content. With this format, advertisers want to drive and consolidate engagement through a broader range of content.
- In-Feed Commerce: the ads will fuse with a commerce feed among the organic products listed there, presented in the same format with the same details. These ads only work with the objective of closing a sale (either physical or digital).
- In-Map: the ads will be shown to the user according to location settings and ultimately providing in-store traffic that will eventually be converted into sales.
- In-Game: the ad will work as a mean to gain an end reward for the specific game it's being played, matching the visual identity of the game. The format is common to be a video that

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can only be seen if the player chooses to do so. By creating a different source of value to the user, the objective is to primarily increase awareness and promote engagement.

- Paid Search: among the search results on search engines websites, ads will appear with the function of creating potential consumer traffic (in-store, in-website or via phone call).
- Recommendation Widgets: these include sponsored links with the objective to increase traffic to advertiser's content. Recommendation widgets appear at the end of the users' experience with suggestions to explore content.
- Custom: content produced and delivered by a brand mainly focused on offline integrations through custom sponsorship (examples of apps sponsored by a certain brand) to create brand awareness.

This MMA model was developed to complement the original and first classification by the Interactive Advertising Bureau – IAB (2013) that presents six core types of ad units: In-Feed Units, Paid Search Units, Recommendation Widgets, Promoted Listings, In-Ad (IAB Standard) with Native Element Units and Custom/"Can't Be Contained". The category that most differs from the previous categorization is the In-Ad that can be explained in the following way: these ads are placed outside the editorial field of the page, but the advertiser knows exactly the surrounding content in order to still provide relevant information for the user to go to an offsite page.

To simplify the equation and because no set of terms has been commonly implemented, Wojdyski (2016: 8) provides a typology that delineates the ad units "*according to nature of content or the format in which the consumer experiences the advertising*", instead of focusing "*on the format and distribution mechanism for the specific advertising content*". The typology proposed is composed by three category segments: Native Content, Native Hyperlinks and Native Social Media Posts.

- Native Content (also denominated 'Sponsored Content'): Is delivered in a way that there is some kind of content in its production that can be consumed by the publisher website user along with its organic content. They diverge in the same way the placement website editorial content varies and can be produced by the advertisers or by the site publisher.
- Native Hyperlinks: Usually take the form of a widget somehow customized and placed in specific areas of the publisher's website, produced based on a collection of user data. Native hyperlinks are commonly named "content recommendation or content discovery" because, by using the publisher as a referral, they allow users to direct their online traffic to other sites related with the advertiser/or producer marketer. Unlike sponsored content,

they don't include original content, they simply take the user along content placed in other links. In this category, three main formats can be included: third-party hyperlink blocks, paid search engine results listings and third-party product links on retailers' websites.

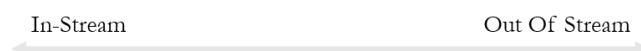
- Native Social Media Posts: This format is about integrating advertiser's communications into the platform feed, appearing to the user just like any non-paid content in the rest of the feed. Social media ad posts can vary according to network and audience chosen. This specific topic will be the centre research of this dissertation and be further on analysed in more depth.

The conclusion on the categorization profiles is that they are all complementary to each other and end up mapping the endless options advertisers have to carefully choose from.

But because each category of both theories englobe various ad units, how does a marketer or an advertiser know which format to go for to reach its desired audience? To answer that, the IAB (2013) developed the Native Evaluation Framework that translates into six questions that will ensure the perfect fit between the ad unit chosen and the brand's objectives are met.

- **Form – Ad fit with the global page layout and design.**

Figure 4. Form spectrum in Native Evaluation Framework (IAB, 2013)



- **Function – Match between the ad and the organic content function on the page; the ad has to deliver the same experience to the viewer.**

Figure 5. Function spectrum in Native Evaluation Framework (IAB, 2013)



- **Integration – Ad behaviour resemblance of the one of the adjacent content.**

Figure 6. Integration spectrum in Native Evaluation Framework (IAB, 2013)



- **Buying & Targeting – Is related with the coverage of the placement plan.**

Figure 7. Buying & Targeting spectrum in Native Evaluation Framework (IAB, 2013)



- **Measurement – How to assess success; top-of-the-funnel brand engagement (views, likes, shares, etc.) versus bottom funnel metrics (sales, downloads, etc.).**

Figure 8. Measurement spectrum in Native Evaluation Framework (IAB, 2013)



- Disclosure – The viewer is able to acknowledge that he/she is contacting with paid content in a strong and noticeable way.

Therefore, the framework was developed to help place the ad unit within the range of action of each of the six questions in order to provide them a clear vision of the end objective they want to achieve with the ad unit. Although the IAB developed the framework according to the typology they created, the questions proposed are common to the other classifications exposed above and can be used to produce a more efficient approach to the communication strategy.

4.2.2.2.Consumer Deception and Labelling Disclosure

Most of the controversy around the native advertising concept is due to one of its main strengths: if the purpose of natively introduce ads among the publishers' content is correctly achieved, it can lead consumers to believe they are accessing editorial content instead of advertisement.

These erroneous beliefs consumers have towards native ads became an interesting challenge for advertisers and publishers because a trade-off between ethic (deception) and economic gain (profitability) must be reach in order to successfully benefit from a native ad strategy (Aribarg and Schwartz, 2017).

To protect the consumer and the ad producer, ad disclosure was a way found to try to solve the deception issue. The Federal Trade Commission (1983: 2) produced a policy that states that deception is found whenever *“there is a representation, omission or practice that is likely to mislead the consumer acting reasonably in the circumstances, to the consumer's detriment”*. Therefore, and since the deception matter is highly connected with the corruption of consumers perceptions, FTC found in ad disclosure the way to fight it. The Comission (2015) suggested the implementation and use of explicit labelling or any qualifying evidence to differentiate paid and nonpaid publications and overcome the fallacious impression. A key aspect of this labelling is that by giving the users more knowledge about the ad source/producer it can affect how important, reliable and credible the ad becomes to them, and there can be an influence on whether or not the user will interact with the sponsored content.

To help marketers in understanding how to label their ads, the Interactive Advertising Bureau (2013) recommends some disclosure principles to be adopted. Regardless of the unit nature, it is vital that the disclosure is clear and prominent. The disclosure must specify that the ad is paid and be visually noticeable in the page/device context it is being viewed in. According

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to the unit type, the disclosure will change. The three that are more specific are In-Feed (“Ad”, “Promoted”, “Sponsored”, “Sponsored Content” or “Suggested Post”), Recommendation Widgets (“You might also like”, “Elsewhere from around the web”, “You may have missed” or “Recommended for you”) and Promoted Listings (“Ads”, “Yelp Ad” or “Sponsored Products”).

Although the issue seems somehow controlled with this disclosure labelling principle, the question is not that simply solved. Several authors have studied the ‘dark side’ of native advertising and labelling disclosure.

Aribarg and Schwartz (2017) explored what drives consumer responses to native ads with different types of ad disclosure, based on the FTC’s guidelines and monitoring. They found that target-brand recognition is higher the more the familiarity with the brand and the “sponsored content” concept. Moreover, the more native an ad looks to the website layout the more likely a viewer is of being deceived which leads to the conclusion that low disclosure prominence promotes more misunderstanding among consumers about the paid nature of the content than high prominence.

Another research was focused on understanding whether participants could tell the difference between native ads and regular ads from unpaid content (Hyman *et al.*, 2017). Their results showed that only 37% of their overall sample was capable of recognizing native ads as paid content and the platform that shows more consumer knowledge about native ads (regardless of the advertiser) is Facebook. When it comes to labelling, consumers perceive native ads as paid content in a higher percentage when the labels used are more explicit and overt – “Paid Ad” (89%) or “Paid Content” (87%). The further from the paid aspect of labelling, the worse the recognition – “Written by”, in the last position, only managed to get recognized as paid by 23% of respondents.

Last but not least, Wojdyski and Evans (2016) evaluated the effects of position and language on disclosure acknowledgement of content as advertising, brand recognition and publisher evaluation. The interesting finding in this study is that when the ads are recognized, usually more negative reactions towards brand and publisher occur. For positioning, a middle level disclosure is more efficient on user’s attention (90% of participants paid attention to the disclosure in this position, compared to 40% on top positioning and 60% on bottom positioning) and therefore, on ad recognition (these two are positively correlated). Visual attention is revealed to be quite important in this context because only people who fixated the disclosure where capable of recognizing the content as paid.

As we can tell from the literature on this ethical question, the tactics marketers need to use to follow the disclosure regulation may not always have the predicted effect on viewers and can even have the opposite outcome one would expect from native advertising: instead of producing positive brand awareness, recall and image, it can deliver negative attitudes if an informed consumer feels fooled by the brand or publisher. So the real challenge of native ads relies on finding the perfect balance between following the disclosure regulation, meeting the consumers' information expectations and perceptions and keeping a positive brand image in the consumers' minds.

4.3.Brand Equity

To be able to comprehend the concept of brand equity and its value to a company, we must understand what 'brand' really means. When we take a product or a service and we add distinctive layers to it, either tangible or intangible, that will differentiate it from the ones in the same category, we're developing a brand (Hakala *et al.*, 2012). The level of emotional or rational differentiation will depend on what the brand will stand for and what values will it represent to its followers. In order to be relevant in any marketplace of today, a brand must create and nourish a unique image in order to succeed and hold their competitive advantage against the competitors (Çifci *et al.*, 2016).

Brand equity is where the previously mentioned value lays, reflecting the firm's marketing performance and mirroring the relationship between the brand and its followers (Hakala *et al.*, 2012).

Brand equity, being a broad concept, can be split up into two perspectives: Company-Based/Financial Brand Equity and Customer-Based Brand Equity. On one hand, financial brand equity encompasses the monetary value of a brand, including how profitable a brand can be and how much market share it can obtain, ultimately shedding a light on the financial assessment of the company. On the other side of the spectrum, customer-based brand equity (CBBE) reflects the value and significance the brand will have to the costumers. Without a good customer-based brand equity, no firm can obtain overall high levels of brand equity as this is essential to a good financial performance. By merging personal experiences of consumers with their learning through those experiences overtime, customer lifetime value is being created – CLV, which is directly impacted by the trade-off between gains and losses that come from customer acquisition, retention and cross-selling (Leone *et al.*, 2006). CBBE is set in the mind

and conscience of the customers whereas financial brand equity is a real asset that can be realized into profit for the company (Farhat, 2014).

For the purpose of this research, we are interested in analysing in depth customer-based brand equity and for that we will take the view of Keller used by most researchers: CBBE is viewed as *‘the effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand’* (Hakala *et al.*, 2012: 440). Still on Keller’s perspective, brand knowledge englobes brand awareness and brand image. Hence, *‘brand equity exists when the customer is familiar with the brand and holds some favourable, strong and unique associations’* (Hakala *et al.*, 2012: 440).

Another interesting take on CBBE is the one from Yoo’s research, where brand equity comes as what makes a consumer choose a branded product over an unbranded one, under the same level of basic attributes within the same product category. Due to this, brand equity is *‘the extra value embedded in a brand’s name’* (Hakala *et al.*, 2012: 440).

Laslty, Aaker also has one of the most widely used definitions of CBBE. He considers it the combined assets and liabilities, name and symbol a brand possesses that help customers understand the available data on that brand, helping them making favourable or not favourable buying decisions (Farhat, 2014). These assets and liabilities are spread among 5 different types: brand loyalty, name recognition, perceived quality, brand associations and others (Budac and Baltador, 2013).

To sum up, CBBE can be seen as *‘the enhancement in the perceived utility and desirability a brand name confers on a product’*, allowing the brand to carry a sense of superiority for consumers over its competitors (Lassar *et al.*, 1995).

4.3.1. Conceptualizing Customer-Based Brand Equity

Among several existing frameworks and conceptualizations of CBBE, the two that researchers will always get back to are Keller’s and Aaker’s perspectives on the subject.

Although the differences between both authors’ theories rely mainly on how they organize the same premises, it is relevant to understand where they both come from as well as how they built their ideas becoming reference in the CBBE field.

4.3.1.1. Aaker’s Dimensions of Brand Equity

Aaker developed its own view of the matter through a clear definition of CBBE as well as what it encompasses to be developed and established in a consumer’s mind. The author takes

a simple approach that delivers the idea that to manage brand equity in a successful way is to know how to put into practice basic marketing propositions and concepts (Zinkhan, 1992).

In accordance to Aaker's point of view, five elements, called brand assets, can be displayed as a foundation to gauge brand equity and support value creation – Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Associations in Addition to Perceived Quality and Other Proprietary Brand Assets. The latter including elements such as patents, trademarks or channel relationships, and these are just additional ways to maintain the distinctive characteristics and competitive advantages of a brand to itself. Most scholars and researchers tend to focus their efforts on studying the first four elements and that's what we'll do next as well.

Brand Loyalty

In the 1991 framework proposal, Aaker defines brand loyalty as “*the attachment that a customer has to a brand*” (Çifci et al., 2016: 3741). This attachment will lead a loyal customer to prefer the consumption of a specific brand over their competitors over time, regardless of alterations in features among product category brands, such as physical attributes or price fluctuations (Farhat, 2014). Brand loyalty works a foundation to brand equity because, according to Aaker, we can use it to evaluate the brand's value since it is an asset that can generate profit (Severi and Ling, 2013).

To analyse brand loyalty as a brand asset is to realize that cumulative levels of consumer satisfaction allow the creation of a loyal customer (Aaker, 1996). If a group of consumers who had used the product/service of a certain brand within a defined time frame can be found, we can measure how satisfied they felt towards the use experience. The difficult issue in this measuring system for Loyalty is how to spot key conditions that allow a customer to be satisfied (Zinkhan, 1992).

Brand Awareness

There's a premise on brand awareness we cannot miss: if a brand is not recognized, no one can be loyal to it (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness is the starting point of brand equity and is a lot times underrated. It mirrors the pre-eminence of a brand in customers' mind. It is defined by Aaker as “*the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category*” (Farjam and Hongyi, 2015: 18).

Brand awareness ranges between the recognition and the recall sides of the spectrum. On a recognition side, awareness is relevant in portraying the brand as a familiar element in a customer's mind. Moving to the recall side of the spectrum, it takes further importance in

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consumer choice by defining the brands that are considered and selected (Farjam and Hongyi, 2015).

The levels that Aaker (1996) presents for brand awareness are the following: Recognition, Recall, Top-of-Mind, Brand Dominance, Brand Knowledge and Brand Opinion. Recognition is as simple as having heard or not of a brand. Recall concerns the ability to retrieve a brand from memory if the product category is given as cue. Top-of-Mind awareness occurs whenever a brand is recalled first, within a certain category, and if that brand is the only one recalled then we present a case of Brand Dominance. The final two levels reflect if the consumer is conscious of what the brand stands for and its meanings (Brand Knowledge), and the consumer is able to formulate a judgment on the brand (Brand Opinion).

Perceived Quality

This is the brand asset that has a higher connection with functional and physical attributes and features of the product/service of a brand (Aaker, 1996).

In 1992, Aaker explains that this dimension is a value provider because it offers a reason to buy the brand as well as allows higher price establishments and line extensions, due to the high levels of quality the consumer will attribute to the brand, conferring a sense of supremacy and quality (Farjam and Hongyi, 2015). It is important to mention that perceived quality is not the same as the quality of a product – perceived quality implies the individual and subjective assessment of the product (Severi and Ling, 2013). A brand that cannot capitalize any perceived quality for itself will barely be able to spawn any brand equity (Farhat, 2014).

Brand Associations in Addition to Perceived Quality

The brand associations asset usually are related with image aspects that resemble the uniqueness of the product category a brand is involved in. Aaker (1996) has considered three different facets of associations: Brand-as-Product – value; Brand-as-Person – brand personality; Brand-as-organization – organizational associations. The major relevance goes to the brand personality facet as most of brand image associations consumers create are based on personality traits the brand convey to them. Brand personality enables consumers to connect on an emotional level with a brand, facilitating a two-way relationship that will endure in the future.

Five main advantages can be associated with favourable brand associations: the delivery of positive feelings and attitudes; providing a reason to buy; aiding in retrieving brand information from a consumer's mind; creating a foundation for brand extension; puts the brand in the marketplace as a differentiating identity (Farhat, 2014).

4.3.1.2.Keller's Brand Knowledge Framework

Kevin L. Keller's conceptualization of customer-based brand equity has its value on the fact that it purposes not only exact guidelines to define marketing strategies, but also includes some touchpoints that are crucial in decision making at a managerial level. Based on this mind-set, CBBE is centralized in how brand knowledge is affected in different ways by marketing activities as well as the knowledge consumers will own on that brand in memory created by the same marketing efforts (Keller, 1993).

The framework that Keller (1993) presents has the starting point in brand knowledge. He defines it based on brand awareness and brand image – these will allow the customer to assess the differential effect that determines the response to a brand's marketing. Therefore, for Keller, to define CBBE is to define the dimensions of brand knowledge.

Brand knowledge itself can be described as a '*node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked*' (Keller, 1993: 3), based on the associative network memory model. The relevance of brand knowledge comes from its substance and arrangement since it influences what comes up to a consumer's mind whenever they think of a brand. Hence, brand knowledge dimensions will diverge into brand awareness and the categorization of the existing brand associations through brand image.

Brand awareness translates into the capacity consumers have to identify and recognize a brand under various circumstances, based on the prominence of the node in memory they possess. To be more specific, brand name awareness will turn out to be '*the likelihood that a brand name will come to mind and the ease with which it does so*' (Keller, 1993: 3). Brand awareness encompasses two important elements: brand recognition and brand recall performance. Brand recognition reflects the capability one has to validate prior exposure to a brand in a situation where it is given as a hint – consumers will identify the brand if it is known to them by having seen it or heard of it before. Brand recall is more about the ability one has to name the brand when the given hints or cues are in nothing related with the product/brand itself, but instead they refer to the product category – consumers must be able to '*generate the brand from memory*' (Keller, 1993: 3). Still within brand recall, a particular type has a huge importance when it comes to analysing awareness: TOMA – top of mind awareness (Hakala *et al.*, 2012). It occurs when more than being able to recall a brand's name from memory, consumers are able to name it before any other brand of, at least, one category. Brand awareness has even more impact in terms of recognition for new or niche brands in the sense that they can take a more solid place in consumers' minds overtime (Çifci *et al.*, 2016).

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Brand image is commonly defined as the brand perceptions reflected by the associations held in the mind and memory of the consumers. The brand associations are very relevant in the sense that they contain the meaning and significance of a brand to a consumer. Brand knowledge is directly affected by the favourability, strength and uniqueness of these associations, in particular for high involvement scenarios. Through a strong brand image, a superior brand message over the competition can be created (Severi and Ling, 2013).

Brand Associations may take the form of attributes, benefits and attitudes, depending on their abstraction extent and how much information is enclosed within a particular association.

Attributes

Whenever there's acquisition or consumption of a product/service, a set of expressive features can be built through the involvement with the product/service and the brand – the attributes. They are categorized as a function of relation with product/service performance, hence there are product-related and non-product-related attributes. Product-related attributes are core characteristics of a product/service that allow to perform them. These attributes reflect physical constituents of the product or essential demands of the service. The non-product-related attributes are extrinsic features from the mentioned acquisition or consumption and they are split into four different types: price information; packaging or product appearance information; user imagery (the user type); usage imagery (where and in which situations the usage occurs). The last two allow consumers to build brand personality attributes that set traits and a character of a brand in the user's mind. Hence, many emotions and feelings will be evoked by a brand according to the personality it arouses.

Benefits

When there's a merge between a given attribute and the personal value conferred to it by a consumer, a benefit exists. It reflects the consumers' thoughts on the rewards they can get from a product/service. Similar to the attributes, these benefits can also be deconstructed into three categories according to the motivations they encompass: functional benefits; experiential benefits; symbolic benefits. Functional benefits are highly related with product-related attributes and reflect inherent gains provided by this product/service. Experiential benefits are connected with product-related attributes as well, but relate more to the sentiments evoked by using the product/service. Lastly, symbolic benefits are external to the product/service and correlated with non-product-related attributes that connect with the last levels of the Maslow's pyramid of needs (social personal expression and approval as well as self-esteem achievements).

Attitudes

These are the foundation for consumer behaviours and responses and determine the overall impressions and appraisals of a brand. Attitudes are delivered based on a function of the attributes and benefits one sets to the brand.

The brand associations will influence CBBE through their favourability, strength and uniqueness. The ultimate marketing program goal is to be able to form favourable brand associations by having consumers believing that brand has a positive image to them and delivers the satisfaction of their needs. Attributes and benefits need to be relevant enough to the consumer in order to trigger either a good or bad evaluation of them, allowing to create a favourable association in the end. The more consumers develop and reinforce the relevance a brand has to them, the stronger the associations created. Moreover, the higher the level of congruence among brand associations, the easier it will be to recall existing associations and to make connections with additional associations. This will lead to a cohesive brand image that enable shared meanings to characterize the unique brand conception and idea on consumers' mind. Hence, building increasing levels of CBBE for that particular brand.

4.3.2. Framework comparison

After being exposed to both perspectives, we can clearly see a difference in the way CBBE was visualised and defined by the authors, as verified in Table 1.

On Aaker's point-of-view, is obvious that there is more emphasis on the product/service itself and on usage experiences of consumers, which determine how brand equity will be built for that brand.

On the other hand, in Keller's studies the focus is on the response to marketing activities and not so on the physical characteristics and benefits of a product. Of course they are not denied, but the usage experience is only relevant aligned with the reaction consumers have to marketing efforts and activities.

Table 2. CBBE framework comparison (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993)

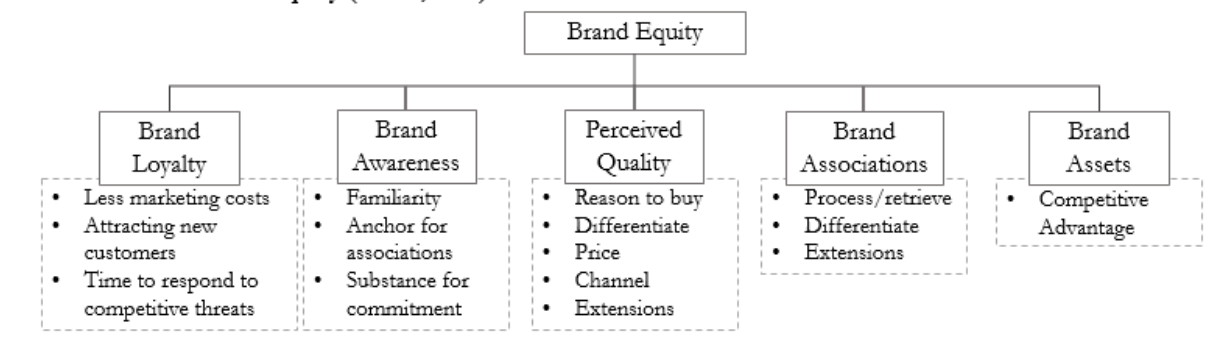
	Aaker (1991; 1996)	Keller (1993)
Brand Equity Definition	<i>"(...) a set of assets such as name awareness, loyal customers, perceived quality, and associations (...) that are linked to the brand (its</i>	<i>"(...) is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand. (...) involves consumers' reactions to</i>

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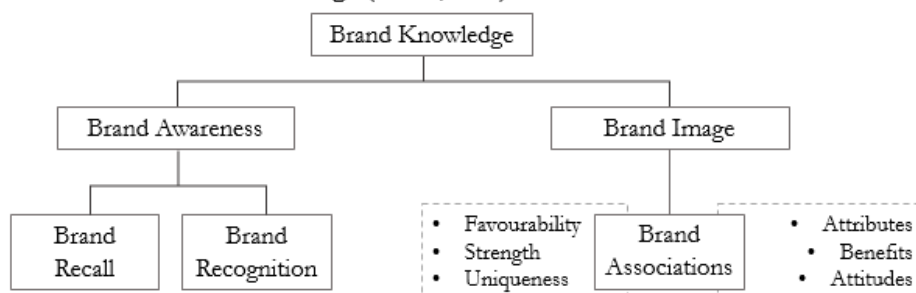
	<i>name and symbol) and add (or subtract) value to the product or service being offered.” (1991: 15)</i>	<i>an element of the marketing mix for the brand in comparison with their reactions to the same marketing mix element attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product or service” (1993: 2)</i>
Assets/Dimensions	Brand Loyalty; Brand Awareness; Perceived Quality; Brand Associations in Addition to Perceived Quality; Other Proprietary Brand Assets.	Brand Awareness; Brand Image; Brand Associations.
Central Assets to Value Creation	Brand Loyalty	Brand Knowledge
Framework orientation	Usage/Product/Service oriented	Marketing and Promotion Activities oriented

Figure 9. CBBE conceptual maps (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993)

Dimensions of Brand Equity (Aaker, 1991).



Dimensions of Brand Knowledge (Keller, 1993).



By analysing the table above, we come to the conclusion that, for the purpose of the present research, the foundation of this study will be Keller's theory. Not only includes the same touchpoints but organized only on three main dimensions as well as it focuses more on the consumer's response to marketing efforts and promotional activities. This goes hand-in-hand with the digital content marketing strategies that can be applied to social media and how

customers respond in order to build brand equity levels. Aaker's theory is more organized towards the usage experience of a product solely and was prior to Keller's perspective, which approached the same matter but with an evolved analysis.

4.4.Instagram as a Marketing Tool

4.4.1.What is Instagram – Description and Data

After an extensive social media analysis at the beginning of this report, we can move further into the topic and start getting closer to our main source of research: Instagram. In order to understand Instagram as a marketing and communication tool, we need to start by analysing the platform and take a look at some numbers and figures to get a bigger picture of its full potential.

Let's start with an in-house point of view over the star app. Co-founder Kevin Systrom says Instagram is much more than a photo-sharing company – its true mission is 'strengthening relationships through shared experiences' (McCracken, 2017). The core focus is on image and how users can be brought together through it.

On a more direct perspective, Instagram, the biggest social media network, can be defined as a photo-sharing platform/application which has its reputation and general acceptance based on its content's digital editing and immediate 'shareability' (Miah *et al.*, 2013). The concept is rather simple: take a photo, add a filter and put it online. This is the biggest platform appeal, especially when it comes to such visual and online connected user target. Another positive for the app is its (mostly) mobile presence: anywhere, anytime, users can access shared content, engage with their follower-based community and upload content in real time, requiring just a few clicks on their smartphones or tablets. One can follow profiles, develop a newsfeed database and take part in exchange of likes and use of features such as hashtags.

The idea launched in 2010 in a tech incubator and within only one and a half years and 30 million users, Facebook bought the company for nearly 1\$ billion. From the initial 30 million, Instagram grew its user base up to about 500/600 million in 2016, the same number of Twitter, Snapchat and Pinterest altogether. According to eMarketer, the estimated revenue generated by the company was at the \$360 million mark in 2015, and Forbes estimates IG to grow its market value up to somewhere in between \$25 and \$50 billion in the near future (Chaykowski, 2016). The platform's users are able to deliver 80 million photo posts daily (Kim *et al.*, 2017). A regular Instagram user goes on the app at least five times a day and browses through the feed to check other people's content rather than posting their own: In fact, checking

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Instagram is, for a lot of users, the first thing they do in the morning and last one before going to sleep (Chen, 2017).

Because image is the centre of attention when it comes to Instagram, visual diaries and identities are developed, allowing users to step into the platform's social interactions that can happen two ways: either among peers (within the user's social circle) or influencer/celebrity/brand profiles that are selling an image to a public audience, something they can desire or look up to (Chen, 2017).

Instagram started with a basic post format: in-feed photo. After that, video came into the frame and now we have several types of products within one Instagram visit. The most successful one is undoubtedly Instagram Stories. This feature was launched in August 2016 to face the growing interest in Snapchat's snap stories and was able to defeat its opponent only five months after its launch. This meant that IG stories reached 150 million users within 1/12 of the time it took for Snapchat to accomplish the same. The feature itself developed at a faster pace in six months than the app as a whole in its first years. (McCracken, 2017). In addition to stories, IG then debuted features such as live streaming (Instagram Live), hands free mode, complementary resources such as Boomerang, Layout or Hyperlapse apps that allowed profiles to burst with creativity and platform engagement.

Due to its intuitive interface and content creation, IG became appealing not only to individual usage but also for business purposes. Companies started seeing IG as a vehicle to get seen in the market place and be present where consumers are. Therefore, the opportunity to create business profiles, deliver branded content and advertise on the platform was way more appealing than any other option from a financial and return per investment perspectives. This way, companies could spread their identities across related interest groups and create a brand environment and atmosphere in the form of a visual hub (Chaykowski, 2016).

Advertisers started investing on IG as a mean to get to consumers and increase brand awareness and presence in consumers' minds. eMarketer estimated an ad revenue for IG of about \$3.64 billion in 2017 (twice as much as in 2016) (McCracken, 2017). This reflects corporate investment on the platforms paid ads formats. Being present in IG for a brand means reaching the right audiences in reasonable volumes: 80% of IG users follow some of the 8 million existing business profiles and a big slice uses them to get further details on the company. More than 1 million advertisers a month in 2017 (five times more than in 2016) were taking advantage of Instagram to share a different level of intimacy and transparency with their followers. (Chaykowski, 2017)

On a final note, Instagram is far from doubt the largest advertiser under Facebook's portfolio and translates into 5% of app-install ads on it (Sloane, 2016).

4.4.2. Branded content and Native Advertising on Instagram

Going into further detail on the advertising matter, after attaining the 1 million advertisers mark and gaining a miscellany of businesses growing in the platform, Instagram is allowing brands and companies to be followed by their admirers and fans. Due to greater advertisers' investment, Instagram was estimated to achieve \$3.64 billion in revenues only on ads last year (Chaykowski, 2017). The implementation of the paid ad business started in 2015 and it allows marketers not only to evaluate their unpaid ads performance but also get real time statistics over the paid ones – 'Insights' tab allows to track users' activity over the posts and sort their demographics (Chaykowski, 2017). The main positive for the platform is enabling marketers to explore brand storytelling and digital communication through user engagement with the brand's visual identities, while getting content feedback in real time (Miah *et al.*, 2013; McCracken, 2017).

IG has recently become 'native friendly'. According to The Resolution Media Team (2013), by the end of 2013 Instagram started testing native advertising products, mainly focused on sponsored photo and video posts to be included in the users' feed. In September 2015, the platform ended the native ads trial period (Rabe, 2015) and from that moment a lot of digital marketers were interested in investing on this key communication channel (Meola, 2016). In March 2017, the Instagram stories ads were launched and have been developing and gaining business reach since then (Cohen, 2017).

In order to start advertising on IG, one must possess a business profile. After that, options are endless. The in-feed posts, Instagram stories, the so called 'carousel ads' that combine multi-photo and video using complementary tools (Boomerang or Hyperlapse) or the quick-sale direct response ads format (that allow to convert user actions into purchase intention) can be managed by marketers according to viewers demographics and budget availability directly on IG when they're making the investment (Chaykowski, 2017; McPherson, 2017). If advertisers also have a Facebook business page besides the IG business profile, two main tools can be used to develop and put live IG ads: Ads Manager and Power Editor (Vogel, 2017). Ads Manager is used to build and manage several ads at once; Power Editor does the same in a more accurate way, especially oriented for bigger advertisers.

Advertising on Instagram allows brands to get ad recall and awareness 2.8 times more than the typical level for online advertising in general (Chaykowski, 2016). One good example for this is the Instagram Stories ads' reach that, due to its full-screen format, pushes consumers to deliver the marketers' desired level of attention to the paid content (McCracken, 2017).

Chen (2017), after studying college students' opinions of social media marketing, discovered that the subtleness of an ad still played a major role on its acceptance towards promotional communications. Marketeers should get away from traditional ad formats to avoid repulsiveness from viewers: they don't like explicit and obvious promotional moves and they much prefer feeling they're getting some privileged access to inside content. Having this in mind, the adoption of Native Advertising was inevitable to Instagram, merging the benefits of enhancing ad reach and approval at the same time.

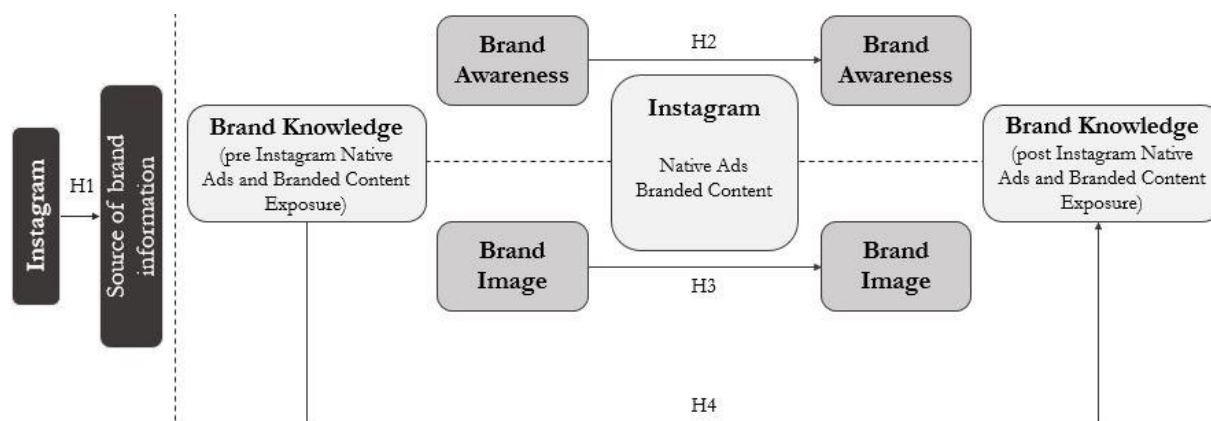
5. Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis

The majority of authors recognizes social media as one of, if not the most, important communication tools in the present times. Many of them have been establishing general benefits from developing a brand's social media presence, using data from big platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, as main study resource. Yet, there's a lack of interest in studying newer networks, such as Instagram.

Integrating social media platforms into the communication mix has proven to improve profitability measures on financial brand equity, such as ROI, way more than the integration of traditional media platforms (Snyder and Garcia-Garcia, 2016). But can we prove it has the same effect on customer-based brand equity through the Instagram example?

The aim of the produced framework is to shed a light on how the exposure of an Instagram (IG) user to digital content related to a brand on social media will affect brand equity. In the case of IG, and according to the literature review on this research, we'll be analysing two types of digital content – native advertising (NAd) and branded content (BC) – and the synergy they can create in elevating consumer-based brand equity (CBBE). We'll be searching for fluctuations in the two main brand assets, according to Keller's theory – brand awareness and brand image, comparing the level of both before and after Instagram content exposure. In the end, the new level of brand knowledge, by agglomeration of the two assets, will set a brand's equity level.

Figure 10. Research framework and hypothesis (Author's source)



H1: Instagram is used as a source of information on brand data.

On a primary level, the basis of this research will be to understand if IG users actually use the platform to gather information about brands. As per Chaykowski (2017), the brands' presence on the platform has been constantly increasing as well as the financial investment that has been put into it. Although Instagram is seen as a platform for users whose motivations to be on the network are on the 'socially-driven fun' category side (Luchman *et al.*, 2014), this does not mean they can't combine fun with knowledge (which is for example the case of Facebook for brands). Moreover, the social media presence of brands mentioned above, can increase the exposure of an IG user to content of brands he/she was not aware of or familiar with before, increasing target reach for new brands. Hence, hypothesis one (H1) will test if IG users consider it a data pool for products/brands.

H2: Brand awareness post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it.

H3: Brand image post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it.

To explain the following two hypothesis, we must be conscious of the fact that before an individual gets exposed to content about product/brands on IG, it has an initial CBBE level. It has been developed prior IG exposure, considering information the consumer has been gathering over a period of time and a combination of situations and associations on that brand. It is extremely important to not forget that a particular individual may not even have any knowledge on a given brand at the beginning, in case he/she never heard of it.

Once on Instagram, an individual can be exposed to the two promotional content formats we'll analyse in this study. On native advertising side, for the purpose of our research, we'll focus our attention on in-feed content (under MMA's definition), which will be translated into native social media posts (under Wojdynski's framework). The same will be applied to the

brands' owned content. If consumers follow a brand's page on Instagram, they are constantly exposed to digital content that may influence the image of the brand and may reinforce its presence in their mind, making it easier to recall that brand within its product category. Nevertheless, it's important to remember that in order to advertise on IG, a brand must create its own page – so marketers better take advantage of it as a first impression exposure appliance (McPherson, 2017), since users voluntarily follow a brand's page, in contrary to native ads content. A synergy can be created between both formats to deliver an optimum input to increase consumer CBBE levels.

We can assess the CBBE levels by assess Brand Awareness and Brand Image. As explained previously, prior to the exposure of IG content, users will have a formed idea or no idea at all on a given brand. Hence, hypothesis H2 and H3 will prove if after the exposure to IG content we can get higher levels of BA and BI.

H4: Overall level of brand knowledge is higher post Instagram content exposure than prior to it.

Lastly, our last hypothesis kind of works as an overview of the two previous ones. If after the exposure to the digital content formats the brand awareness and brand images levels are modified, the brand knowledge a consumer will have on it after the exposure experience will be different as well.

What all brands hope is that this content they are putting at consumers' disposal will create a positive effect on brand knowledge and, consequently, on brand equity. To assess BK, BA/BI and Competitive Advantage perception from an individual should be accounted. Therefore, hypothesis H4 will testify if BK increases in comparison to the initial levels prior to the IG exposure.

Below, is a table that summarize and gathers all hypothesis under research.

Table 3. Research hypothesis compilation (Author's source)

Research Hypothesis
H1: Instagram is used as a source of information on brand data.
H2: Brand awareness post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it.
H3: Brand image post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it.
H4: Overall level of brand knowledge is higher post Instagram content exposure than prior to it.

6.Methodology

6.1.Research design

The correct research methodology must be chosen to have the right assessment of the questions to be explored. Jeongeun and Minhye Park (2016) state the nature of the occurrence analysed must be considered to find the adequate method and then establish the main characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to choose from.

The present study has been established and built around a descriptive research design that is complemented by explanatory research adoption and statistical analysis. In the end, we aim to prove via statistical confirmation the practical appliance of the defined research question (Albers, 2017). Descriptive research follows the principles of the positivist paradigm through which we will support our study with the findings from observation and experiment (Rahi, 2017). The scientific method to generate inferences on the studied matter will be a quantitative one. In tune with the quantitative research method, the focus will be set on collecting data to be quantified to further analyse and support the central question in an objective and consistent way, by using a sample to represent a larger population (Queirós *et al.*, 2017; Rahi, 2017).

The specific tool chosen to follow a quantitative analysis is an online survey. It is among the existing tools, the one with most expressiveness, having around 31% of researchers preferring it (Queirós *et al.*, 2017). The survey allows to collect information that reflect ‘*the opinions, perceptions and behaviors of a group of individuals*’ (Queirós *et al.*, 2017: 381) and is aligned with the deductive approach (Rahi, 2017). The data collected will be primary.

6.2.Universe and sample

The data collection universe for this study will be based on a group of individuals from which the information will be retrieved – the universe. This universe will be the main resource from where we intend to collect information and draw conclusions. It can be defined for the purpose of this research as ‘Individuals who use Instagram’. Foremost, since the social media platform that works as communication vehicle and foundation for this research is Instagram, it is relevant that the individuals use the platform. Otherwise, they would have less chances of being exposed to the content under analysis and cannot provide input on whether or not they use IG as a data source.

In order to deepen our knowledge, a specific brand was chosen in order to analyse starting and ending levels of a particular CBBE. Gin brand Beefeater was chosen due to two main

reasons: 1 – it was one of the brands we found had both an IG own profile as well as delivered native ads on the platform, so both formats could be combined and analysed for this study; 2 – Gin can be seen as a transversal product category, in other words Gin is a product that is known/consumed regardless of gender, age or other demographics of the population. To that end, our study had less probability of being jeopardized by the influence of any inherent characteristics of the sample.

In order to achieve our final sample group to study, we'll be analysing the collected population by using a convenience non-probability sampling approach aligned with the use of filter questions. All subjects exposed to the survey on-line were welcome to participate in the study, without further requirements or demands, so there's any discrimination whatsoever on the potential participants of the study, turning the gathering of data and the inclusion of it in the study into a random process (Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). The main goal was to have a final sample of at least between 300 and 500 respondents to get a robust enough sample that would allow to better test the hypothesis set in a statistical way. A final sample of 501 participants was collected and later on a following section we will explain how this number was calculated.

6.3. Instrument construction and data collection

In order to collect data for this research, an online questionnaire was used as the chosen instrument (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). To perform this online survey, the mean chosen to facilitate the construct and on-line placement of the questionnaire was *Qualtrics* tool. The queries were performed both in English and Portuguese, since the universe was not restricted to Portuguese speakers and natives. All the main notions used on the survey were explained to the respondents whenever needed and the universe was exposed to a group of closed questions, mainly.

A pilot survey was conducted with 6 individuals in order to serve as a test for the final version from which the data was gathered. The main importance was to check if questions were understandable and clear, if the survey was not too extensive and also if the flow of the survey made sense. After receiving feedback from this group, certain questions were changed/removed and conditional logic rules were added to improve the flow of the survey. The answers from this test group were excluded from the final universe group.

The revised and final version of the survey was shared to gather responses across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. All respondents were

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exposed to a disclaimer at the beginning of the survey explaining this research was part of a Master in Marketing Dissertation and informed the results were only for statistical analyses purposes. In order to filter the responses among the universe, a filter question starts the survey to confer suitability to the respondent profile.

The survey is split into four main sections that follow the flow of hypothesis from the research framework. The first section is focused on testing the importance of Instagram as a source of information for products/brands. We then move on to the second section that contributes to assess the brand awareness, brand image and brand knowledge of Beefeater without any reference to the brand's content on Instagram. After being exposed to Beefeater's communication efforts on Instagram, individuals will now suffer a new assessment of the three constructs above. The final section is aimed at collecting demographics about the universe studied.

The purpose is to be able to compare the effect on non-exposition and exposition to Instagram communication on brand awareness, brand image and brand knowledge, from the two middle sections of the survey. The items that were used to evaluate each construct were adapted from existing literature.

Table 4. Instrument construct (Author's source)

Construct	Item	Adapted From	Scale/Measures
Instagram as a Source of Information	A1. Individuals follow brand pages or not. A2. Main reason to search for product/brand information on IG. A3. IG as a source to discover new products/brands.	Chen, (2017). Chaykowski, (2016). Miah <i>et al.</i> , (2013). McCracken, (2017). McPherson, (2017).	Multiple choice: varies according to question.
Brand Awareness	B1. The ease at which a brand is recalled. B2. The ease at which the brand gets TOMA, when the product category is given as a hint. B3. The ease at which the brand is recognizable over its competitors. B4. The ease at which the brand's logo and symbols are recognized.	Aaker, (1991; 1996). Keller, (1993). Hakala <i>et al.</i> , (2012). Barreda <i>et al.</i> , (2015). Çifci <i>et al.</i> , (2016).	1-5 Likert Scale: 1- Totally Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4- Agree; 5- Totally Agree.

Brand Image	C1. Credibility C2. Trustworthiness C3. The ability to ken the brand. C4. The brand is liked. C5. The brand's communication strategy is enjoyable. C6. Exposure to brand's content. C7. The products of the brand satisfy consumers' needs. C8. The ease at which the brand is differentiated from its competitors.	Aaker, (1991; 1996). Keller, (1993). Severi and Ling, (2013). Mühlbacher <i>et al.</i> , (2016). Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel, (2013). Farhat, (2014).	1-5 Likert Scale: 1- Totally Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4- Agree; 5- Totally Agree.
Brand Knowledge	D1. The brand is memorable. D2. The brand send a favourable image. D3. The brand is better than the competitors.	Aaker, (1991; 1996). Keller, (1993). Çifci <i>et al.</i> , (2016).	1-5 Bipolar Likert Scale.

6.4. Data extraction and procedure

To start analysing the data gathered, the coding and presentation of all the answers from *Qualtrics* tool were inputted in statistical analysis software *SPSS 22*. An initial screening was led to identify and eliminate answers that may be invalid or not completed. The original sample encompassed 595 responses that, after the mentioned screening, translated into a final sample with the total of 501 respondents. 94 entries on the survey were not completed. If we had left these replies in the final sample, the results would have been biased and could led to adulterated outcomes. However, for the final data analysis, the sample of 501 respondents will be shortened to 392 respondents which represents the number of individuals in the sample that have an IG account (filter question).

A sample characterization was performed at the beginning by gathering the results of the demographic and behavioural oriented criteria, allowing to build a respondents profile. Variables used were gender, age, educational level, professional situation and nationality on the demographics side. On the behavioural perspective, usage of Instagram and frequency of use were the main criteria included in the analysis.

The procedure to scrutinise variables and extract results was based on different levels of analysis. Along with the sample characterization mentioned above, we selected almost every variable of the study to perform some descriptive statistics tools on them. Frequency tables, measurements of centrality and dispersion (encompassing minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation) and cross tabulation of variables were chosen to assess number and tendency of responses' results. Moreover, on the variables that were measured with Likert scales, a scale validity and reliability test was applied – Cronbach's Alpha test. This test aims to check internal consistency of the items that combined imply a given construct.

From this moment onwards, hypothesis testing was started. To use parametric tests to extract results, a set of 3 assumptions should be accomplished. Since all variables implied a sample >30 , the first assumption for normality of variables' distribution could be validated since the sample was robust enough. In case we wanted to compare two or more groups, a second assumption arises and it concerns independence of groups – an individual in the sample can only belong to one group or the other. For the third assumption, homogeneity of variances, a Levene's test had to be performed. If the variable did not pass Levene's test, a non-parametric version of the chosen test would be performed. In this study, parametric tests Independent Samples T-Test and non-parametric Mann-Whitney were performed.

Moreover, to test the relationship between some specific variables, Pearson Chi-Square non-parametric test was performed. The aim of the test is to validate the hypothesis that two variables are independent. This type of study enriches the results by allowing the researcher to spot interesting connections between items of research.

All results and conclusions were analysed in order to build a conclusion and discussion section where we'll get a general idea of the outcomes of the research as well as a critical evaluation on how this study was conducted and what can be take into account for future researchers.

7.Results

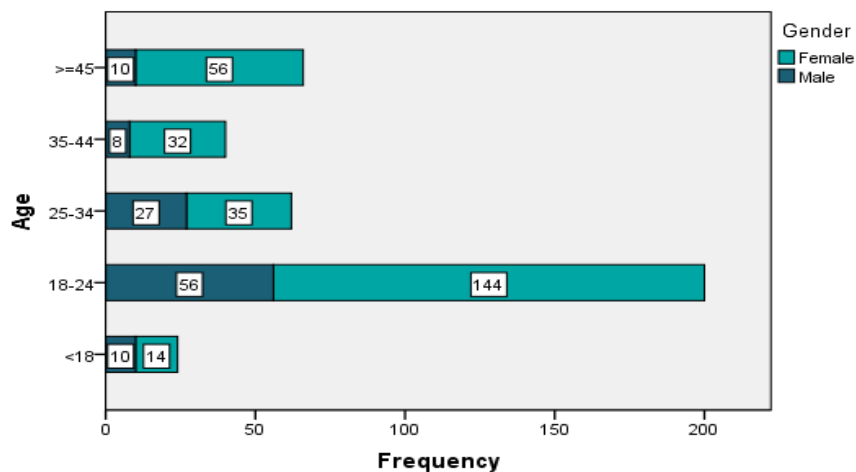
7.1.Sample Characterization

From the initial sample of 501 respondents, 392 have an Instagram profile and were therefore allowed to continue the study.

Out of this new filtered sample, 281 respondents are Female (71.7%) and 111 are Male (28.3%). The majority of the respondents' age is situated in the group between 18 and 24 years old (51%), followed by the over or 45 years old group (16.8%).

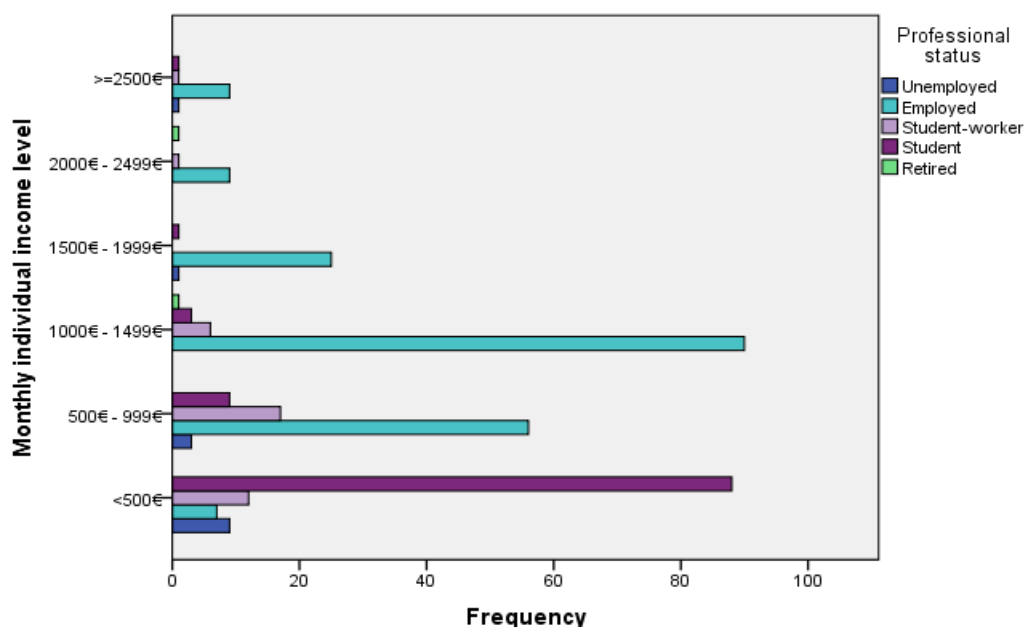
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Figure 11. Chart graph of gender distribution among age groups in frequency (Author's source)



Our sample is also characterized by being highly educated, since 78.1% of the respondents have at least a Bachelor's degree (Bachelor's – 47.2%, Master's – 30.6% and PhD – 0.3%). Around half of the respondents are employed (51.5%), followed by a high number of students (33.7%). These details on professional status go along with the fact that about 1/3 of the sample earns less than 500€ a month (33%). The second most chosen level of income was between 1000€ and 1499€.

Figure 12. Chart graph of professional status distribution among income groups in frequency (Author's source)



Finally, the overwhelming majority of respondents are Portuguese (371 against 21 from other nationalities), turning Nationality into a less relevant variable.

7.2.Instagram usage and platform perception

As presented in instrument construct table, a few sections ago, the main aspects to assess if IG is used as a source of brand information are: A1- The main reason to search for brand information on IG; A2- Whether or not brand pages are followed; A3- The ability to find new products/brands on IG.

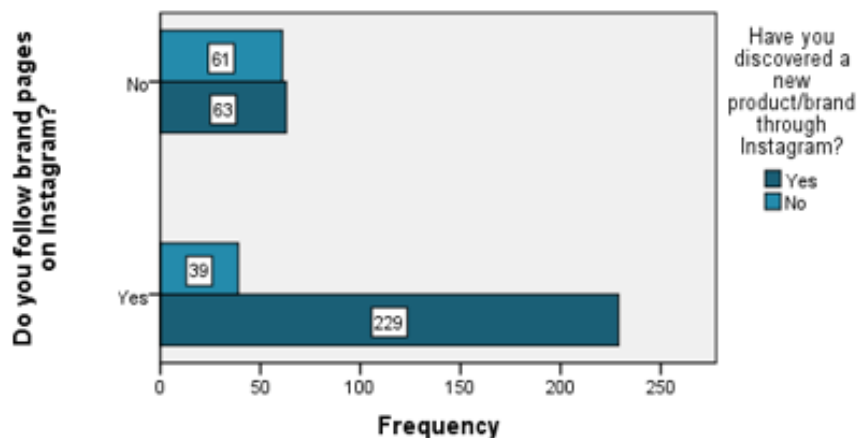
Out of the respondents that have an IG account, 187 do not use IG to search for information on products/brands (47.7%). From the individuals who do search for brands on the tool (52.3%), 119 (23.8%) state the main reason to do so is to get general information about the product itself or the brand, followed by discounts and campaigns (each weighing 16.6% of the sample). Besides, whether or not an individual uses IG to search for product/brand information is dependent on the frequency of usage of the platform, according to the results of the Chi-Square test. It makes sense since the more you are using the platform, the more new information you'll get the chance to be exposed to and to look for as well. Instagram is accessed by 97.4% of respondents that have a profile via Smartphone.

Moreover, about 2/3 (268 out of 392) of the individuals follow brand pages on IG. Interesting enough, considering the results on the paragraph above, there are more people admitting to follow brand pages on IG (68.4%) than admitting they use the tool to search for information on products/brands (52.3%). A Chi-Square test allowed to confirm that to follow or not a brand page on IG is highly related with using the platform to look for information on a product/brand.

Lastly, 292 out of 392 respondents state they found a new product/brand via IG. We know by statistical evidence, that to discover new products/brands on IG is highly dependent on the frequency of use as well as if one follows or not brand pages. In fact, 229 individuals follow brand pages and have discovered new products/brands and 246 individuals have discovered new products/brand by accessing IG several times a day.

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Figure 13. Chart graph of distribution of 'Have you discovered a new product/brand through IG?' versus 'Do you follow brand pages on IG?' in frequency (Author's source)



7.3.Brand Awareness prior and post IG exposure

Since as explained in the Methodology section, Beefeater brand was selected to help explore and test the hypothesis created, the analysis started by assessing the knowledge of the sample on the product category. More than 80% of the respondents were not familiar (155), slightly familiar (102) or relatively familiar (90) with Gin product category.

Introducing TOMA (top of mind awareness), the respondents were requested to rank three brands that came to their mind whenever they thought about Gin. Beefeater was mentioned on 10.3% ratio in first, 9.92% in second and 5.94% in third. Among a total of 780 mentions, Beefeater got mentioned 67 times (which accounts for 8.59%). The chances of the brand being mentioned got lower as we move further down the rank.

Table 5. TOMA of Beefeater according to rank position in frequency (Author's source)

Variable	#1	#2	#3
Beefeater	24	26	17
Total	232	262	286

Then, in terms of brand recognition, out of the 13 Gin brands provided, Beefeater was selected as recognized 199 times, which accounts for about 50.77% of the individuals that recognize the brand. If we rank the brands according to the times they got selected, in decreasing order, we would have the following: Gordon's → Hendricks's → Bombay → Bulldog → Beefeater → Tanqueray → Gin Mare → Martin Miller's → Mombasa Club → Larios → Jodhpur/Hayman's.

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At last, to the question ‘Do you know the brand Beefeater?’ 52.8% of the sample said they did, while 47.2% said they didn’t.

After introducing the content from IG, firstly we assessed if individuals had seen the native ad for the brand on IG before and 21.2% did. Additionally, 4.1% of individuals followed the brand, which is very low level of follower base on the sample.

We assed Brand Awareness through a set of 4 variables measured with a Likert scale from 1- Totally Agree to 5- Totally Disagree. A Cronbach’s Alpha test was conducted and it revealed a good internal consistency ($0.8 < \alpha \leq 0.9$) on these variables to represent brand awareness.

Table 6. Mean of variables for the construct brand awareness, post IG exposure (Author’s source)

Variable	Mean
B1.I can easily recall this brand	2.21
B2.When I think of Gin, this is one of the brands that come to mind	2.94
B3.I would more easily remember this brand than its competitors	2.77
B4.I can easily recognize the brand's logo and symbols	2.42

Table 7. Frequency of variables for the construct brand awareness, post IG exposure (Author’s source)

Variable	Count 1	Count 2	Count 3	Count 4	Count 5	Total
B1.	106	147	106	17	16	392
B2.	64	94	105	59	70	392
B3.	51	130	112	56	43	392
B4.	118	111	84	37	42	392

From the results above, we can see the variable that performed best was B1, while B2, performed worse. However, all of the variables performed a good level of agreement, according to the majority of counts in frequency.

To understand better brand awareness post IG exposure, a parametric Independent Samples T-test was conducted, according to the variables for this construct mentioned in the instrument construct table, for the hypothesis below considering the group of people who knew Beefeater (1) and the group of people who didn’t know the brand (2).

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Table 8. T-Test hypothesis for variables on brand awareness construct post IG exposure among group 1 and 2
(Author's Source)

Variable	T-Test Hypothesis
B1.I can easily recall this brand	$H_0: B_{1,2,3,4} \text{ mean in group 1} = B_{1,2,3,4} \text{ mean in group 2}$
B2.When I think of Gin, this is one of the brands that come to mind	$H_a: B_{1,2,3,4} \text{ mean in group 1} \neq B_{1,2,3,4} \text{ mean in group 2}$
B3.I would more easily remember this brand than its competitors	
B4.I can easily recognize the brand's logo and symbols	

Levene's test validated homogeneity of variances for B2. So we proceeded the analysis of the T-test results for this variable. However, the null hypothesis was rejected and by the group statistics we can see that the mean of B2 is higher in the group of individuals who knew the brand.

For variables B1, B3 and B4, since Levene's test rejected the needed assumption, Mann-Whitney non-parametric test was performed for the following hypothesis.

Table 9. Mann-Whitney hypothesis for variables on brand awareness construct post IG exposure among group 1 and 2 (Author's Source)

Variables (post IG)	Mann-Whitney Hypothesis
B1.I can easily recall this brand	$H_0: B_{1,3,4} \text{ distribution in group 1} = B_{1,3,4} \text{ distribution in group 2}$
B3.I would more easily remember this brand than its competitors	$H_a: B_{1,3,4} \text{ distribution in group 1} \neq B_{1,3,4} \text{ distribution in group 2}$
B4.I can easily recognize the brand's logo and symbols	

All 3 tests rejected the null hypothesis which dismissed equality of distribution of the variables on group 1 and 2. According to the mean rank for each variable, the level of B1, B3 and B4 is always higher in the group of people who did not know Beefeater.

The same principal was followed for a new Independent Samples T-test, but this time the groups in analysis consisted of the individuals who have seen the IG content previously (3) and the ones who have not seen it before (4).

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Table 10. T-Test hypothesis for variables on brand awareness construct post IG exposure among group 3 and 4
(Author's Source)

Variables (post IG)	T-test Hypothesis
B1.I can easily recall this brand	$H_0: B_{1,2,3,4}$ mean in group 3 = $B_{1,3,4}$ mean in group 4 $H_a: B_{1,2,3,4}$ mean in group 3 $\neq$ $B_{1,3,4}$ mean in group 4
B2.When I think of Gin, this is one of the brands that come to mind	
B3.I would more easily remember this brand than its competitors	
B4.I can easily recognize the brand's logo and symbols	

Levene's test was valid for B1, B2 and B3. However, the T-test results made us reject the null hypothesis. We found via group statistics that for B1 and B3 the mean is higher in the group of individuals who have not seen the content before. For B2, the mean is higher in the group of individuals who have seen the content before.

For B4, Mann-Whitney test was conducted and the null hypothesis that the distribution of B4 in group 3 and 4 was the same. By the mean ranks, we conclude that B4 has higher mean level in the group of individuals who have not been exposed to the content previously.

7.4.Brand Image prior and post IG exposure

In order to assess brand image prior and post IG exposure, a set of 8 variables was created and measured with a Likert scale from 1- Totally Agree to 5- Totally Disagree. A Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted and it revealed a good internal consistency ($0.8 < \alpha \leq 0.9$) on both cases on these variables representing well brand image.

The centrality and dispersion measure 'Mean' for all values prior IG exposure in comparison to post IG exposure is represented in the table below. Only C5 and C6 got better mean values, which makes sense since these are the variables more related with communication of content and the sample has just been exposed to it. It's important to mention that prior IG levels do not account for respondents that did not know Beefeater (185 respondents), since they were not allowed to reply to the question. Post IG levels include all respondents, whether or not they knew the brand.

Table 11. Mean for variables on brand construct prior and post IG exposure (Author's Source)

Variable	Mean Prior IG	Mean Post IG
C1.This brand is credible	1.79	2.10
C2.I trust this brand	1.95	2.30

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C3.I feel like I know this brand	2.28	2.58
C4.I like this brand	2.17	2.48
C5.I enjoy this brand's communication strategy	2.54	2.32
C6.I'm exposed to online content from this brand a lot	3.43	3.31
C7.The products from this brand satisfy my needs	2.50	2.89
C8.I can differentiate this brand from its competitors	2.43	2.46

Table 12. Frequency of variables for the construct brand image, prior to IG exposure (Author's source)

Variable (prior IG)	Count 1	Count 2	Count 3	Count 4	Count 5	Total
C1.	98	59	46	3	1	207
C2.	79	64	61	2	1	207
C3.	58	67	58	15	8	207
C4.	61	59	80	5	2	207
C5.	29	45	126	6	1	207
C6.	16	31	61	47	52	207
C7.	34	64	88	14	7	207
C8.	38	76	63	25	5	207

Table 13. Frequency of variables for the construct brand image, post IG exposure (Author's source)

Variable (post IG)	Count 1	Count 2	Count 3	Count 4	Count 5	Total
C1.	120	133	123	11	5	392
C2.	92	122	155	13	10	392
C3.	68	123	138	30	33	392
C4.	67	116	176	18	15	392
C5.	77	140	155	13	7	392
C6.	26	69	139	75	83	392
C7.	42	83	188	33	46	392
C8.	76	145	122	33	26	392

In order to better explore this construct, we conducted a parametric Independent Samples T-Test to analyse the hypothesis on the table below for each variable post IG experience in two different groups: 1. Individuals who know Beefeater; 2. Individuals who don't know Beefeater.

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Table 14. T-Test hypothesis for variables on brand image construct post IG exposure among group 1 and 2
(Author's Source)

Variable (post IG)	T-Test Hypothesis
C1.This brand is credible	$H_0: C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 1 = $C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 2 $H_a: C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 1 $\neq$ $C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 2
C2.I trust this brand	
C3.I feel like I know this brand	
C4.I like this brand	
C5.I enjoy this brand's communication strategy	
C6.I'm exposed to online content from this brand a lot	
C7.The products from this brand satisfy my needs	
C8.I can differentiate this brand from its competitors	

Since Levene's test for homogeneity of variances failed for C1, C5 and C8, those variables were tested later in a Mann-Whitney non-parametric test. For variables C2, C3, C4, C6 and C7 Levene's results accepted the homogeneity of variances and we were able to analyse T-tests results. None of the groups demonstrated equal means for each variable, that is all null hypothesis for the 5 variables were rejected. By looking at statistics table, we can see that the ranking of C2, C3, C4, C6 and C7 is always higher in the group of individuals who did not know the brand.

For variables C1, C5 and C8 the hypothesis to be tested in Mann-Whitney test were as follows.

Table 15. Mann-Whitney hypothesis for variables on brand image construct post IG exposure among group 1 and 2 (Author's Source)

Variable (post IG)	Mann-Whitney Hypothesis
C1.This brand is credible	$H_0: C_{1,5,8}$ distribution in group 1 = $C_{1,5,8}$ distribution in group 2 $H_a: C_{1,5,8}$ distribution in group 1 $\neq$ $C_{1,5,8}$ distribution in group 2
C5.I enjoy this brand's communication strategy	
C8.I can differentiate this brand from its competitors	

All tests rejected the null hypothesis, therefore the variables do not follow similar enough distributions and their mean ranks reveal that the ranking of C1, C5 and C8 is bigger every time in the group of individuals who did not know the brand, similar to the results for the T-test variables.

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A new Independent Samples T-test was performed to test the mean levels of post IG brand image variables in the groups of the individuals how have seen the IG content previously (3) and the ones who have not seen it before (4).

Table 16. T-Test hypothesis for variables on brand image construct post IG exposure among group 3 and 4
(Author's Source)

Variables (post IG)	T-test Hypothesis
C1.This brand is credible	$H_0: C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 3 = $C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 4 $H_a: C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 3 $\neq$ $C_{1,...,8}$ mean in group 4
C2.I trust this brand	
C3.I feel like I know this brand	
C4.I like this brand	
C5.I enjoy this brand's communication strategy	
C6.I'm exposed to online content from this brand a lot	
C7.The products from this brand satisfy my needs	
C8.I can differentiate this brand from its competitors	

Levene's test was valid for C1, C2, C5, C6 and C7. All T-test results for these 5 variables made us reject the null hypothesis. We found via group statistics that for the 5 variables, the mean is higher in the group of individuals who have not seen the content before.

For C3,C4 and C8, Mann-Whitney test was conducted and the null hypothesis that the distribution of the three variables was equal between group 3 and 4 got rejected for all variables. By the mean ranks, we conclude that all means were higher in the group of individuals who have not been exposed to the content previously.

7.5.Brand Knowledge prior and post IG exposure

Finally, on brand knowledge level, that encompasses variables D1 to D3, we first compared the mean of the 3 variables prior to IG exposure and post IG exposure. These variables were measured on a bipolar Likert scale which means for D1, 1- Not memorable and 5- Memorable; for D2, 1- Unfavourable image and 5- Favourable image; for D3, 1- Worse than competitors and 5- Better than competitors.

By comparison of the two line graphs below, we can tell that the line is more populated to the right on the second case, although mean levels are very similar in all variables. All variables increased the initial mean value but not by much: D1 increased from 3.43 to 3.44; D2 increased from 3.37 to 3.49; D3 increased from 3.06 to 3.12.

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Figure 14. Line graph of mean of variables under brand knowledge construct prior to IG exposure (Author's source)

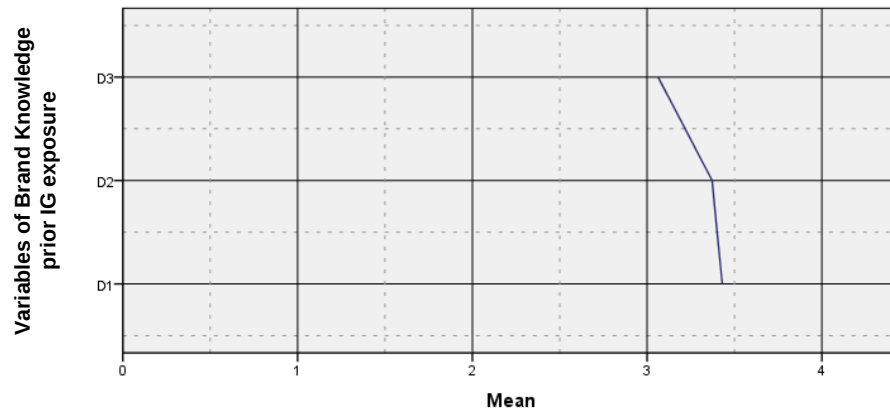
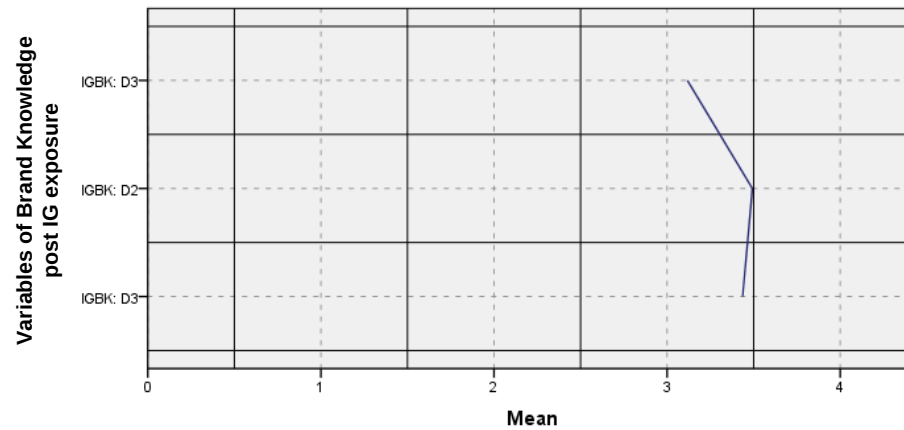


Figure 15. Line graph of mean of variables under brand knowledge construct post IG exposure (Author's source)



For this construct, Independent Samples T-test were conducted as well, for all three variables D1 to D3 among the group of individuals who knew Beefeater (1) and the group of individuals who didn't knew the brand (2). The objective was to test the equality of the variables' means between groups. However, since Levene's test failed for all variables, Mann-Whitney was conducted instead.

Table 17. Mann-Whitney hypothesis for variables on brand knowledge construct post IG exposure among group 1 and 2 (Author's Source)

Variable (post IG)	Mann-Whitney Hypothesis
D1.The brand is memorable	$H_0: D_{1,2,3}$ distribution in group 1 = $D_{1,2,3}$ distribution in group 2 $H_a: D_{1,2,3}$ distribution in group 1 $\neq$ $D_{1,2,3}$ distribution in group 2
D2.The brand sends a favourable image	
D3.The brand is better than the competitors	

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All null hypothesis were rejected and we concluded none of the variables followed a similar distribution. From the mean ranks of this test, we stated the mean of D1, D2 and D3 are always higher in the group of individuals who knew the brand Beefeater.

A final Independent Samples T-test was performed to test the mean levels of post IG brand knowledge variables in the groups of the individuals how have seen the IG content previously (3) and the ones who have not seen it before (4).

Table 18. T-Test hypothesis for variables on brand knowledge construct post IG exposure among group 3 and 4
(Author's Source)

Variables (post IG)	T-test Hypothesis
D1.The brand is memorable	$H_0: D_{1,2,3} \text{ mean in group 3} = D_{1,2,3} \text{ mean in group 4}$
D2.The brand sends a favourable image	$H_a: D_{1,2,3} \text{ mean in group 3} \neq D_{1,2,3} \text{ mean in group 4}$
D3.The brand is better than the competitors	

Levene's test was valid for D1 and D2. The T-test result for D1, made us reject the null hypothesis. By the group statistics, D1 is higher in mean on the group of individuals who have not seen the content before. The T-test results for D2 made us accept the null hypothesis. Therefore we can consider D2 mean equal regardless of individuals having seen the content or not.

Since D3 got reject at Levene's, we conduct a Mann-Whitney and the results made us reject the null hypothesis that D3 is equally distributed in group 3 and 4. The mean ranks let us know that D3 is higher in mean for individuals who have been exposed to the content.

In conclusion, after cross tabulation of the variables 'Do you follow this brand on IG?' and 'Would you start following/continue to follow the brand?' we assessed that 99 individuals would actually start following the brand and 2 would stop.

Table 19. Cross tabulation in frequency of variables 'Do you follow this brand on IG?' and Would you start following/continue to follow the brand?' (Author's Source)

Variables	Do you follow this brand on IG? - Yes	Do you follow this brand on IG? - No
Would you start following/continue to follow the brand? - Yes	14	99
Would you start following/continue to follow the brand? - No	2	277

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Table 20 will be summarizing all the tests, apart from descriptive statistic data, that were used in order to assess the validity of the four main hypothesis questions set for this study. We can conclude, that all hypothesis except for one were validated. This will be explained in depth on the following chapter of Conclusions and Discussion.

Table 20. Validation of research hypothesis summary (Author's Source)

Hypothesis	Valid or Not Valid	Validation tests
H1: Instagram is used as a source of information on brand data	VALID	Dependence of Variables: 1. 'Do you use IG to search for information on products/brands?' * 'How often do you use IG?' 2. 'Do you follow brand pages on IG?' * 'Do you use IG to search for information on products/brands?' 3. 'Have you discovered a new product/brand on IG?' * 'How often do you use IG?' 4. 'Have you discovered a new product/brand on IG?' * 'Do you follow brand pages on IG?'
H2: Brand awareness post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it	VALID	1. The mean of all variables (B1 to B4) was equal between the group of people who knew Beefeater and the group of people who didn't. 2. The mean of all variables (B1 to B4) was equal between the group of people who have seen the IG content before and the group of people who haven't.
H3: Brand image post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it	NOT VALID	1. The mean of all variables (C1 to C8) post IG exposure was equal between the group of individuals

		who knew Beefeater and the group who didn't. 2.The mean of all variables (C1 to C8) post IG exposure was equal between the group of individuals who have been exposed to the IG content before and the group who haven't.
H4: Overall level of brand knowledge is higher post Instagram content exposure than prior to it	VALID	1.The mean of all variables (D1 to D3) post IG exposure was equal between the group of individuals who knew Beefeater and the group who didn't. 2.The mean of all variables (D1 to D3) post IG exposure was equal between the group of individuals who have been exposed to the IG content before and the group who haven't.

8.Conclusions and Discussion

In the final section of this dissertation, we'll conclude on the validity of the research hypothesis proposed as well as provide some critical analysis and future research advice in the discussion topic.

Starting with *H1: Instagram is used as a source of information on brand data*, considering the results in the previous section, we will confirm this hypothesis is **VALID**.

On the literature review, we analysed Luchman and his colleagues (2014) Motives Framework where Instagram specifically was placed in the 'Socially-driven fun' quadrant. Evidence from our study 'moves' IG from that side of the spectrum to a mix between 'Information seeking' and 'Focused entertainment' segments. More than half of our sample states they use IG as a platform to search for information on products/brands and the main reason why they do it is to get general information on that product/brand. Moreover, the more the usage frequency of IG, there's higher chances an individual may use it to search for

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product/brand information. The availability of the platform will allow users to drive their content-specific usage from other platforms to IG, since they use it currently (several times a day).

Adding to the facts above, it's also interesting that there are more people confirming to follow brand profiles on IG than confirming to use the platform as a data source. In this case, the gaining of brand information becomes somehow passive. This means that the reason why an individual followed a brand in the first place may have nothing to do with information on it directly, but because he/she chose to follow the brand content they chose to get exposed to whatever material the brand puts at disposal. In line with these thoughts, since around 75% of our sample confirmed they have discovered new products or brands through IG, the main idea is corroborated again, again in a more passive way. The more frequent one is on the platform and the more brand profiles one follows, enhances the probability to discover new products or brands. The more you use the platform, you'll be more exposed to IG content, including brand marketing efforts, regardless of their type. We can also relate this conclusion to Constantinides (2014) approaches for engaging B2C communications on social media from companies' perspectives. This study has reassured the importance of the active approach: to be present in social media is already important because even if consumers are not looking for 'you' directly, they'll eventually come your way. Here we are touching the fields of placement, mentioned in Native Advertising section (we will get into it latter on this topic).

Second research hypothesis, *H2: Brand awareness post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it*, was **VALID** as well. To get to this conclusion we had to compare the results from the awareness section that reflected different types of awareness with the variables for the main construct after IG exposure. First fact to validate the hypothesis is that after IG exposure, 64.5% of the individuals confirmed they could easily recall the brand, 40.3% confirmed Beefeater is in the top brands they recall when they think of Gin and 46.17% confirmed they would easily distinguish the brand among competitors. In the initial questions prior to IG exposure, in terms of recall, only 8.59% of total mentions referred Beefeater, significantly less than the percentages for recall after. About half of the sample recognizes the brand among its competitors and knows the brand prior to IG exposure, which is a better percentage than the one for the variable that mentions the ease at which the brand is recognizable among the consumers. As Keller (1993) stated, whenever there's brand awareness in considerable levels, there's a higher ability from consumers to validate prior exposure to that brand in a given situation.

Recall levels are also better in the group of respondents that knew the brand before and were exposed to IG content. The easiness of recall, the ability to distinguish the brand among competitors and the ease at which the logo and symbols are recognized are less evident for the group of individuals who did not know the brand and were exposed to IG content. This confirms what we have on theory from Çifci and his colleagues (2016) to confirm that the relevancy of a brand will mostly be translated on the unique image that is created to be held in its consumers mind. Especially the physical attributes – logo and symbols – allows to create a visual identity with the brand that will reinforce the substance of the construct to be included in final brand knowledge (Keller, 1993).

At last, the group of individuals who have been exposed to Native Ads from Beefeater on IG previously had better level of recall and TOMA as well. This is an expected conclusion since the aim is to reinforce awareness mainly via placement, which means to be distinctive enough whenever the content from your brand comes ‘in the way’ of the customer. If it reflects your brand well enough, consumers will not only remember it but will actively seek for it if they enjoy it. The rest of the variables were again lower in comparison on the group of individuals who did not have access to that content previously. Again, if you have not been exposed to that brand that many times, you’ll have more difficulty in retrieving the brand itself as well as its elements. The individuals from our sample, who have been exposed to the content, were able to determine that that visual content and the brand were familiar enough to be retrieved from memory.

Moving on to *H3: Brand image post Instagram content exposure is higher than prior to it*, was **NOT VALID** since it was not completely confirmed. Some variables got better results post IG exposure, however they were not the majority. Still falling mostly into the scope of partial agreement level, it is interesting to find that the exposure to the content led to higher levels of neutrality from the respondents for most of variables, which is not in line with the expected result of the hypothesis. The objective is always to provide such strong content to the consumers that they will somehow re-organize or reinforce the associations they already have regarding that brand (Keller, 1993). Our study demonstrated some indifference for the brand prior the exposure to the content. Since brand image is more of a personal filter for the perceptions on the brand, it may be the case that our sample was not that keen on that specific brand (Keller, 1993).

Enjoying the brand’s communication strategy and being exposed to online content a lot performed better after seeing the IG content. This makes sense because the initial values pointed for lower levels of agreement with those variables. Since we forced exposure to the content, is

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natural that the respondents may recall it or even at least assess if they enjoy or not the communication from the brand. Which leads us into the surprising result that all variables under brand image performed worse means in the group of individuals who have not seen the content previously. The same was reflected on the group of individuals who did not know the brand previously.

On the last hypothesis, *H4: Overall level of brand knowledge is higher post Instagram content exposure than prior to it*, the premise is **VALID**. The difference is not that big, but indeed there's an improvement. Especially in the level of favourability of the brand image, that evidence showed improved from pre IG exposure to post IG exposure. All constructs got neutral or positive evaluations, which means there's a support from the constructs that brand knowledge performs well. Knowing the brand previously provided higher levels of memorability, favourability of image and was found to be better in comparison with competitors. Again there has been a reinforcement and rearrangement of the substance on the brand, improving acceptability and brand equity values (Keller, 1993). The image of the brand was favourable regardless of whether or not the individuals were exposed to the native content previously (which represents a good match between the image the brand sends and the image consumers constructed on their mind through the associations created previously). Higher levels of memorability and better comparison with competition were evident as well for who has not been exposed to the content previously – distinctiveness was represented into these results.

To finish on brand knowledge, the favourability, strength and uniqueness of the brand overall was implicit in the fact that the majority of respondents did not follow the brand on IG but were willing to start following it or for the ones who already followed, they would continue to do so. This represents a positive attitude towards the brand and its content (Keller, 1993; Hakala *et al.*, 2012).

To conclude, our main research question '*Can native advertising and branded content on Instagram affect brand equity levels?*' was **VALIDATED** and it was possible to understand that a balance of the internal dimensions of brand knowledge are reached to produce a new level of brand equity for consumers.

9. Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

With the research concluded and the validation of the main research question, it is now possible to take a step back and critically analyse our research in order to track the limitations it had.

First of all, although the sample size was enough to create a valid database, a bigger number of responses would have increased the reliability of the study since it would allow to better fit the results with reality. The small sample size can be explained by the time the online survey was live. If we were collecting responses for a longer period, we would have got a bigger sample. However, this was not possible due to time constraints.

Moreover, the exposure to the digital content on Instagram was imposed and was a one-time exposure for our research. For future researches, an increased exposure over time to the content is advised as it may lead to different and improved results. Not to forget, that overly exaggerated exposure can also create the opposite effect. Instead of engaging consumers with the content, they may get tired of it and start creating negative ideas about it. This may be an interesting research approach for the future, relating exposure time to IG content with benefits on brand equity.

On another note, IG runs its ads based on user algorithms and preferences the brands use to place the content in front of the right audiences. Some individuals in our sample could use Instagram for the rest of their lives and might not even be exposed to that content once. Simply because, according to the preferences established, they do not fit the target. Which means that there may be better target samples to test the exposure to Beefeater, in this case, for future reference. To mention as well that the brand obviously influenced the results we got. Different brands would have performed differently under the same set of questions and items to analyse.

Finally, the most relevant alternative research path that could have been pursued was to test native ads on Instagram against brand profiles instead of testing their synergy on improving or creating brand equity levels.

10. Contributions to the Academy and Managerial Implications

As explained in the beginning of this dissertation, the literature is quite short on advertising and communication impacts on IG regarding branded content and native advertising.

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We gave some insight on this topic, allowing to make connections between a value of a brand to a consumer and how it is affected via IG as an integrated communications' platform.

It is very important that we begin to pay more attention to advertising on IG in the long run due to the exponential growth it has been gaining and will continue to gain in the future. Brands must constantly adapt to the changing demands of their targets, knowing how to leverage the combined marketing efforts.

Regarding managerial implications, first of all, as we concluded in this study, a lot of people still do not find IG to be a resource on brand information. Companies must analyse their target to track the group of individuals who do feel this way about IG and orient their communication efforts to change their minds. If firms want to set IG as their main social media platform for brand presence, then they must attract consumers in a new way. Not to forget that for the ones that already use the tool as main source of information, the firm needs to keep them coming back and interested.

Moreover, to determine the approach they will use to create the type of content may be crucial in having a successful engagement from your target. First, assess what is the main aspect that makes the individuals search for your brand. Then, adapt your content to the outputs from the filter you did. Giving individuals what they want in a memorable way will increase awareness and consequently turn the brand knowledge into a more valuable asset in the end. Exposure to fresh and new content over time may reinforce associations with the brand to improve its image as well.

At last, consistency and cohesiveness will improve the levels of reliability of the brand voice among consumers. Again, if the brand voice is clear and identifiable across communication formats, the same reinforcement and memorability will increase. In the end, the unique aspects of your brand will be remembered in a favourable way that will enhance your competitive advantages among competitors.

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12. Appendix 1 – Online Survey in English

Finishing the Master in Marketing at ISCTE Business School, this survey will be used as a quantitative research tool to conclude my Dissertation. The goal is to test the effect Instagram's content in the level of Consumer Based Brand Equity. All answers are anonymous and used for statistical analysis purposes only. This survey will not take more than 3 minutes. Thank you.

Section 1 – Instagram usage and perception of the platform

Q1) Do you have an Instagram profile?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(If the answer is No, the survey ends here.)

Q2) How often do you use Instagram?

- ☐ Several times a day
- ☐ 1 to 3 times a week
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ Less than 1 to 3 times a week

Q3) What is the device you use the most to access Instagram?

- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Smartphone
- ☐ Tablet

Q4) Do you use Instagram as a tool to search for information about products/brands?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(If the answer is No, skip to Q6)

Q5) From the following options, please select the main reason to search for product/brand information on Instagram?

- ☐ General information about the product/brand
- ☐ Discounts
- ☐ Campaigns
- ☐ Contests
- ☐ Other _____

Q6) Do you follow brand pages on Instagram?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q7) Have you discovered a new product/brand through Instagram?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

Section 2 – Brand Awareness and Brand Image prior to Instagram exposure

Q8) How familiar are you with the Gin product category?

- ☐ Not familiar
- ☐ Slightly familiar
- ☐ Relatively familiar
- ☐ Very familiar
- ☐ Extremely familiar

Q9) When you think of Gin, what brands come to your mind? Please name 3.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Q10) From the following brands of Gin, please select the ones you know.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ Aviation | ☐ Hendrick's | ☐ Bombay |
| ☐ Bulldog | ☐ Jodhpur | ☐ Mombasa Club |
| ☐ Gordon's | ☐ Gin Mare | ☐ Tanqueray |
| ☐ Hayman's | ☐ Larios | ☐ Other _____ |
| ☐ Beefeater | ☐ Martin Miller's | |

Q11) Do you know the brand 'Beefeater'?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(If the answer is No, skip to Q14)

Q12) Please select your level of agreement with the following sentences about your overall perception of Beefeater brand.

	Totally agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Totally disagree
This brand is credible.					
I trust this brand.					
I feel like I know this brand.					
I like this brand.					
I enjoy this brand's communication strategy.					
I'm exposed to online content from this brand a lot.					
The products from this brand satisfy my needs.					
I can differentiate this brand from its competitors.					

Q13) From the following characteristics, please rank each from 1 to 5, placing how you feel the brand fits among them.

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

‘I consider Beefeater...’

Not Memorable _ _ _ _ _ Memorable

Sends an unfavourable image _ _ _ _ _ Sends a favourable image

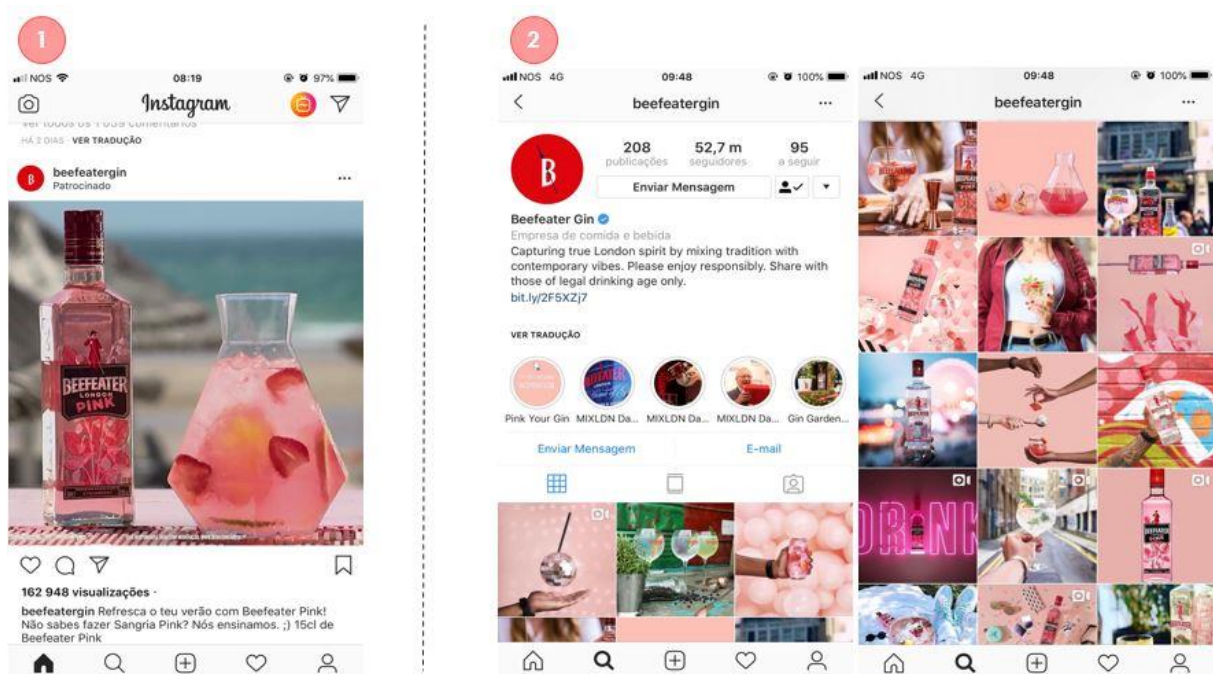
Worse than competitors _ _ _ _ _ Better than competitors

Section 3 – Brand Awareness and Brand Image post Instagram exposure

You will now be exposed to two types of content Beefeater shares on Instagram.

Case 1 – Native Ads as In-feed format posts. Beefeater produces and pays Instagram to blend this content in an organic way with the posts from the profiles you follow.

Case 2 – Beefeater’s official Instagram profile. The brand manages and produces content for their followers, such as posts about recipes, current events or festivities, or general posts that share the brand’s personality and essence.



Q14) Do you remember seeing the content from Case 1 on your Instagram feed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q15) Do you follow this brand on Instagram?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q16) Would you start following / continue to follow the brand?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

Q17) Considering the content you have been exposed to, please select your level of agreement with the following sentences.

‘After being exposed to Instagram content about Beefeater, I think...’

	Totally agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Totally disagree
I can easily recall the brand.					
When I think of Gin, this is one of the first brands that come to mind.					
I would more easily remember this brand than its competitors.					
I can easily recognize the brand’s logo and symbols.					

Q18) Considering the content you have been exposed to, please select your level of agreement with the following sentences.

‘After being exposed to Instagram content about Beefeater, I think...’

	Totally agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Totally disagree
This brand is credible.					
I trust this brand.					
I feel like I know this brand.					
I like this brand.					
I enjoy this brand’s communication strategy.					
I’m exposed to online content from this brand a lot.					
The products from this brand satisfy my needs.					
I can differentiate this brand from its competitors.					

Q19) From the following characteristics, please rank each from 1 to 5, placing how you feel the brand fits among them based on the content you have been exposed to.

‘I consider Beefeater...’

Not Memorable _ _ _ _ _ Memorable

Sends a Negative image _ _ _ _ _ Sends a Positive Image

Worse than competitors _ _ _ _ _ Better than competitors

Section 4 – Demographics

Q20) Gender

☐ Female

☐ Male

Q21) Age

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

- ☐ < 18
- ☐ 18 – 24
- ☐ 25 – 34
- ☐ 35 – 44
- ☐ ≥ 45

Q22) Educational level

- ☐ High School
- ☐ Bachelor's
- ☐ Master's
- ☐ PhD
- ☐ Other _____

Q23) Professional status

- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Student-worker
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired

Q24) Monthly individual income level

- ☐ <500€
- ☐ 500€ – 999€
- ☐ 1000€ – 1499€
- ☐ 1500€ – 1999€
- ☐ 2000€ – 2499€
- ☐ ≥2500€

Q25) Nationality

- ☐ Portuguese
- ☐ Other _____

13. Appendix 2 – Online Survey in Portuguese

A finalizar o Mestrado em Marketing na ISCTE Business School, este inquérito será utilizado como método quantitativo de pesquisa para terminar a minha Dissertação. O objetivo é avaliar o efeito de conteúdo no Instagram no nível do Valor da Marca para o Consumidor. Todas as respostas serão anónimas e utilizadas apenas para fins estatísticos. O questionário não tomará mais de 3 minutos do seu tempo.

Obrigada.

Secção 1 – Uso do Instagram e perceção da plataforma

Q1) Tem um perfil de Instagram?

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

(Se a resposta for Não, o questionário termina aqui.)

Q2) Com que frequência utiliza o Instagram?

- ☐ Várias vezes ao dia
- ☐ 1 a 3 vezes por semana
- ☐ 1 vez por dia
- ☐ Menos de 1 a 3 vezes por semana

Q3) Qual o dispositivo que utiliza mais para aceder ao Instagram?

- ☐ Computador
- ☐ Smartphone
- ☐ Tablet

Q4) Utiliza o Instagram como ferramenta de pesquisa de informação sobre produtos/marcas?

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

(Se a resposta for Não, passar para Q6)

Q5) Das seguintes opções, por favor selecione a razão principal pela qual procura informação de um produto/marca no Instagram?

- ☐ Informação geral sobre o produto/marca
- ☐ Promoções
- ☐ Campanhas
- ☐ Concursos
- ☐ Outra _____

Q6) Segue páginas de marcas no Instagram?

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

Q7) Descobriu algum produto/marca novos pelo Instagram?

- ☐ Sim

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

- ☐ Não

Section 2 – Awareness e imagem de marca pré exposição ao Instagram

Q8) Quão familiarizado está com a categoria de produto Gin?

- ☐ Nada familiar
☐ Ligeiramente familiar
☐ Relativamente familiar
☐ Muito familiar
☐ Extremamente familiar

Q9) Quando pensa em Gin, quais as marcas de que se recorda? Por favor nomeie 3.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Q10) Das seguintes marcas de Gin, por favor selecione as que conhece.

- ☐ Aviation
☐ Bulldog
☐ Gordon's
☐ Hayman's
☐ Beefeater
☐ Hendrick's
☐ Jodhpur
☐ Gin Mare
☐ Larios
☐ Martin Miller's
☐ Bombay
☐ Mombasa Club
☐ Tanqueray
☐ Outra _____

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

Q11) Conhece a marca 'Beefeater'?

- ☐ Sim
☐ Não

(Se a resposta for Não, passar para Q14)

Q12) Por favor selecione o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes frases sobre a sua percepção geral da marca Beefeater.

	Concordo Totalmente	Concordo parcialmente	Neutro	Discordo	Discordo Totalmente
Esta marca é credível.					
Eu confio nesta marca.					
Eu sinto que conheço esta marca.					
Eu gosto desta marca.					
Eu aprecio a estratégia de comunicação desta marca.					
Estou muito exposto(a) a conteúdo online desta marca.					
Os produtos desta marca satisfazem as minhas necessidades.					
Eu consigo distinguir esta marca dos seus concorrentes.					

Q13) Das seguintes características, por favor classifique cada de 1 a 5, de forma a posicionar-se em relação a como acha que a marca se enquadra nas mesmas.

'Eu considero que a Beefeater...'

Não é memorável _ _ _ _ _ É memorável

Passa uma imagem desfavorável _ _ _ _ _ Passa uma imagem favorável

É pior que os concorrentes _ _ _ _ _ É melhor que os concorrentes

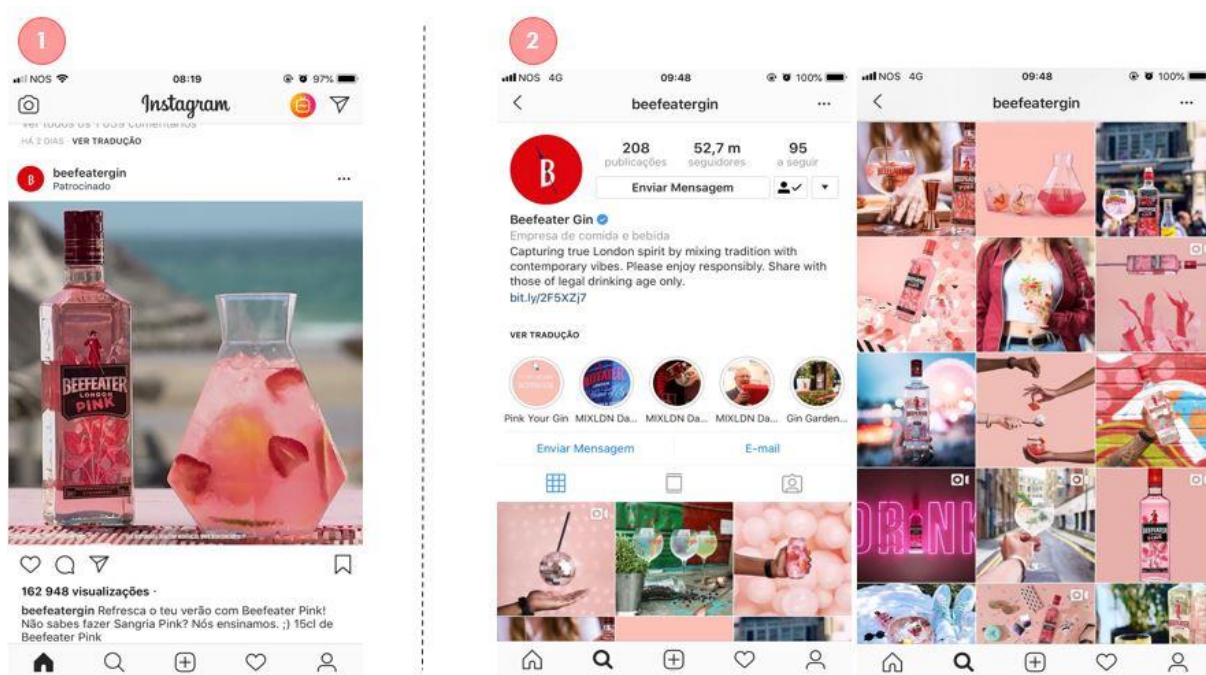
Section 3 – Awareness e imagem de marca após exposição ao Instagram

Será agora exposto a dois tipos de conteúdo que a Beefeater partilha no Instagram.

Caso 1 - Publicidade Nativa no formato de um post In-feed. A Beefeater produz e paga ao Instagram para misturar este conteúdo de forma orgânica com os restantes posts de perfis que segue.

Caso 2 - Perfil oficial da Beefeater no Instagram. A marca gere e produz conteúdos para os utilizadores que a seguem, tais como posts sobre receitas, eventos ou festividades correntes, ou que simplesmente reflectem a personalidade e essência da marca.

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?



Q14) Lembra-se de ver o conteúdo do Caso 1 no seu feed do Instaram?

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

Q15) Segue esta marca no Instagram?

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

Q16) Começaria a seguir / continuaria a seguir a marca?

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

Q17) Tendo em conta o conteúdo a que foi exposto, por favor selecione o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes frases.

‘Depois de estar exposto a conteúdo da Beefeater no Instagram, eu penso que...’

	Concordo Totalmente	Concordo Parcialmente	Neutro	Discordo Parcialmente	Discordo Totalmente
Consigo recordar-me facilmente desta marca.					
Quando penso em Gin, esta é uma das primeiras marcas de que me recordo.					
Eu lembrar-me-ia mais facilmente desta marca					

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

que dos seus concorrentes.					
Consigo reconhecer facilmente o logo e os símbolos da marca.					

Q18) Tendo em conta o conteúdo a que foi exposto, por favor selecione o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes frases.

‘Depois de estar exposto a conteúdo da Beefeater no Instagram, eu penso que...’

	Concordo Totalmente	Concordo Parcialmente	Neutro	Discordo Parcialmente	Discordo Totalmente
Esta marca é credível.					
Eu confio nesta marca.					
Eu sinto que conheço esta marca.					
Eu gosto desta marca.					
Eu aprecio a estratégia de comunicação desta marca.					
Estou muito exposto(a) a conteúdo online desta marca.					
Os produtos desta marca satisfazem as minhas necessidades.					
Eu consigo distinguir esta marca dos seus concorrentes.					

Q19) Das seguintes características, por favor classifique cada de 1 a 5, de forma a posicionar-se em relação a como acha que a marca se enquadra nas mesmas com base no conteúdo a que foi exposto acima.

‘Eu considero que a Beefeater...’

Não é memorável _____ É memorável

Passa uma imagem negativa _____ Passa uma imagem positiva

É pior que os concorrentes _____ É melhor que os concorrentes

Section 4 – Critérios Demográficos

Q20) Género

- ☐ Feminino
☐ Masculino

Q21) Idade

- ☐ < 18
☐ 18 – 24
☐ 25 – 34

Can Native Advertising and Branded Content on Instagram Affect Brand Equity Levels?

- ☐ 35 – 44
- ☐ ≥ 45

Q22) Habilitações literárias

- ☐ Ensino Secundário
- ☐ Licenciatura
- ☐ Mestrado
- ☐ Doutoramento
- ☐ Outra _____

Q23) Situação profissional

- ☐ Desempregado
- ☐ Trabalhador
- ☐ Trabalhador-Estudante
- ☐ Estudante
- ☐ Reformado

Q24) Nível de rendimento mensal individual

- ☐ <500€
- ☐ 500€ – 999€
- ☐ 1000€ – 1499€
- ☐ 1500€ – 1999€
- ☐ 2000€ – 2499€
- ☐ $\geq 2500€$

Q25) Nacionalidade

- ☐ Portuguesa
- ☐ Outra _____