

Does the richness from online social media platforms affect the effectiveness of the advertising message of a product?

Marketing through influencers

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the different levels of richness in online social media platforms and furthermore, to study how this affects the persuasiveness when products that belong to high and low levels of involvement are endorsed using influencers.

A pre-test was conducted in order to investigate if there were any difference in terms of richness among online social media platforms and also, to sort out products from three industries into three different involvement levels: low, medium and high. After finding those differences, YouTube and Pinterest were selected to use them in the main study. This main study was conducted through an online survey, 301 individuals, male and female equally distributed participated in this study. The number of respondents aged from 10 to 70 years old and they belonged to high and low educational levels.

The research was formed by two single factor designs to research the effects on persuasion when using high and low richness online social media platforms on three levels of product involvement.

Respondents were presented with a video in which a virtual user interacts with the platforms and finds the sponsored video or post about a specific product, then, the participants answered questions about what they watched. These questions reported their levels of persuasion and conviction, their attitude towards the brand and their purchase intention.

The results showed that using YouTube (rich online social media platform) will be effective for any level of involvement product. Whereas using Pinterest (lean online social media platform) will be more effective when it is used to promote a low involvement product.

The findings of this study can help companies in the decision of choosing YouTube as their medium when their goal is to promote a product using online marketing, or more precisely, influencer marketing because of the powerful capabilities of this platform to persuade potential consumers.

Keywords: online marketing, influencer marketing, media richness theory, elaboration likelihood model, product involvement, social media platforms, Online Word of Mouth.

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1. Introduction

In the last ten years, online marketing has grown significantly. The new web 2.0 has brought new possibilities and strategies to get closer to the consumer. Nowadays, the interaction with the consumer is essential, as well as the fact that these potential purchasers start to talk positively about your brand online. This turned the strategies related with Word-of-Mouth marketing (WOM) into the most important ones to persuade possible online clients.

Word-of-Mouth marketing is a form of direct marketing that hinges on actual interpersonal interaction between (sales) agent and consumer where the influence agent is not a sales representative of the company, but a committed user of the product. He or she acts as a persuasion agent trying to convince close relatives and friends to try the product as well (Fennis & Stroebe, 2010).

There are different studies that affirm that the traditional WOM can be applied into the online world (E-WOM). An example of this type of strategy is the online reviews. Nowadays, instead of hearing the opinion about a product from a friend, we can consult the reviews of a product made by multiples consumers; another recent strategy to apply E-WOM marketing methods is what it is known as influencer marketing.

Influencer marketing is becoming a fundamental tool, which is gaining popularity among brands. There are multiple reasons to understand why this kind of marketing is one of the most powerful lately. Fashion, food and travel industry are the most distinguished sectors when we talk about influencer marketing, according to Burst Media and a study made in 2015.

Nowadays, there are a multiple number of online media platforms that influencers use to communicate with their followers, it is in that interaction with followers where brands see their opportunities to show their products to a very concrete target group. In this paper, five online media platforms will be studied: Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Blog and YouTube.

The traditional Media Richness Theory introduced by Daft and Lengel (1984) explains that the richest the medium is, the better the information will be received and interpreted. This theory is much older than digital marketing and it has not been updated or adapted to new ways of communications like social media, that is the reason why in this research, this theory will be challenged in the online environment. This study will start explaining the theoretical background of different concepts that will be considered later as important theories for both: the pre-test and the main study. These concepts include the online word of mouth, the media

richness theory and the elaboration likelihood model. After the theory, the pre-test will be explained. Through a survey, the richness in these platforms will be studied in order to identify its level from the richest to the leanest online social media platform. On this pre-test the level of involvement will be also measured since a low involvement product, according to the media richness theory, would imply in order to promote it, the use of a simple message, whereas a high involvement product would imply the need of a more complex message to promote it. This will be tested in a group of products that belong to the three categories of industry mentioned before: fashion, food and travel.

The **Pre-test Research Questions** are:

- *Do online social media platforms differ in terms of Media Richness?*
- *Can products be categorize in low, medium and high level of involvement?*

After answering these questions; identify the leanest and richest platforms as well as the low, medium and high involvement product, the main study will be conducted.

For the Main study, another survey will be carried out. The leanest and richest online platforms will be presented as influencer marketing campaigns introducing the three products resulted as low, medium and high involvement. It is expected that depending on the degree of involvement, the capacity of persuasion and conviction will be different depending on the online social media platform. The aim of this research is to demonstrate that the traditional media richness theory does not apply for the online world using E-WOM strategies.

The **Main Research Question** for this study is:

Do differences of richness influence the online social media platform's capacity of persuasiveness and conviction when comparing products from different levels of involvement?

2. Theoretical framework

On this part of the paper Word-of-Mouth, influencer marketing, their relation, the content marketing matrix and how the dependent variables are based on it will be explained. To understand influencer marketing, first, we need to talk about Word-Of-Mouth in an online context.

2.1 Online word of mouth

Online word-of-mouth (E-WOM) has become a common topic of research in the area of computer-mediated communication, particularly in the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions. Powered by tools such as email, weblogs, bulletin boards, chat rooms, and instant messenger clients, online E-WOM communication has helped give rise to different types of online communities. In the process, online E-WOM has attracted researchers' attention as a convenient, inexpensive, and less intrusive venue for sharing interests and ideas in online communities (Sun et al., 2006). Online Word-of-mouth is important in the sense that individuals share opinions and experiences on a wide range of topics, including companies, products, services, and even world events (Dellarocas, 2003). The advantage is this capacity of sharing, not only on their close social group, but also in an extend and unlimited number of people, that is the reason why it is considered so powerful.

E-WOM has seen a surge in interest from companies to overcome consumer resistance and scepticism towards conventional advertising practices. With the rise of Internet communication, E-WOM has taken on a new modality with consumers chatting on an unprecedented scale about brands and products via online social networks such as Twitter or Facebook (Fennis & Stroebe, 2010). Moreover, online reviews have become a major information source for consumers (Hu, Pavlou & Zhang).

However, different studies (i.e. Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006) shown that the E-WOM follows most of the principles of traditional WOM: the content of the message is critical, the law of the few remains (not regarding people, but specific websites and technologies) and, of course, the context is also important. There are positive and negative messages as well, and the interaction is among people who do not pursue any commercial interest in the recommendation (Armellini & Villanueva, 2006). This is important because it means that several insights obtained through decades of research on offline WOM may also apply to the online domain.

2.1.1 Influencer Marketing

Word-of-mouth diffusion has long been regarded as an important mechanism by which information can reach large populations, possibly influencing public opinion (Gold, Katz, Lazarsfeld, & Roper, 1956). In recent years, interest among researchers and marketers alike has increasingly focused on whether or not diffusion can be maximised by seeding a piece of information or a new product with certain special individuals, often called “influential” or simply “influencers” (Goldsmith, 2004).

This type of marketing focuses on specific key individuals rather than the target market as a whole. Influencers are only credible in a narrow field of expertise. It is vital to match the message to the appropriate influential messenger. For example, if the objection is technology-orientated, then a techie should be used, if it is a financial issue, a financially credible influencer etc. (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

But, which are the advantages of using influencer marketing? According to Brown and Hayes (2008), using influencer as proxies for customer reference is effective because:

- It avoids customer reference fatigue, most industries suffer from it, where the same clients are trotted out again and again to address every objection.
- Influencers are believed (because they are influencers).
- It allows tailored counter-arguments to be developed for each objection.
- Influencers have broader knowledge of the marketplace than customer organisations.
- Influencers are typically happier to share their experiences and provide deeper insight, because they have fewer commercial and competitive constraints.

Besides that, according to a study made by Burst Media (2015), the main sectors in which this type of marketing is successful are (in order of influence): fashion, food and travel industry. This study will look into them later on this paper to find out their particular characteristics when using influencer marketing.

2.2 Online media platforms and their media Richness

Media richness theory developed by Daft and Lengel (1984) recognizes that as new communication technologies develop the decision about the best way to send a message becomes more complex, it argues that performance improves when team members use “richer” media for equivocal tasks. The central argument of media richness theory is that communication professionals should match the communication channel to the content of information (Lengel & Daft, 1986). Media richness refers to the information-carrying capacity of the medium. One determines the richness of the media by assessing four characteristics: speed of feedback, ability to personalize the message, availability of multiple cues, and language variety (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Face to face will be the richest media due to facial expressions, gestures, pauses, eye contact etc. The main idea about this theory is that the medium should match the message. Another aspect to take into account is the ambiguity of the message. Communication effectiveness is assumed to occur because of a match between ambiguity of the message and the richness of the media. A highly ambiguous message communicated using a lean media form is likely to exacerbate uncertainty and create misunderstanding. Conversely, using a very rich medium to communicate fairly straightforward information is a form of overkill contributing to a sense of information overload (Trevino, Lengel & Daft, 1987).

There are not many studies in which this theory has been studied applied to new internet communication channels such as social media platforms, which is the aim of the present study.

Looking at this theory from the point of view of these online social media platforms, it can be discussed that different platforms offers different characteristics that makes them have a different level of ambiguity, speed of feedback, ability to personalize the message and language variety. Therefore, every online social media platform will be adequate for a specific type of message. In this research, we will focus the study on the advertisement of various product industries using influencer marketing on different online platforms.

In the following part of this paper, influencer marketing and the most popular online platforms that are used nowadays will be discussed.

2.2.1 Online Social Media Platforms

On this part of the paper, five different platforms frequently used by influencers will be explained from the point of view of the influencers and the capabilities of the platform to persuade and their characteristics as a considered low or high level of richness.

Blogging

The blogosphere, which is the term for the collection of all blogs on the Internet, is made up of more than 60 million individual blogs, and the number is growing daily (Murphy, 2006). In addition, firms that use blogs are finding that it provides them a new way to stay relevant to their customers (Singh, Veron-Jackson, & Cullinane, 2008).

Blogging systems have gained a great deal of attention as an emerging social media that exploits existing social networks by inspiring bloggers to share their own posts or personal information with others (Li, Lai & Chen 2011). Blogging works as a huge word of mouth engine in which according to Kempe, Kleinberg & Tardos (2003) it has become a good platform for advertisers to promote new products or services and for customers to locate product comments and purchasing suggestions.

Nevertheless, the main problem of the blogosphere is finding the influential blog sites. These have different characteristics. Subramani & Rajagopalan (2003) applied various network-based parameters and dimensions to examine the influence of commentary information in online social networks.

There are bloggers with more than 100.000 readers and these persons see the author as a close friend with whom they relate to and connect with at an interpersonal level sharing life stories, remembering past events, and engaging in brand level discussions. This level of closeness is rather counterintuitive especially if we consider that blogs are, by definition, a form of broadcast media in which a blogger shares his or her views with a large audience.

These characteristics makes blog a complete platform with a high level of richness and also a good example in which E-wom strategies can be used in order to persuade potential consumers.

Twitter

Twitter is a type of blogging, known as “micro blogging” that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets. Tweets are text posts that can contain 140 characters and these posts are shared from the author’s profile to all his/her followers.

In their research, Chen et al. (2014) studied the different influence roles of Twitter users and they distinguished them into five different categories and their Marketing effects. These were: **Fans**, that supporting and defending products they will have the marketing effect of improving sales, the second role is the **Information Disseminator**, this is the one who publishes product information like news and their effect is to enhance the brand memorability. The third role is the **Expert** whose influence way is to gather professional facts and opinions to improve the reputation of the product. The forth role is the **Celebrity**, this one endorses and promotes products through high popularity to improve awareness. Finally, the fifth role is that one that does not show obvious influence and that it hasn't a marketing effect at all.

Che et al. (2014) also mention that a huge number of followers does not identify the user as an influencer. Cha et al. (2010) strength this position on their research about the million follower fallacy. They put more attention on the relation between the users comparing three different measures of influence: in degree, retweets and mentions and focusing on different topics, they examined how the three types of influential users performed in spreading popular news topics as well as the dynamics of an individual's influence by topic and over time.

The persuasion characteristics of Twitter are similar than the ones on blogging. Furthermore, Twitter creates as well a one-to-one communication, but probably more direct than the one on blogs because instead of just a comment you can interact directly with the user/influencer raising a higher level of richness.

Instagram

According to a social media marketing industry report, Instagram increased its position most significantly among the top platforms used by experienced social media marketers, increasing from 28 percent in 2014 to 36 percent in 2015. Moreover, 52 percent of marketers are planning to increase their Instagram marketing activities in the near future. Instagram data is also suitable for analysing the influence of content, since the posts consist of both picture and text. (Michael, 2014).

An Instagram influencer with a high number of followers will be perceived as generally more likeable because he/she is perceived as more popular. However, likeability should preferably result from the fact that consumers see the influencer as a valuable source of information, an opinion leader, rather than merely from popularity (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2016). According to Yoganarasimhan (2012) Since the number of followers indicates audience size

and influencers disseminate their ideas among them, having more followers accelerates the diffusion of information.

These characteristics create a platform in which its influencers have a huge persuasion capability and that is the reason why many companies use them to sell their products. From the point of view of richness, we can consider Instagram as a one of the lowest from online platforms because the interaction with the other users is not as high as in Twitter or Blogs. Moreover, this platform is limited to share an image with some text in which the misunderstanding of the message can be high.

Youtube

YouTube was founded in February 2005, as a “consumer media company for people to watch and share original videos worldwide through a web experience” (YouTube, 2016). Its characteristics make this platform very accessible to any kind of target. Moreover, it is free to use, anybody can create a channel and share videos with other people.

The change in YouTube started when a lot of YouTube content creators (“YouTubers”) rose to fame with an expanding subscriber/follower base. Businesses saw here an opportunity with growing viewership and explored marketing potential with YouTubers. According to Wu (2016) YouTube sponsored activities can largely be found under three forms:

- 1) **Explicit sponsorship** where the sponsoring company pays the YouTuber a flat, fee or a specified amount per number of views on a video specifically created to market a brand or product.
- 2) **Affiliated links** where purchases made through the link, or coupon code provided by the YouTuber that will help him or her earn a commission on the sale.
- 3) **Free product sampling** where companies send products to YouTubers with the hope that they will create product reviews, advertorials or just general exposure of the product.

Any of these options creates a bridge between the viewers of that particular YouTuber and the different companies. But these three forms can be applied on different platforms as well.

Susarla et al. (2012) studied the impact of contagion through the networked structures of interaction on the diffusion of digital products on YouTube. There, they distinguish three distinct mechanisms of social influence on this platform: First, networks of friends within the community of interest (local network of friends). Second, friendship ties between users from

outside the community of interest, (nonlocal or long ties). Third, networks of subscribers within the community of interest, or social networks based on instrumental ties, i.e., a pattern of affiliation based on shared interests.

The capabilities of persuasion using this platform are extremely high. Nowadays there are a huge number of YouTubers with more than 10 millions of subscribers (56 millions in the case of the user with more subscribers in the world). There are more than 10 millions of people who see a YouTuber as an opinion leader. The opportunities for companies here are huge to persuade potential consumers.

The richness on this platform can be considered high because this platform allows the viewer to interact with the influencer and it also allows the influencer to express himself or herself freely in an audiovisual format in which other communication cues can be added in edition.

Pinterest

Pinterest refers to itself as a “virtual pin board.” It takes this concept and moves it to a socially based online environment. Pinterest users can connect with and follow the pins of other users who have posted content they find interesting. It essentially becomes a community bound together by interests rather than exiting personal connections (Cario, 2013).

According to the business magazine Forbes (2016). In October, 2016 Pinterest reached for the first time 150 million monthly users.

The average user of Pinterest is a female between the ages of 25 and 34 who hails from Middle America. Half of them have children and nearly a third of them are from families with household incomes of more than \$100.000 per year. (Cario, 2013). One distinction between Pinterest and competitor social media platforms is that users focus on their personal interests rather than the social graphs of others (Bosker, 2012). In addition, Pinterest users often relate to one another in terms of common interests rather than following other users for their personal status updates (Hambrick & Kang, 2014).

Even though, the female users of this platform is majority, the number of men actively searching on Pinterest has increased by 55% year-over-year (Forbes, 2016).

The capability of persuasion in this platform is considered high in the specific target of women because they are the ones who use this platform more often. In addition the richness here could be considered as medium/low because on one side you have personalize recommendations and on the other side, the interaction between influencers and ordinary users are not as fluent as in other platforms.

It is important to explain that in this paper, when these online social media platforms are considered as low, medium or high. It always depends on the principal characteristics of that platform and how they can affect the basic elements of the Media Richness Theory which are: Capacity to include personal focus, Immediacy of feedback, Conveyance of multiple cues and Variety of language carried.

Moreover, naming a platform considered “low”, it actually means “lower than the rest of the platforms analysed in this paper”. It does not mean “low” or “high” in a general level, or in comparison with other communication mechanisms.

According to the theory, we can assume that there are different levels of richness between these five platforms. In order to simplify these ideas the following table has been made:

Table 1. Classification of online media platforms according to their presumed media richness

| Media Richness | | |
|----------------|----------|---------|
| Low | Medium | High |
| Instagram | Blogging | YouTube |
| Pinterest | Twitter | |

In table 1, the five analysed online social media platforms have been classified by their inferred richness. Instagram and Pinterest are considered as being the leanest media because their platforms characteristics are the lowest compared to the rest. For example, the immediacy feedback or the number of cues is poor compared to Twitter or YouTube. As a medium richness are located Blogging and Twitter because even though they could be considered as having many of the attributes of a rich medium is still lower than the highest presumed online social media platform which is YouTube.

To find out if the online social media platforms differ from each other from a richness point of view a pre-test will be executed, the research question will be:

Pre-test RQ₁: *Do online social media platforms differ in terms of Media Richness?*

This pre-study will be composed by two research questions, the second one will be explained in the following part. More details about this pre-test can be found on the section 3 of this paper under the name of “Pre-study”.

2.3 Different levels of product involvement

The elaboration likelihood model will be explained in relation with the possible product involvement and the different routes to reach the message.

Developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) suggests that important variations in the nature of persuasion are a function of the likelihood that receivers will engage in elaboration of information relevant to the persuasive issue. Depending on the degree of elaboration, two different kinds of persuasion process can be engaged: Centrally routed messages and peripherally routed messages.

The central route is also referred to as the elaborated route. Centrally routed messages include a wealth of information, rational arguments, and evidence to support a particular conclusion. Its messages are much more likely to create long-term change for the recipient than peripheral messages. However, not all individuals are capable of receiving centrally routed messages. ELM argues that centrally routed messages succeed in long-term change only when two factors are met: the target must be highly motivated to process all the information given, and the target must be able to process the message cognitively. The theory states that without both motivation and ability, an elaborated message is of little value (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In this degree of persuasion, it is what we denominate in our study as Conviction.

However, elaborated messages are ineffective when targeted participants are neither capable nor interested in the information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). When motivation or ability is missing from the target audience, the persuader can use the peripheral route to persuasion. Peripheral messages rely on a receiver's emotional involvement and persuade through more superficial means. ELM predicts that when the audience is unmotivated or unable to process an elaborated message, persuaders should focus on quick and easy ways to produce change. One significant drawback is that the peripheral route leads only to short-term change, if any change at all. (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

In the context of online marketing, the ELM can be applied through the peripheral or central route of persuasion depending on the level of involvement on a specific product and the specific platform that we would use to sell that product.

There are two types of level of involvement. Sometimes, consumers think carefully about their beliefs and attitudes, and sometimes they reflect very little. When an issue or situation is relevant and important, higher levels of consumer involvement follow, and consumers think very carefully about the implications of the available information. When an issue or situation

is not relevant or important, involvement is low, and consumers reflect very little (Kardes, Cronley, & Cline, 2011).

Following this argument and the media richness theory explained in the previous chapter, when the intention is to persuade a consumer to purchase a high level of involvement product, a rich media would be the best option to transmit a complex message, which relies on the central route of persuasion.

According to Kardes et al. (2014), involvement with a particular issue or topic is called enduring involvement. Here, consumers' levels of interest in the topic are fundamental—either high or low, and hence, their interest (or lack of interest) endures. A second type of involvement, based solely on special circumstances or specific conditions, is known as situational involvement. Here, any personal relevance that a consumer develops for a situation is ephemeral or short lived. When the situation goes away, the consumer's interest decreases correspondingly. When a purchase decision is important or consequential, situational involvement is typically high and consumers are likely to think very carefully about the decision. For example, buying a car is consequential for most people, and they think carefully about what characteristics of a car are right for them. However, when a purchase decision is unimportant or inconsequential, situational involvement is low and consumers are not likely to think carefully about the decision. For example, buying a candy bar is a fairly trivial exercise, and most consumers buy the brand they usually buy without thinking a lot about the purchase decision. Furthermore, when information is complex, inconsistent, or difficult to evaluate, a high degree of situational involvement is needed to appreciate the implications of the information for attitudes. However, when information is simple and easy to evaluate, a high level of situational involvement is not needed to determine its relevance or its implications (Kardes, Cronley, & Cline, 2011).

2.3.1 Industries of interest for this study

According to the previously mentioned study by Burst Media (2015), the main sectors in which influencer marketing is successful are (in order of influence): fashion, food and travel industry. That is the reason why in this paper we will study these three types of industries, their relation with influencer marketing and their levels of involvement.

Food: Low involvement

Consumers love content that makes them laugh, cry or learn something and the best source of this kind of content is often from another consumer. The food industry gets lots of mileage from this approach since people love talking about recipes, restaurants, deals, celebrations, etc.

Food industry tends to use visual content to attract customers. Done right, visual content is visceral, inspiring, entertaining and delectably sharable (Chiefmarketer, 2016).

Some examples of the use of influencer marketing on food industry are:

McDonald's: The fast-food restaurant worked with "food, travel and lifestyle" vlogger Doug Armstrong to tell the story of how McDonald's burgers are made. The company allowed him to record a video where he visited a beef farm, meat-processing factory, and kitchen. The aim was to promote directly to his fans how the Big Mac burger is made.

Although he was paid to make the video, Doug Armstrong was given full editorial control. The video has attracted already more than 3 million views.

Tyson Nuggets: Influencers invented and shared unique, entertaining ways to use chicken nuggets in their holiday recipes and helped increase sales by 42%. Letting influencers get creative and create content their readers loved helped increase the exposure of the campaign and product sales (Chiefmarketer, 2016).

On both examples, we can see that the personalization of the product and the innovation are an important part on this influencer marketing strategy.

Fashion: Medium involvement

Influencer marketing is gaining importance and popularity within the fashion industry. There are more than 400 million monthly active users on Instagram, 3.5 billion likes daily and more than 80 million photos posted a day (Instagram, 2016).

A study made by Fashion & Beauty Monitor (2015) shows that 60% of fashion and beauty brands have an influencer marketing strategy in place, while further 21% plan to invest in it over the next twelve months.

In 2010, brands such as Valentino and Prada had still not taken control of their Facebook page, leaving the profiles in the hand of spammers. However, in 2012, all brands had a Facebook page and the majority of brands posted something new every day. An interesting development is that 80% of brands in 2012 linked directly from their website to their social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and sometimes also Pinterest, Instagram and Google+) that were often in the visible menu bar (up from 20% in 2010). This indicates that social media has eventually become an integrated part of the online branding and communication (Hansen & Bjorn-Andersen 2013).

Some examples of the use of influencer marketing on fashion industry are:

Adidas: In 2016, the sport brand collaborated with different vloggers in the campaign *Step In*, where these vloggers did a series of videos highlighting their new, snazzy *Adidas Neo Cloudfoam* shoes. The British YouTuber Marcus Bluter with nearly five millions subscribers can be seen dashing about London in his *Cloudfoam*'s in one of his vlogs and sharing opinions such as: *"The new Adidas Neo Cloudfoam shoes are perfect for me to wear everyday. They suit my casual style and the extra comfort means that I can keep going all day long, even on the busiest days like when I was dashing around London. I had so much fun making my video and now I want to see what my followers love to do too"* (Footwearnews, 2016).

Lush: The cosmetic brand, had a lot of exposure on YouTube with videos from influencer Grav3yardgirl. In a shopping 'haul' video, the self-described 'swamp family queen' showed off the Lush products she bought for herself and as gifts for her family, garnering over 700 thousand views. Her passion for the products is clear, ensuring an authentic feel to the endorsement. During the same time, Lush also benefitted from YouTuber and lifestyle maven Nicole Guerriero who included their products in a video that gained 690 thousand views. Of course, these YouTube stars have built-in audiences of 6 and 2 million subscribers. By comparison, the Lush's own channel has only about 110 thousand subscribers (Ion, 2015).

Travel: High Involvement

Hotel brands, travel companies, travel searchers websites and even municipalities use influencer marketing to attract potential tourists to book their hotels, flights or visit their websites and cities. Relationships are the basis on which trade in the travel industry is built (Grönroos, 2000).

Many travel-related employers assign their employees to monitor the blogosphere for what is being written about the companies (Huang, 2012). Many travel agents and tour guides are bloggers who maintain their own blogs individually or on the company's Web sites to the extent where they are not only personal blogs, but also employee blogs under the corporate blogging strategies. (Ho & Lee 2015).

Some examples of the use of influencer marketing on travel industry are:

The Royal Norwegian Consulate General: They wanted to promote tourism in specific cities in Norway while helping promote Norwegian architecture and design in the U.S. so Marketing Maven connected them with ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition's Ty Pennington for a

Norwegian Design Tour to be promoted via traditional media and social media. This use of an influencer helped to highlight Norwegian tourist attractions, hotels, airlines and restaurants, along with Norwegian furniture designers looking to gain awareness in the U.S. This digital influencer tourism campaign was amplified with national TV, radio and newspaper interviews in Norway, along with an Access Hollywood TV interview upon his return to the U.S. (Duwaik, 2016)

Marriott Hotels: They collaborated with the American video vlogger Casey Neistat (6 million of subscribers in YouTube) and sent him to Haiti to both tour their recently-opened hotel and provide his audience with an overview of how the country has recovered from the devastating earthquake that rocked the country in 2010. Marriott knew that building a relationship with Neistat was key. They laid the foundation for it by letting him incorporate their brand message into content that was important to him, which gave him the ability to keep his output authentic (Burgess, 2015).

To find out the level of involvement from different products that belong to these industries, the pre-test, mentioned in the media richness section, will have a second research question which will be the following:

Pre-test RQ2: *Can products be categorize in low, medium and high level of involvement?*

In the following part, the dependent variables for the main study and its relation with the content of marketing matrix will be explained.

2.4 The content of marketing matrix and Hypotheses

The following matrix created by smartinsights.com (2015) shows the dimensions of different content based on how the audience might think and what is trying to be achieved as a business. This matrix predicts what will work when the audience or product/service is more or less impulsive or rational (Propel Marketing & Design, 2015).

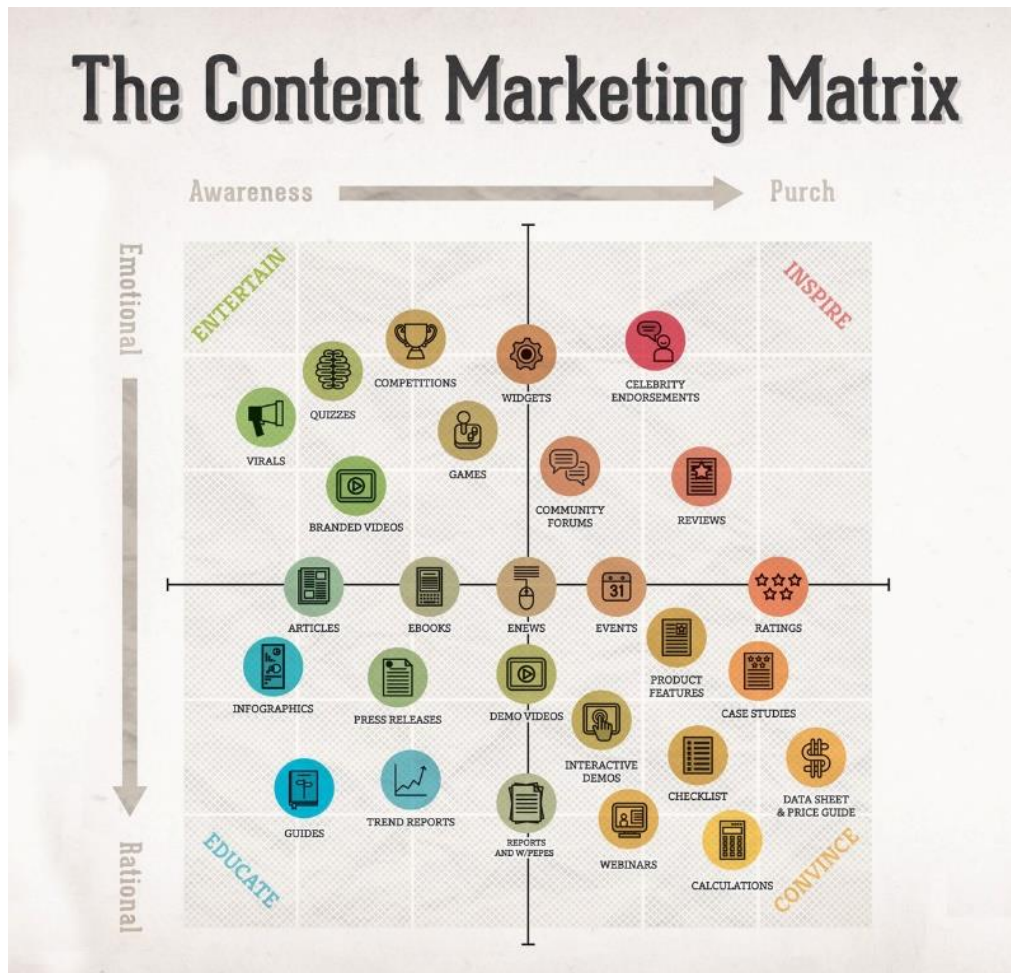


Figure 1. The content marketing matrix. (Digital marketing strategy advice - Smart Insights Digital Marketing, 2015)

This matrix is built by four elements: entertain, inspire, educate and convince; which can modify the brand awareness and the purchase intention of a product. In the main research of this paper, these concepts will be used to measure the capabilities of the online social media platforms. That is the reason why this model will compose the dependent variables for the main study. Before explaining the variables themselves, we have to analyse the differences between persuasion and conviction since these two concepts will be relevant for the research.

Impulsive/Rational – Persuasion/Conviction

There is a traditional conviction-persuasion distinction; this distinction is attributed to George Campbell's discussion in his book 'The philosophy of rhetoric' (1776). In Campbell's view, conviction means the process of changing a hearer's beliefs through an appeal to the understanding. On the other hand, persuasion is seen as a matter of affecting the will using peripheral routes related with emotional involvement.

Whately in his work 'The elements of rhetoric' (1828) sharpened Campbell's distinction by emphasizing the role of emotional arousal and correspondingly downplaying the role of argument in persuasion. Whately affirms that 'there is a wide distinction between strict argumentation, with a view to the conviction of the understanding alone, and the attempt to influence the will by the excitement of any emotion'. According to Aaker & Bruzzone (1981) ads frequently rely on emotional appeals as a means of persuading consumers, influencing their ad or product attitudes. Moreover, Williams and Aaker (2002) found that an ad appeal that portrayed an emotion with a positive (i.e., happy) versus a negative (i.e., sad) valence produced more favourable attitudes. These examples show that there is a considerable connection between persuasion and emotional appeals and between conviction and rational.

The previous matrix (Figure 1) show how the emotional part (persuasion) is related with entertain and inspire. Meanwhile, the rational part (conviction) is related with educate (understanding) and convince. This way we can make two groups in which the four elements are contained: persuasion and conviction. Since they are the most important concepts from the content of matrix, the following research question for the main study has been stated:

Main RQ: *Do differences of richness influence the online social media platform's capacity of persuasiveness and conviction when comparing products from different levels of involvement?*

Persuasion and conviction will be the dependent variables for this study but if we look at the matrix, we still have another two elements: Brand awareness and Purchase intention. In the following part of this section, every dependent variable for this study, included brand awareness and purchase intention, will be explained in detail.

Persuasion

As it has been explained before, entertainment and inspiration is directly connected to persuasion. In the case of entertainment, it is very connected to the idea of narratives. Entertainment narratives can not only provide enjoyment and emotional experiences, but can also affect individuals' real-world attitudes and beliefs (Shrum, 2012). There are consequences for ads' effectiveness depending on how they appear with a story.

In one set of studies, when an advertisement interrupted a highly transporting narrative, people were left with more negative attitudes toward the product (Wang & Calder, 2006). However, when an ad accompanied a transporting story without interrupting the experience, people liked the product more than when not transported. Furthermore, under some circumstances, the experience of transportation into a narrative can transfer to the advertisement, which can increase ad affectiveness (Wang & Calder, 2009).

In the case of inspiration and according to Maccaro (2015) and his study about how millennials think about financial brands, he concluded that the content of these brands must appeal to emotion because millennials value success, happiness, curiosity, enjoyment and passion, and this drives how they engage with content. A brand story is only as powerful as its ability to make an emotional connection to stakeholders that inspires them to share it. This is even truer as clients and consumers across all categories are now constantly connected through the web, social media and smart phones (We First Branding, 2015).

The hypotheses concerning persuasion are:

H1: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as more persuasive when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H2: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as more persuasive when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

Conviction

Conviction is related with the understanding and rational arguments. Strong arguments create a positive response in the minds of receivers while also positively aligning receivers' beliefs with those views of the persuader (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Strong arguments inoculate the audience against counterpersuasion and are most likely to create long-term attitude change that leads to predictable behaviour. Neutral arguments generate a noncommittal cognitive response from the receiver and weak arguments produce a negative cognitive response to the persuasive message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The second element of conviction is education. Education-based marketing is the sharing of knowledge with the purpose of building trust. It is a strategy that establishes credibility and trust with the customers by using educational messages ("Forbes", 2015).

Education-based marketing is the direct opposite of traditional marketing, which is done through selling-based messages. Many consumers have had enough of traditional marketing approaches and have grown tired of hearing old and worn out sales pitches. However, when you share important information and facts that help customers make a good buying decision they listen ("Forbes", 2015).

Apart from persuasion and conviction there are another two concepts on the content marketing matrix: Purchase intention and Brand Awareness. According to this matrix Brand awareness would depend on the combination between educating and entertaining. Meanwhile, Purchase intention would depend on the combination between inspiring and convincing.

The hypotheses concerning conviction are:

H1_a: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as more convincing when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H2_a: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as more convincing when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

Brand awareness and brand attitude

Brand Awareness means the ability of a consumer can recognize and recall a brand in different situations (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness consists of brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall means when consumers see a product category, they can recall a brand name exactly, and brand recognition means consumers has ability to identify a brand when there is a brand cue. That is, consumers can tell a brand correctly if they ever saw or heard it.

In an attempt to understand what drives product awareness, researchers have examined the relationship between awareness and a wide variety of marketing and consumer behaviour variables (Axelrod, 1968; Haley and Case, 1979). Important among these are variables such as brand attitude, preference and usage, or advertising recall.

For this research, the measurement of brand awareness is not as significant as brand attitude that is why brand attitude will be one of the dependent variables.

Brand attitude gives an important capacity of knowledge about the consensus attitude of potential consumers toward a product. It also refers to what the consumers believe the product does, how well it does it, and how likely they are to find it useful. (Financial Dictionary, 2017) This is why this is a good variable to take into account for this research.

In the next part of this paper, the media richness theory will be explained, related to influencer marketing and its platforms.

The hypotheses concerning brand attitude are:

H1_b: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as a positive attitude towards the brand when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H2_b: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as a positive attitude towards the brand when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

Purchase intention

The willingness of a customer to buy a certain product or a certain service is known as purchase intention. ("MBA Skool-Study.Learn.Share.", 2017)

Bagozzi (1983) mentioned "intentions constitute a wilful state of choice where one makes a self-implicated statement as to a future course of action" Purchase intention is instantaneous determinant of actual buy (Engel et al., 1986). It is the bare fact that a consumer purchases a product on a the regular basis may at times result in brand attachment and in turn positively influence the brand image, via the so called "mere exposure" effect (Zajonc, 1968).

The hypotheses concerning Purchase intention are:

H1_c: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will increase the purchase intention of the brand when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H2_c: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will increase the purchase intention of the brand when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

2.5 Demographics and their relation with E-WOM

There is not a clear target group for this study, online social media platforms are used around the world for all kind of different people. According to the latest data, more than half of the population has access to the internet nowadays, around 4 billion people ("World Internet Users Statistics and 2017 World Population Stats", 2017). This means that 4 billion people have also access to online social media platforms so it would be very difficult to target a specific target group.

Due to this reason, three general demographic variables have been chosen: Gender, age and education.

Gender

Gender has been frequently used as a basis for segmentation for a significant proportion of products and services (Putrevu, 2001). It would be a mistake not to take it into account on this research. In addition, there is some debate on gender gaps and Internet use, as computer use has traditionally been considered a male-dominated field. However, in recent years women have become frequent computer users. The overall population is evenly split between men and women. Despite the even number of users, research shows gender differences found in

preference and style for Internet activities. Women typically report greater difficulty finding information than men and prefer to use the Internet for education, communication, and personal information, whereas men are more likely to obtain information regarding weather, business, sports, and games (Thayer & Ray, 2006).

Age

Age is an important factor because a company's products and services are more likely to appeal to certain age groups. Younger people under 35 are often the first consumers to purchase high-tech products like cell phones, electronic books and video games. Certain buying groups also have more buying power than others. (Suttle, 2017) In addition, there is a clear differentiation between Internet users related to the age. In past Internet demographic studies, the average age of Internet users has ranged between 32 and 35 years old (GVU, 1999). However, this has changed in the latest years; according to the webpage Statista and a study made in 2014, the bigger group of internet usage is between 15 and 34 years old. Due to these distinctions, age can be a good moderator for this study.

Education level

The effectiveness of various methods of usage of online social media platforms can differ according to a person's level of education. Research has shown that less educated people rely more on what they hear (aural) and the pictorial means of communicating, for example, television, whereas educated people tend to use print media to a greater degree (Careerforce, 2015). What it is not clear yet is how education level can affect when an ad is coming from an influencer in an online social media platform, that is why it can be a significant factor in this research.

2.6 Conceptual model and Research Question

After having introduced concepts and variables that are of importance to this study the conceptual model can be made. There are six independent variables, the low medium and high involvement products introduced in a low and high richness platform.

The objective of this research is to measure the effect of these two variables (richness) through different involvement products on the dependent variables: conviction, persuasion, brand attitude and purchase intention.

In this research, the demographics gender, age and education will be taking into account as moderating variables. On Figure 2, a graphic representation of the conceptual model can be seen, whose study, will take place in the main study of this paper.

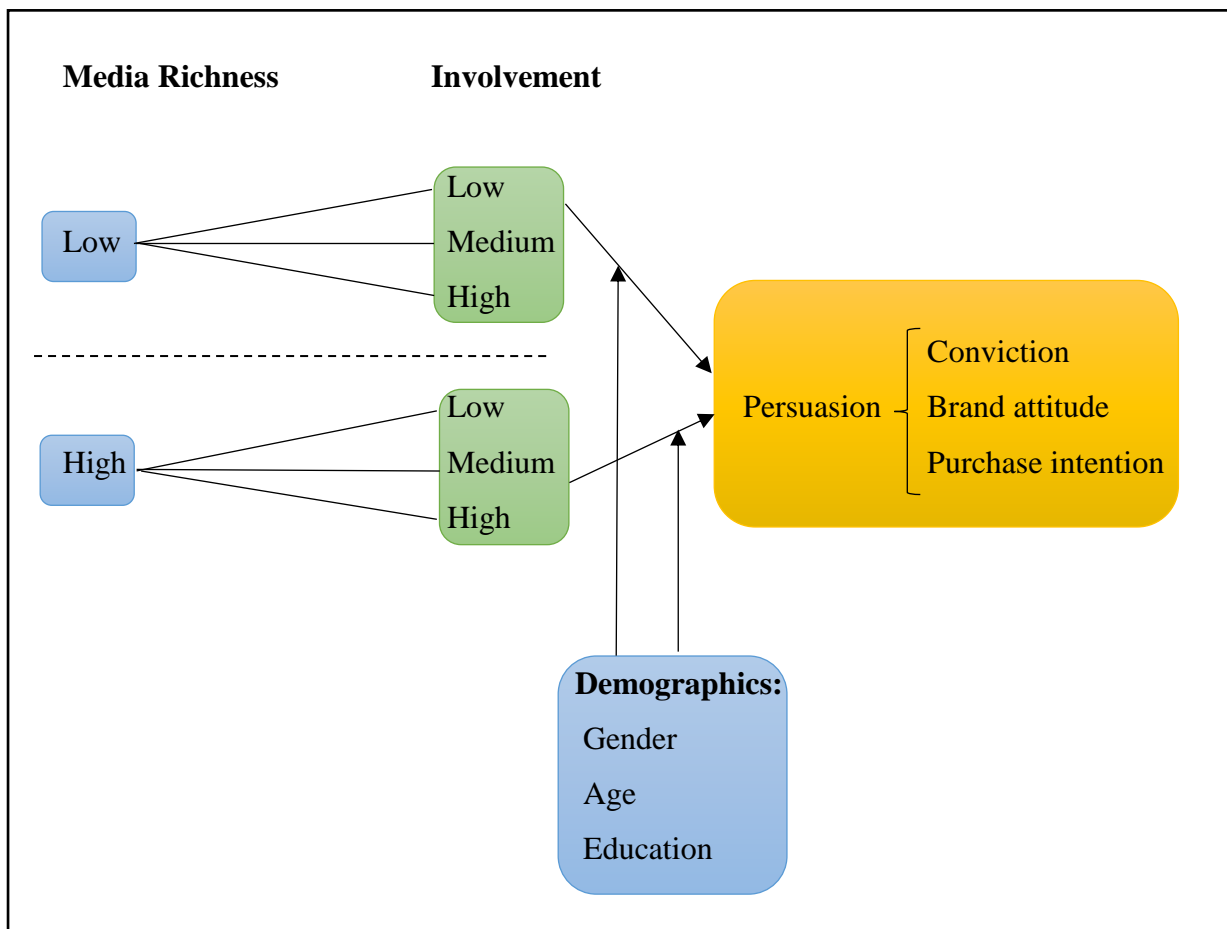


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Main Research.

In order to summarize the principal objective of this study, a brief resume in which the research question and the hypotheses are stated is provided below:

The main research question for this study is the following:

Research Question: Do differences of online media platform's richness influence the capacity of persuasiveness and conviction when comparing products from different levels of involvement?

From this research question the following hypotheses have been stated:

H1: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as more persuasive when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H1_a: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as more convincing when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H1_b: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as a positive attitude towards the brand when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H1_c: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will increase the purchase intention of the brand when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement.

H2: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as more persuasive when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

H2_a: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as more convincing when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

H2_b: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as a positive attitude towards the brand when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

H2_c: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will increase the purchase intention of the brand when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement.

This study will be conducted using two times a 1x3 design. There will be six independent variables, the three products chosen: Chocolate, clothes and plane ticket. They will be advertised in the two more representative platforms from the pre-study: YouTube and Pinterest. Additionally, three moderators are taken into account: Age, gender and education level. To summarize these hypotheses the following table has been made:

Table 8. Stimuli and their expected effects

| Conditions | | Low Involvement | Medium Involvement | High Involvement |
|---------------|--|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Platforms | | | | |
| | | Chocolate + YouTube | Clothes + YouTube | Plane Ticket + YouTube |
| High Richness | | Low persuasion | Low persuasion | High persuasion |
| | | Low Conviction | Low Conviction | High Conviction |
| | | Low Brand Attitude | Low Brand Attitude | High Brand Attitude |
| | | Low Purchase Intention | Low Purchase Intention | High Purchase Intention |
| | | | | |
| | | Chocolate + Pinterest | Clothes + Pinterest | Plane Ticket + Pinterest |
| Low Richness | | High persuasion | Low persuasion | Low persuasion |
| | | High Conviction | Low Conviction | Low Conviction |
| | | High Brand Attitude | Low Brand Attitude | Low Brand Attitude |
| | | High Purchase Intention | Low Purchase Intention | Low Purchase Intention |

The terms “High” or “Low” mentioned in table 8 refers to a more positive (High) or more negative (Low) reaction towards the capacities of persuasion, conviction, brand attitude and purchase intention from a condition compared to the rest of them.

3. Pre-study

In this section, the two research questions for this pre-study will be addressed as well as the method, the criteria and the results of this study.

1) Research Question about richness of the platforms

In the first Research Question that will be solved using a pre-study, it wants to be determined which platforms correspond with the richest and leanest media between the five platforms: Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Blogs and YouTube. The Research question is the following:

Research Question₁: *Do online media platforms differ in terms of media richness?*

2) Research Questions about involvement in the products

The second Research Question of the pre-study will also examine product involvement. Six products considered to have a different level of involvement have been chosen. These products are: Bicycle, Chocolate, Plane Ticket, Clothes, Toilet Paper and Toothpaste.

Research Question₂: *Can products be categorize in low, medium and high level of involvement?*

3.1 Method

In order to conduct this study, the pre-test will consist out a questionnaire with the aim of being filled in by a minimum of 30 respondents. The questionnaire will be composed by two parts. In the first part, the question about media richness will be covered and in the second part, the involvement of the products will be covered. In order to have certain control on the respondents, two basic variables will be used: gender and age. Gender is an important variable to have into account because it will determine if the test was equal distributed and to see if there is a differentiation in product involvement between male and female respondents. The age is important to control in order to see if the age from the respondents is not spread in a large range. Moreover, to determine if there is a differentiation between old and young users and the results in media richness of the platforms due to the reason that young users could perceive online social media platforms as richer compared to old users.

The stimulus material for the media richness part will consist of a visual representation of the five platforms. This will show a screenshot of one phone device trying to imitate how a user would see the online social media platform. Each platform will be opened on a particular post simulating it, as a regular user would see it. An example is given in figure 4. A recognition

question will help to make only respondents who know the platform answer the richness questions because they know the possibilities that those platforms can offer. After being exposed to the stimulus material, the respondents have to answer if they recognized the platform shown. Respondents who answered this question correctly will continue to the media richness questions, those who did not recognize the platform correctly will skip the media richness question and they will go directly to the question about product involvement.

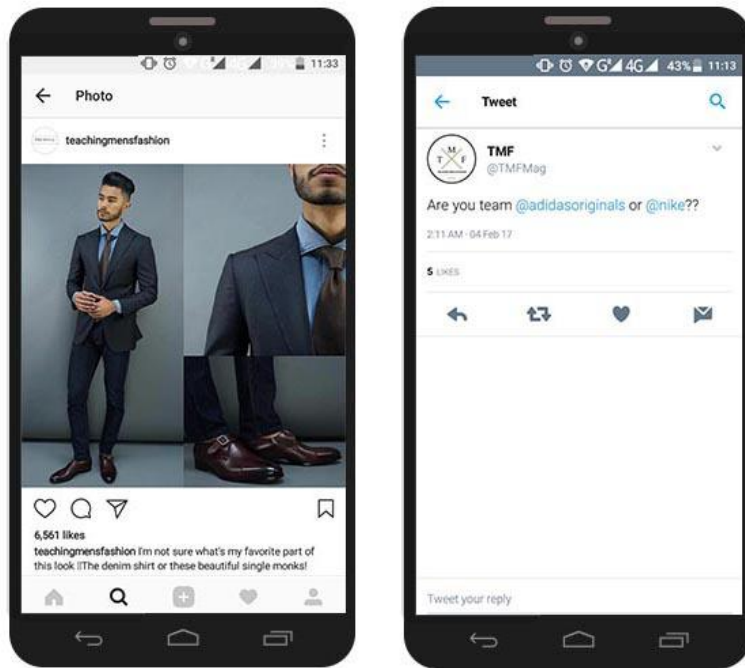


Figure 4. Stimulus material for Instagram and Twitter platforms

For the part of media richness, three randomized platforms (out of five) will be shown to every respondent (stimulus material). The respondents will have to answer statements about the richness of the platform, only if they have identified them correctly in the recognition question. The richness will be measured with a Likert scale of seven points, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale will be formed based on characteristics of the media richness theory according to the webpage www.communicationtheory.org. These characteristics are: Capacity to include personal focus, immediacy of feedback, conveyance of multiple cues and variety of language carried. Related to these characteristics, four statements have been created, an example of an item is: “With this online media platform I am able to share content with other people”. The items were rated on a 7 points Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha of the 4 items in the media richness scale was enough ($\alpha = .69$).

After completing the statements about media richness, the second part of the pre-study, in which the product involvement is the main interest, will begin. Three out of the six selected products will be shown to the respondents. These six products were chosen due to the reason that they represent the industries studied in the theoretical framework: fashion, food and travel. Also because traditionally, the products: toilet paper, toothpaste and bicycle are considered as products representing low, medium and high level of involvement. The respondents will have some time to think about the product that it is shown on the screen as a picture and then they will answer different statements about the involvement of those products. This construct was operationalized by using five existing items used by Ramirez Angulo (2012). The items were translated into English to include them in this study. An example of an item is: “The decisions when buying this product are serious and important”. The items were rated on a 7 points Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha of the 5 items was high ($\alpha= 0.86$). After completing this part, the questionnaire will be finished. The complete survey of this pre-study is available as “Appendix A”.

3.2 Criterion to determine levels of media richness and levels of involvement

The criteria to identify if a platform is considered as being a rich or lean richness medium or a product has a high or low level of involvement will be the following:

The Likert scales used in the test are formed by seven points (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree). Because of this, a classification is needed. The interpretation will be the following: The means with a result between 1.00 and 2.00 will be considered as a low richness medium or low involvement product. The means between 2.01 and 5.00 will be considered as medium richness or medium involvement product and the means between 5.01 and 7.00 will be considered as high richness medium or as a high involvement product.

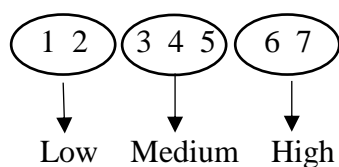


Figure 5. Scheme of the pre-study criteria

3.3 Results of the pre-study

The survey of this pre-study was filled by a total of 51 respondents from which 56.80% were male and 43.20% were female. The distribution is relatively equal, this means that if there are differences they cannot occur due to gender. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 45 years old in which the majority range was between 25 and 28 years old, this is positive because it makes a homogenous group.

Results Media Richness

The results show that four out of five platforms are considered as rich mediums because they scored higher than 5.00 with the exception of Pinterest, which obtained a score of 3.97, and it would be considered as a medium level of richness as it can be seen in table 2. Therefore, from now on when the leanest media richness platform is mentioned in this paper, it actually means the leanest compared with the rest of the platforms studied.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the media richness platforms used for the pre-test

| | Participants (Before recognition answer) | Mean | Std. Deviation | Recognition (%) | Richness Criteria |
|-----------|---|------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Platforms | N | | | | |
| YouTube | 24 | 5.74 | .98 | 87.50 | High |
| Twitter | 33 | 5.21 | .95 | 90.90 | High |
| Instagram | 31 | 5.16 | .87 | 87.09 | High |
| Blog | 31 | 5.12 | 1.02 | 74.19 | High |
| Pinterest | 34 | 3.97 | 1.13 | 64.70 | Medium |

The platforms' richness were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1= Low richness | 7= High richness)

A One-Way ANOVA analysis is conducted to compare the means scores of media richness from the different online social media platforms in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that they are significantly different.

Table 3. ANOVA analysis of the platforms and their media richness.

| | Sum of Squares | df | F-value | Sig. |
|--------------------|----------------|----|---------|------|
| Platforms/Richness | 36.97 | 4 | 9.53 | .000 |

The results of this analysis (table 3) show that the mean of richness is significantly different for at least two of the platforms ($F=9.527$, $p<0.001$). These indicate that there is a difference between the platforms. To find out which platforms differs from others a post-hoc Bonferroni test was made, the results can be seen in table 4.

Table 4. Bonferroni test used to find significant differences between platforms and their relation with Media Richness.

| | | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|--------------|--------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Platform (I) | Platform (J) | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Twitter | Instagram | 1.00 | -.70 | .80 |
| | Pinterest | .00 | .45 | 2.03 |
| | Blog | 1.00 | -.69 | .87 |
| | YouTube | .61 | -1.33 | .27 |
| Instagram | Twitter | 1.00 | -.80 | .70 |
| | Pinterest | .00 | .38 | 2.00 |
| | Blog | 1.00 | -.76 | .84 |
| | YouTube | .45 | -1.40 | .24 |
| Pinterest | Twitter | .00 | -2.03 | -.45 |
| | Instagram | .00 | -2.00 | -.38 |
| | Blog | .00 | -1.99 | -.31 |
| | YouTube | .00 | -2.63 | -.91 |
| Blog | Twitter | 1.00 | -.87 | .69 |
| | Instagram | 1.00 | -.84 | .76 |
| | Pinterest | .00 | .31 | 1.99 |
| | YouTube | .40 | -1.47 | .23 |
| YouTube | Twitter | .61 | -.27 | 1.33 |
| | Instagram | .45 | -.24 | 1.40 |
| | Pinterest | .00 | .91 | 2.63 |
| | Blog | .40 | -.23 | 1.47 |

This test shows that there is only one platform significantly different from the others. This refers to Pinterest being different from all the other platforms. From the main scores in table 2, YouTube can be referred to as the richest online social media platform and Pinterest can be referred as the medium online social media platform. Even though, Pinterest obtained a score representing a medium richness platform. In this study, it will be considered as the leanest one, but this does not mean that it is a lean medium itself, it means that it is the leanest from all the platforms studied. YouTube and Pinterest will be the platforms that will be studied in the main study of this research.

Conclusion Media Richness of online social media platforms

As an answer to the first research question; Is there a difference of perceived media richness between online media platforms? We can conclude that we cannot evaluate online media

platforms as low, medium and high because all the platforms proved to have medium to high media richness. Based on the criteria established, they all are situated in a range between medium and high media richness. Due to this fact, from now on in this paper, the online media platform named as “low” will mean medium richness in terms of the Media Richness Theory but the lowest in comparison with the rest of the platforms studied in this research.

It is important to take into account that, looking at the data from the recognition question, which can be consulted in table 2. Pinterest was the platform which less respondents were able to recognize, only 64,7 % of the respondents were correct when the rest of the platforms were over 80% excluding Blog that it was 74,2%. It is a remarkable difference, which could explain the result considering it as the lowest richness platform from the five.

Results Product Involvement

The results related to the product involvement show similar outcomes as the results in media richness. The products are ranged from medium to high involvement based on the criteria. The products considered as high involvement are plane ticket (5,61) and bicycle (5,36), the rest of the products obtained scores with a range between 3,21 and 4,92 and they would be considered as medium involvement as it can be seen in table 5. Therefore, from now on when the lowest involvement product is mentioned in this paper, it actually means the lowest involvement compared with the rest of the products.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations of the products involvement used for the pre-test

| | Participants (before recognition answer) | Mean | Std. Deviation | Involvement Criteria |
|--------------|--|-------|----------------|----------------------|
| Products | N | | | |
| Plane Ticket | 22 | 5.61* | .96 | High |
| Bicycle | 26 | 5.36 | 1.09 | High |
| Clothes | 24 | 4.92* | .97 | Medium |
| Toothpaste | 26 | 3.80 | 1.34 | Medium |
| Chocolate | 30 | 3.54* | 1.59 | Medium |
| Toilet Paper | 22 | 3.21 | 1.32 | Medium |

The products' involvement were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1= low involvement | 7= high involvement)

*corresponds to the results of the products that aimed at the industries fashion, travel and food.

Using the criteria established before, two groups can be classified from these results. On one side, Plane Ticket and Bicycle are considered as high involvement products. On the other side, Clothes, Toothpaste, Chocolate and Toilet Paper are considered as medium involvement products.

A One-Way ANOVA analysis is made then to compare the means in involvement from the different products in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that they are significantly different.

Table 6. ANOVA analysis of the products and their involvement.

| | Sum of Squares | df | F | Sig. |
|----------------------|----------------|----|-------|------|
| Products/Involvement | 125.34 | 5 | 15.76 | .00 |

The results of ANOVA analysis (table 6) show that the mean of involvement is significantly different for at least two of the products ($F=15.76$, $p<0.001$). To find out which products differ from others, a post-hoc Bonferroni test was made, the results can be consulted in table 7.

Focusing on the results from the products that belong to the industries mentioned in the theoretical framework (Chocolate, Clothes and Plane Ticket), as shown in the post-hoc, there are significant differences between Chocolate and clothes and plane ticket, but no difference between Plane ticket and clothes.

Table 7. Bonferroni test used to find significant differences between products.

| | | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|--------------|--------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Product (I) | Product (J) | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Bicycle | Chocolate | .00 | .81 | 2.83 |
| | Clothes | 1.00 | -.62 | 1.51 |
| | Plane Ticket | 1.00 | -1.34 | .84 |
| | Toilet Paper | .00 | 1.06 | 3.24 |
| | Toothpaste | .00 | .52 | 2.61 |
| Chocolate | Bicycle | .00 | -2.83 | -.81 |
| | Clothes | .00 | -2.41 | -.35 |
| | Plane Ticket | .00 | -3.13 | -1.01 |
| | Toilet Paper | 1.00 | -.73 | 1.39 |
| | Toothpaste | 1.00 | 1.27 | .75 |
| Clothes | Bicycle | 1.00 | -1.51 | .62 |
| | Chocolate | .00 | .35 | 2.41 |
| | Plane Ticket | .97 | -1.80 | .42 |
| | Toilet Paper | .00 | .60 | 2.82 |
| | Toothpaste | .03 | .05 | 2.18 |
| Plane Ticket | Bicycle | 1.00 | -.84 | 1.34 |
| | Chocolate | .00 | 1.01 | 3.13 |
| | Clothes | .97 | -.42 | 1.80 |
| | Toilet Paper | .00 | 1.26 | 3.54 |
| | Toothpaste | .00 | .72 | 2.90 |
| Toilet Paper | Bicycle | .00 | -3.24 | -1.06 |
| | Chocolate | 1.00 | -1.39 | .73 |
| | Clothes | .00 | -2.82 | -.60 |
| | Plane Ticket | .00 | -3.54 | -1.26 |
| | Toothpaste | 1.00 | -1.68 | .50 |
| Toothpaste | Bicycle | .00 | -2.61 | -.52 |
| | Chocolate | 1.00 | -.75 | 1.27 |
| | Clothes | .03 | -2.18 | -.05 |
| | Plane Ticket | .00 | -2.90 | -.72 |
| | Toilet Paper | 1.00 | -.50 | 1.68 |

Conclusion product involvement

As an answer to the second research question: *Can products be categorized in low, medium and high level of involvement?* We can conclude that all the products have a medium or high involvement. Plane Ticket is the product with the highest involvement and it will represent the high involvement product as well as the travel industry in the main study. In the group of low level of product involvement, toilet paper scored as the lowest among all of them, nevertheless this product is not part of any mentioned industry (fashion, travel and food), that is why this product will be discarded. Once toilet paper is omitted, the product with the lowest score, and therefore lowest product involvement, is chocolate, due to these characteristics, chocolate will represent the low product involvement in the main study as well as the food industry. Even though, clothes and chocolate are both considered as having a medium level of involvement, they are significantly different as it is shown in table 7. Moreover, Clothes scored higher than chocolate that is the reason why it will represent the medium level of involvement in the main study.

Despite the fact that Plane Ticket and Clothes are not statistically different in terms of involvement, both products will be used for the main study because they are considered to be different products in characteristics such as economic or target group. Moreover, they represent products from two of the industries studied before (travel and fashion). In addition, they will be studied with the aim of trying to figure out if there are other differences between them in other terms apart from involvement. To summarize, the representation of each industry for the main study will be the following:

High level of involvement → Plane Ticket → Travel industry

Medium level of involvement → Clothes → Fashion industry

Low Level of involvement → Chocolate → Food industry

In the following section, the main study, its research question and hypothesis as well as its method will be explained.

4. Main study: Method

In this chapter, using the data obtained in the pre-study, the main study will be designed and explained in detail. The aim of the study is to find out if online social media platforms of different levels of richness have the same effect on (potential) consumers when products from different levels of involvement are endorsed through these channels.

4.1 Design and stimulus material

The aim of the stimulus material is to imitate what an ordinary user does when she/he wants to get information about a product through an online social media platform. The products used for this study are the ones selected from the results of the pre-study and at the same time, they are part of the general industries of chocolate, clothes and plane ticket (As low, medium and high involvement). For chocolate, the product selected to represent it is “big crunch Milka-Oreo bar” because Milka and Oreo are well-known brands and there are enough reviews in YouTube to be able to categorize them and select the one that fits the best with the research. For clothes, the product selected to represent it is a specific model of Nike sneakers called “Flyknit 2017”, the reason is the same as for the chocolate bar, Nike is a well-known worldwide brand and it has an enormous presence in YouTube. In the case of Plane Ticket, a search engine app will be the selected product, the app is “Skyscanner” due to its popularity and their use of influencers to promote this application. In addition, it was important to use real and well-known brands because that way, existing YouTube videos and therefore real influencers could be used.

To show these products, six videos in which the products are advertised were made with a length of around one minute. In the case of the online social media YouTube condition, videos that already existed from influencers with a meaningful number of followers in YouTube (more than 100.000) will be used. These influencers have similar characteristics among them, such as the enthusiasm of the speaker when explaining the product, the speed of talking, their casual appearance and the impression of knowing what they are talking about. The length of the videos is only one minute with the aim of not to make the respondent lose focus of the content and due to it is enough time to show the possibilities that a platform offers including the search engine and the sharing options from each platform.

In the case of Pinterest, the image of the YouTube influencers of all brands will be used. The platform is shown as usual but with manipulated posts from these existing influencers, inside the post, the same information as the one from the YouTube condition is included to create a resemblance between the possible options (Figure 6).

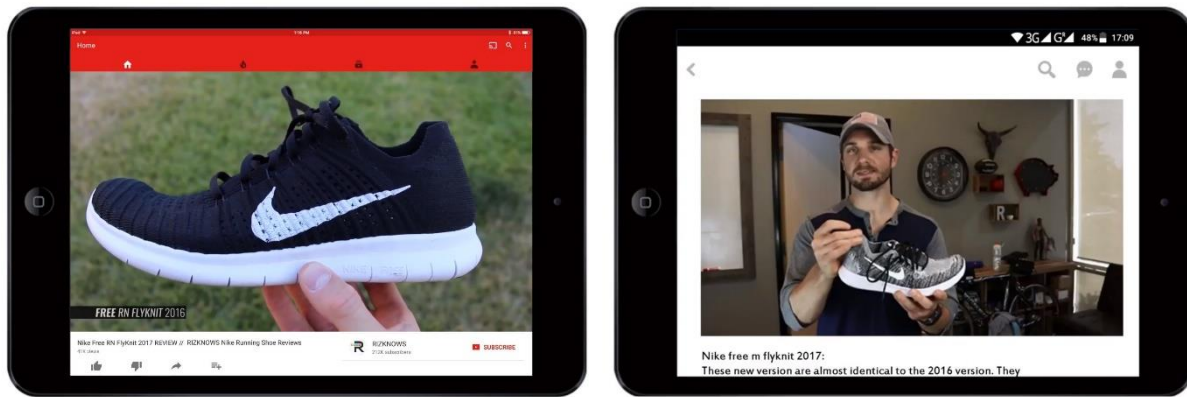


Figure 6. Screenshots of the stimulus material videos used for clothes in YouTube and Pinterest

4.2 Procedure

The research will be conducted using a survey in which the image of the influencer will be present in both platforms: YouTube and Pinterest. This way the products can be related to the person who introduce them and also his possible influence over the product can be analysed. For instance, in Figure 6, it can be seen the influencer selected to promote clothes in both of the platforms. The links to the videos used for this study can be found in Appendix B.

The survey will start with moderators questions: gender, age, and education. Then one product randomly assigned will be shown in one platform also randomly assigned. This stimulus will be a video in which the respondent can see the screen of an ordinary user and how she searches for a particular product in one of the platforms then, she interacts with the different possibilities of that platform like searching a specific product, saying out loud her opinions and showing their sharing and saving options. After this video, he/she will answer different questions about the dependent variables: entertainment, inspiration, education, conviction, brand attitude and purchase intention.

Subsequently, the test will proceed to do the manipulation checks in which media richness from the platforms and product involvement will be measured. All the questions will be presented in a Likert scale of 7 points from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The complete survey of this study can be found at the end of this paper as Appendix B.

4.3 Measures

The questionnaire contained different constructs in accordance with the research question. The used measurement constructs for the dependent variables in this study were based on a mix of items from existing studies (Bearden, Netemeyer & Haws, 2011; Bruner, Hensel & James, 2005). The Dependent variables were persuasion, conviction, brand attitude and purchase

intention. It is necessary to validate the measures before further analysis of data. This section discusses the reliability analysis from the dependent variables.

Persuasion

The ability of persuasion construct was measured by five questions taken from existing studies (Bearden, Netemeyer & Haws, 2011; Bruner, Hensel & James, 2005) and based on a seven-point scale. As it was explained in the theoretical framework of this study, persuasion was related with the peripheral route of information processing, that is why the items were related with the entertainment, inspiration or the feelings. The reliability of this construct was high ($\alpha = .93$). An example of an item is: “I found this content entertained”.

Conviction

The ability of conviction construct was measured by five questions, taken from existing studies (Bruner II, 2015) and based on a seven-point scale, As it was explained in the theoretical framework of this study, conviction was related with the central route of information processing, that is why the items were related with the knowledge or information and learning process. The reliability of this construct was high ($\alpha = .84$). An example of an item is: “I could understand every provided information about this product”.

Brand Attitude

The attitude towards the brand construct was measured by five questions taken from existing studies (Bearden, Netemeyer & Haws, 2011), based on a seven-point scale. The reliability of this construct was high ($\alpha = .93$). An example of an item is: “I like this product”.

Purchase Intention

The Purchase Intention construct was measured by five questions, taken from existing studies (Bearden, Netemeyer & Haws, 2011), based on a seven-point scale. The reliability of this construct was high ($\alpha = .93$). An example of an item is: “I am willing to purchase this brand/use this app in the future”.

4.3.1 Validity of dependent measures

A factor analysis was performed in order to test the validity of the items for each construct. In table 9, the results of the factor analysis are shown based on 301 respondents. A total of 19 items were tested with orthogonal rotation method (Varimax). The results showed that there are two variables loading on the same factor, these variables are Brand Attitude and Purchase

Intention. This means that the items that compose these variables are not different from each other. This fact is reasonable because, brand attitude and purchase intention are connected. The act of purchasing a product comes with the fact that you like that product. It would be contradictory for a consumer to purchase a product that he/she does not like or thinks that it is a bad product. Therefore, both characteristics are important and have clear similarities, due to this reason, both constructs, brand attitude and purchase intention, will be merged into a new construct called “Brand perception”. This new merged construct is measured by nine items. The reliability is still high ($\alpha = .95$).

Table 9. Factor Analysis

| Principle component analysis of the dependent variables with Varimax Rotation | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|------|
| | Rotated component matrix* | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Persuasion | | | |
| I found this content entertained | | .780 | |
| I found this content inspirational | | .810 | |
| I enjoyed watching this content | | .842 | |
| This video makes me feel good | | .839 | |
| The video was lots of fun to watch and listen to | | .838 | |
| Conviction | | | |
| I could understand every provided information about this product | | | .790 |
| The concepts were clear enough for me | | | .831 |
| I learned something from this video that I didn't know before about (the brand) | | | .519 |
| While I watched this video, I thought how this brand/app might be useful to me | | | |
| I could explain easily the information given to me in this video to somebody else | | | .778 |
| Brand Attitude | | | |
| This is a good product | .811 | | |
| I like the product | .833 | | |
| The product is attractive | .775 | | |
| The product is nice | .822 | | |
| Purchase Intention | | | |
| After watching this content I would think about this brand/app if I have to buy a product like this | .708 | | |
| I am willing to purchase this brand/use this app in the future | .656 | | |
| I would recommend this brand/app to my family/friends | .791 | | |
| This video makes me want to buy/use the brand/app it features | .723 | | |
| With this type of promotion, I feel like buying the product | .673 | .528 | |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis | | | |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization | | | |

Values below .4 have been subtracted from the table

4.4 Participants

The survey was completed by a total of 304 anonymous individuals. There were two respondents who clicked “no” in the previous agreement of the survey in which the individuals can accept or refuse the conditions stated and start the survey. Therefore, these two responses were discarded. In addition, one who filled the year of birth question with “1900” was discarded as well because the age was not realistic enough. Moreover, responds with a completed survey

of more than 88% were included in the final data of this study because their information is considered still useful even though they did not fill all the questions.

The final data-set included 301 individuals, including 146 males, 153 females and 2 respondents who preferred not to specify their gender. The age of the individuals varied between 10 to 70 years old, with a mean age of 30.40 with a standard deviation of 9,74. The majority of the participants is higher educated (bachelor, master and PhD or higher). The characteristics of the participants in each condition are presented in table 10.

Table 10. Demographic respondents

| Condition of the study | Participants | | Gender | | Age | Education Level | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----|---------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| | N | ale | Female% | Not defined% | Mean(SD) | N High | N Low |
| Chocolate x YouTube | 50 | 44 | 56 | 0 | 32.44 (10.8) | 40 | 8 |
| Chocolate x Pinterest | 48 | 48 | 52 | 0 | 30.18 (9.27) | 41 | 5 |
| Clothes x YouTube | 49 | 47 | 51 | 2 | 29.69 (8.27) | 34 | 12 |
| Clothes x Pinterest | 60 | 53 | 45 | 2 | 28.83 (8.71) | 48 | 11 |
| Plane Ticket x YouTube | 40 | 43 | 58 | 0 | 30.82 (9.72) | 32 | 8 |
| Plane Ticket x Pinterest | 54 | 54 | 46 | 0 | 30.77 (11.37) | 40 | 14 |

To measure the education level of the respondents, the answers were recoded in two groups: high level of education and low level of education. The options High School or lower and middle level school belong to the low level of education group and the options Bachelor, Master and PhD or higher is considered as a high level of education. The answers “I prefer not to say” were recoded as missing value.

To know if there are significant differences between the demographics variables and the conditions, an ANOVA analysis has been conducted (Table 11).

Table 11. ANOVA analysis of the different demographic variables and the conditions.

| | Sum of Squares | df | F-value | Sig. |
|----------------------------|----------------|----|---------|------|
| Conditions/Gender | .59 | 5 | .46 | .804 |
| Conditions/Age | 396.88 | 5 | .83 | .527 |
| Conditions/Education Level | 1.15 | 5 | 1.20 | .309 |

The test showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the conditions and the demographic variables.

In the following part, the results from the study will be analysed.

5. MAIN STUDY: RESULTS

5.1 Manipulation check

In the pre-test, the independent variables manipulated by the stimulus material were classified in media richness levels and involvement levels. In the main study, the same questions were repeated to compare the results.

Table 12. Means and SD of the platforms and products

| Platforms (Media Richness) | | | | Products (Involvement) | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|------|------|------------------------|-----|------|------|
| | N | Mean | SD | | N | Mean | SD |
| YouTube | 136 | 5.44 | 1.08 | Clothes | 108 | 5.24 | 1.09 |
| Pinterest | 91 | 5.15 | 1.14 | Plane Ticket | 92 | 5.22 | 0.85 |
| | | | | Chocolate | 98 | 4.39 | 1.47 |

The perceived platforms' richness were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1= Low richness | 7= High richness)
The product's involvement were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1=Low involvement | 7= High involvement)

Media Richness

The construct of Richness was built by four items. The reliability was high ($\alpha = .826$) and the results were the same as in the pre-test as it can be seen in table 8. Nevertheless, there is a big different in the mean of the leanest media. The result of Pinterest in the pre-test showed a mean of 3.90, in the main test the mean was 5.15, a total different result from the previous study. Before, this platform was considered as having medium richness but now it would be part of the high richness platforms group. To see if there is a significant different between the two platforms, an ANOVA analysis is conducted. The results can be consulted in table 13 and it can be seen a p-value of .057 ($p > .05$). It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the platforms but there is a tendency to be significant different.

Table 13. ANOVAa analysis between platforms and media richness

| | Sum of Squares | df | F | Sig. |
|--------------------------|----------------|----|------|------|
| Platforms/Media richness | 4.53 | 1 | 3.66 | .057 |

Involvement

The construct of involvement was built by five items. The reliability was high ($\alpha = .86$). But as it can be seen in table 12, there is a difference with the pre-test. In this case the richest product is Clothes when in the pre-test it was plane ticket. An ANOVA analysis was conducted to check

if there is a significant difference between products and involvement, as it can be seen in table 14, the test shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the products.

Table 14. ANOVA Test between products and involvement.

| | Sum of Squares | df | F-value | Sig. |
|----------------------|----------------|----|---------|------|
| Products/Involvement | 26.49 | 2 | 9.98 | .000 |

A Bonferroni post-hoc has been conducted then to identify where those differences are.

Table 15. Bonferroni post-hoc test

| | | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|--------------|--------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Product (I) | Product (J) | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Chocolate | Clothes | .000 | -1.04 | -.27 |
| | Plane Ticket | .001 | -1.01 | -.20 |
| Clothes | Chocolate | .000 | .27 | 1.04 |
| | Plane Ticket | 1.00 | -.34 | .44 |
| Plane Ticket | Chocolate | .001 | .20 | 1.01 |
| | Clothes | 1.00 | -.44 | .34 |

As it is shown in table 15, there is a significant difference between chocolate and the rest of the products, but there is no significant difference between clothes and plane ticket. This result is a reiteration from the results obtained previously in the pre-test. Nevertheless, both products will be studied separately in further analysis but both will be considered as high involvement products due to their possible differences in other characteristics that are not involvement.

5.2 Descriptive statistics

The assumption of normality of the distribution was tested for all variables and they proved to have a normal distribution.

Table 16. Normal distribution test

| | Persuasion | Conviction | Brand Perception |
|----------|------------|------------|------------------|
| Skewness | -.35 | -.86 | -.70 |
| Kurtosis | -.78 | .64 | -.40 |

Below there is a table showing the mean results on the distinct dependent variables in combination with the different platforms and products. Regarding the scores obtained, the dependent variables will be evaluated.

Table 17. Means and standard deviations of the dependent variables in every platform and product.

| YouTube Channel (Rich platform) | | | | Pinterest Channel (Lean Platform) | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|------|------|-----------------------------------|-----|------|------|
| | N | Mean | SD | | N | Mean | SD |
| Chocolate | | | | Chocolate | | | |
| Persuasion | 50 | 4.30 | 1.54 | Persuasion | 48 | 4.26 | 1.48 |
| Conviction | 50 | 4.99 | 1.12 | Conviction | 48 | 4.93 | 1.11 |
| Brand Perception | 50 | 4.86 | 1.31 | Brand Perception | 48 | 5.00 | 1.05 |
| Clothes | | | | Clothes | | | |
| Persuasion | 49 | 4.67 | 1.46 | Persuasion | 60 | 4.14 | 1.56 |
| Conviction | 49 | 5.42 | 1.21 | Conviction | 60 | 5.20 | 1.13 |
| Brand Perception | 49 | 5.05 | 1.44 | Brand Perception | 60 | 4.88 | 1.25 |
| Plane Ticket | | | | Plane Ticket | | | |
| Persuasion | 40 | 4.73 | 1.37 | Persuasion | 54 | 3.83 | 1.63 |
| Conviction | 40 | 5.36 | 1.12 | Conviction | 54 | 4.44 | 1.40 |
| Brand Perception | 40 | 5.18 | 1.27 | Brand Perception | 54 | 4.60 | 1.42 |
| Total | | | | Total | | | |
| Persuasion | 139 | 4.56 | 1.47 | Persuasion | 162 | 4.08 | 1.57 |
| Conviction | 139 | 5.25 | 1.17 | Conviction | 162 | 4.87 | 1.26 |
| Brand Perception | 139 | 5.03 | 1.35 | Brand Perception | 162 | 4.90 | 1.26 |

The dependent variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree | 7= strongly agree)

Persuasion

As shown in Table 17, the product *plane ticket* in combination with the platform *YouTube* obtained the highest mean in persuasion (4.73) without a big difference with the second higher mean which was the product *Clothes* in combination with *YouTube* (4.67). The lowest mean was *Plane Ticket* in *Pinterest*.

These results denote a general medium capacity of these platforms to persuade potential consumers. All the means range from 3.80 to 4.70, which according to the criteria explained before, they are all considered as having a medium capacity of persuasion.

It stands out the difference between the two platforms; the products shown in *YouTube* obtained a higher result than the same products shown in *Pinterest*. Moreover, only paying attention to the platforms separately. In the case of *YouTube*, plane ticket (highest involvement) was the product with the highest persuasion level. Meanwhile, in *Pinterest* it was chocolate (lowest involvement) the product with the highest persuasion level. Hence, the platforms obtained opposite results.

Conviction

The product *Clothes* in combination with the platform *YouTube* obtained the highest mean in conviction (5.42) still the difference with the second highest mean (5.36) is minimum, in this case *Plane Ticket* shown in *YouTube*. As it was seen before, this variable is the only one in which a significant difference was found, this was between clothes and plane ticket in *Pinterest*.

The fact that two products with similar involvement level obtained such a different result in the same platform is something to pay attention.

Nevertheless, the results in conviction denote a general high capacity of these platforms to convince potential consumers. All the means range from 4.44 to 5.42, which can be considered as having a medium-high capacity of conviction.

Brand Perception

The product *Plane Ticket* in combination with the platform *YouTube* obtained the highest mean in brand awareness (5.18). But with a minimum difference from the second one which is *Clothes* in *YouTube* with a mean of 5.05. The lowest mix was, one more time, *Plane Ticket* endorsed in *Pinterest*.

These results which goes from 4.60 to 5.18 denotes a general high/positive perception towards the brand by the respondents after being influenced by the stimulus materials in the questionnaire.

As it can be seen in table 17, both platforms obtained high results which make them both good mediums when trying to sell or promote a product using online and influencer marketing.

5.3 Platform analysis

The manipulation checks showed that the products clothes and plane ticket are not significantly different, that is the reason why in further analysis, the product chocolate will be compared individually with each high involvement product: first with clothes and secondly with plane ticket.

5.3.1 YouTube

Chocolate versus Clothes

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (Wilks' Lambda) was performed to determine if there was a significant effect of the independent variables (Chocolate, clothes and YouTube) on the dependent variables.

Table 18. Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda) between Chocolate and Clothes in YouTube

| Effect | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------|------|----------|
| Product | 1.38 | .254 | .052 |
| Product*Age | 4.08 | .010 | .139 |
| Product*Gender | .68 | .566 | .026 |
| Product*Education Level | 1.73 | .168 | .064 |

As it is shown in table 18, in this case, only one significant main effect was found in the interaction between product and age ($p < .05$). In Table 19, the statistics of the test are illustrated. It can be concluded that there was no interaction effect on the products or on any interaction between moderators and products.

Table 19. Multivariate Tests (Test of Between-Subjects Effects)

| Effect | | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------------------|------|------|----------|
| Product | Persuasion | 3.12 | .081 | .038 |
| | Conviction | .96 | .331 | .012 |
| | Brand Perception | .50 | .480 | .006 |
| Product*Age | Persuasion | .90 | .347 | .011 |
| | Conviction | 2.55 | .115 | .032 |
| | Brand Perception | 1.11 | .296 | .014 |
| Product*Gender | Persuasion | 1.73 | .193 | .022 |
| | Conviction | .51 | .479 | .006 |
| | Brand Perception | 1.70 | .196 | .021 |
| Product*Education Level | Persuasion | 2.01 | .161 | .025 |
| | Conviction | .29 | .594 | .004 |
| | Brand Perception | .00 | .966 | .000 |

Chocolate versus Plane Ticket

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (Wilks' Lambda) was performed to determine if there was a significant effect of the independent variables (Chocolate, plane ticket and YouTube) on the dependent variables.

Table 20. Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda) between Chocolate and Plane Ticket in YouTube

| Effect | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------|------|----------|
| Product | 1.40 | .249 | .055 |
| Product*Age | .31 | .817 | .013 |
| Product*Gender | .38 | .762 | .016 |
| Product*Education Level | 1.76 | .162 | .068 |

As it is shown in table 20, there was no significant main effect. In Table 21, the statistics of the test are illustrated. It can be concluded that there was no interaction effect on the products or on any interaction between moderators and products.

Table 21. Multivariate Tests (Test of Between-Subjects Effects)

| Effect | | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------------------|------|------|----------|
| Product | Persuasion | 3.01 | .087 | .039 |
| | Conviction | 1.38 | .244 | .018 |
| | Brand Perception | .60 | .442 | .008 |
| Product*Age | Persuasion | .30 | .584 | .004 |
| | Conviction | .14 | .705 | .002 |
| | Brand Perception | .01 | .937 | .000 |
| Product*Gender | Persuasion | .18 | .676 | .002 |
| | Conviction | .40 | .531 | .005 |
| | Brand Perception | .00 | .955 | .000 |
| Product*Education Level | Persuasion | 2.64 | .108 | .035 |
| | Conviction | .01 | .938 | .000 |
| | Brand Perception | .00 | .995 | .000 |

5.3.2 Pinterest

Chocolate versus Clothes

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (Wilks' Lambda) was performed to determine if there was a significant effect of the independent variables (Chocolate, clothes and Pinterest) on the dependent variables.

Table 22. Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda) between Chocolate and Clothes in Pinterest

| Effect | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------|------|----------|
| Product | 1.82 | .149 | .059 |
| Product*Age | .42 | .738 | .014 |
| Product*Gender | .47 | .706 | .016 |
| Product*Education Level | .28 | .841 | .009 |

As it is shown in table 22, there was no significant main effect. In Table 23, the statistics of the test are illustrated. It can be concluded that there was no interaction effect on the products or on any interaction between moderators and products.

Table 23. Multivariate Tests (Test of Between-Subjects Effects)

| Effect | | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------------------|------|-------|----------|
| Product | Persuasion | .02 | .881 | .000 |
| | Conviction | 1.09 | .300 | .012 |
| | Brand Perception | .63 | .429 | .007 |
| Product*Age | Persuasion | .32 | .570 | .004 |
| | Conviction | .16 | .688 | .002 |
| | Brand Perception | .02 | .881 | .000 |
| Product*Gender | Persuasion | .03 | .858 | .000 |
| | Conviction | .20 | .658 | .002 |
| | Brand Perception | .24 | .624 | .003 |
| Product*Education Level | Persuasion | .00 | 1.000 | .000 |
| | Conviction | .02 | .884 | .000 |
| | Brand Perception | .38 | .539 | .004 |

Chocolate vs. Plane Ticket

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (Wilks' Lambda) was performed to determine if there was a significant effect of the independent variables (Chocolate, plane ticket and Pinterest) on the dependent variables.

Table 24 Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda) between Chocolate and Plane Ticket in Pinterest

| Effect | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------|------|----------|
| Product | 3.28 | .025 | .106 |
| Product*Age | 1.15 | .332 | .040 |
| Product*Gender | .29 | .833 | .010 |
| Product*Education Level | 3.21 | .027 | .104 |

As it is shown in table 24, two significant main effect were found in product ($p < .05$), the interaction between product and Education Level ($p < .05$). In Table 25, the statistics of the test are illustrated. There were interaction effects on the products and the dependent variables

conviction ($p < .05$) and brand perception ($p < .05$). There was also interaction effect between products*education level and the dependent variable conviction ($p < .05$)

Table 25 Multivariate Tests (Test of Between-Subjects Effects)

| Effect | | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-------------------------|------------------|------|------|----------|
| Product | Persuasion | 2.94 | .090 | .033 |
| | Conviction | 9.93 | .002 | .105 |
| | Brand Perception | 5.81 | .018 | .064 |
| Product*Age | Persuasion | 1.33 | .253 | .015 |
| | Conviction | .17 | .681 | .002 |
| | Brand Perception | .14 | .707 | .002 |
| Product*Gender | Persuasion | .27 | .608 | .003 |
| | Conviction | .09 | .771 | .001 |
| | Brand Perception | .00 | .984 | .000 |
| Product*Education Level | Persuasion | 1.16 | .284 | .013 |
| | Conviction | 8.85 | .004 | .094 |
| | Brand Perception | 3.67 | .059 | .041 |

Moreover, as it is shown in Figure 7, these products under Pinterest conditions show that there is a tendency of having a higher score in conviction when promoting a low level of product involvement on individuals with a low level of education.

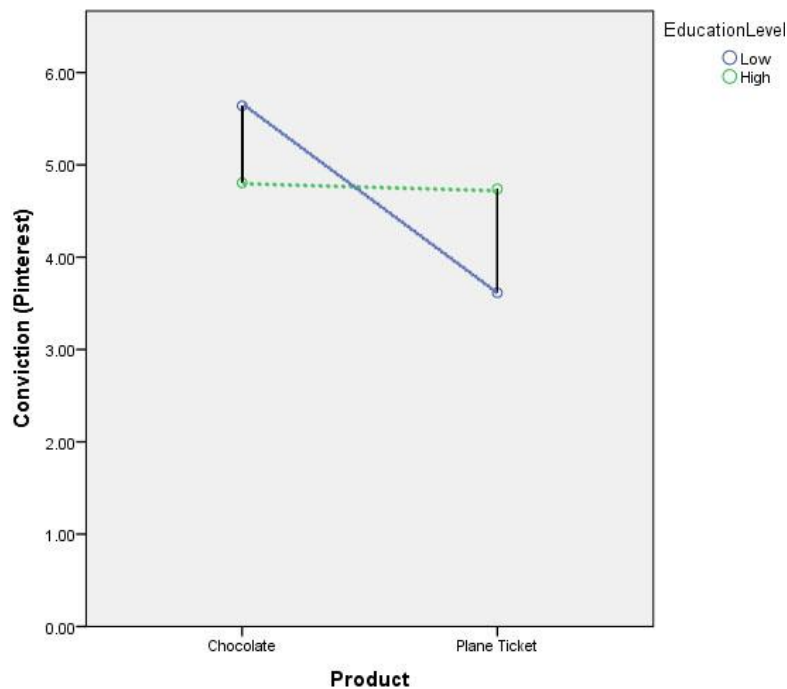


Figure 7. Relationship between scores on the dependent variable Conviction and the products chocolate and plane ticket in Pinterest platform.

A summary is provided in Table 26 for the supported and unsupported hypotheses based on the results.

Table 26. Supported and unsupported hypotheses

| Hypotheses | Supported |
|--|-----------|
| H1: Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as more persuasive when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement. | Partly |
| H1 _a : Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will be perceived as more convincing when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement. | Partly |
| H1 _b : Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will improve the attitude towards the brand when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement. | Partly |
| H1 _c : Content communicated by online media platforms of low media richness will improve the purchase intention of the brand when the content is related to products of low involvement, as compared to products of high and medium involvement. | |
| H2: Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as more persuasive when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement. | No |
| H2 _a : Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will be perceived as more convincing when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement. | No |
| H2 _b : Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will improve the attitude towards the brand when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement. | No |
| H2 _c : Content communicated by online media platforms of high media richness will improve the purchase intention of the brand when the content is related to products of high involvement, as compared to products of low and medium involvement. | |

6. Discussion

In this section, the main findings will be given first. Subsequently, the theoretical and practical implications are provided. Furthermore, the limitations and directions for future research are discussed. Finally, an overall conclusion of the research is provided.

6.1 Research question and main findings of the study

This study aimed to examine the richness characteristics of the online social media platforms and their capability of persuasion when used to promote different levels of product involvement with the intention of persuading potential consumers. The media richness theory has been explained and applied in multiples studies. However, its application in the online world has not been researched deeply enough. This study intends to proof that this theory has become outdated from the moment that companies try to sell their products through online social media platforms. The main research question was:

Do differences of richness influence the online social media platform's capacity of persuasiveness and conviction when comparing products from different levels of involvement?

The answer to this question is that YouTube (rich online social media platform) is a good option to promote both, high and low involvement products with the intention of persuade potential consumers. Thus, the different level of product involvement does not affect the outcomes of YouTube. Whereas Pinterest (lean online social media platform richness), performances better when it is used to endorse low involvement products than when it is used to endorse high involvement products.

Even though in the results from the pre-study there was a clear differentiation in richness terms between YouTube and Pinterest. In the main study, it was found out that the respondents considered both platforms as rich mediums. However, the platforms obtained different results concerning the dependent variables. This denotes that there are differentiations between both platforms related to their characteristics.

On one side, YouTube is a multifunctional platform in which sounds, images, animations etc. are an important part, and this could be the reason why even when it is used to promote low level of product involvement, the outcomes in persuasion are high. On the other side, Pinterest, is a much more limited online social media platform because it is based on images, text and recommendations, that is why the results in persuasion when it was used to promote low level

of product involvement were better than when it was used to promote high involvement products.

6.2 Theoretical implications

The media richness theory explains that a richer media enables users to communicate more quickly, to better understand ambiguous or equivocal messages and, therefore, would lead to better performance on equivocal tasks. In contrast, leaner media is better for low equivocality tasks because rich media provided communicators with too much information and superfluous messages (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). Nevertheless, the main study executed in this paper proves that this theory does not apply in online social media platforms.

In this main study, the message, or in this case the involvement of the product is not as important as the medium. Pinterest (lean online social media platform) will not perform significantly better than YouTube (rich online social media platform) when used to promote a type of product that belongs to a low level of involvement. Moreover, in the case of YouTube (rich online social media platform) the traditional media richness does not apply because this online social media platform is effective even when it is used to endorse a low level of product involvement.

Pinterest turned out to be more persuasive when it was used to endorse products with a low level of involvement than when it was used to endorse products with a high level of involvement. This reinforces the media richness theory in which it is stated that a lean media richness medium is better to communicate a simple message or, in the case of this study, to endorse a low involvement product.

On the contrary, YouTube turned out to be persuasive when it was used to endorse both levels of product involvement. This fact, contradicts the media richness theory in which the high involvement product should have obtained a much better overcome compared to the low involvement product. This could have been due to the fact that media richness cannot be applied in the online world.

A few studies have examined the effects of media channels and informational content on decision-making and other organizational outcomes. In a study by Otondo et al. (2008) about investigating factor structures and relationships involving media and information richness and communication outcomes using an experimental design. They found out that the notions of media and information richness oversimplify the complex relationships between media, message, and receiver-based communication outcomes and that media richness theory is a poor

predictor of the effects of media type on communication outcomes. Perhaps, in the main study carried out in this paper, the products used were oversimplified divided them only according to involvement levels and no other characteristics.

Moreover, the communication through online social media platforms is more complex than the traditional communication model designed by Shannon and Weaver (1948). Online social media platforms communication is closer to a mass communication than to an interpersonal communication, which means that the aim of the sender is to send a message to a group of individuals and not only to one. As a result, parts of the communication process such as feedback or noise can be affected as a consequence of not knowing who the receiver of the message will be. Therefore, this could be the reason why the media richness theory does not apply that well in the online world.

6.3 Practical implications

Brands use influencers through online social media platform all the time to promote their products, what they do not take into account is what kind of influencer and channel they need to use in order to show that particular product and persuade a specific target group.

This study focuses the attention in the richness characteristics of online social media platform based on the media richness theory. Companies could use the information provided in this research because it proofs that under the condition of Pinterest (lean online social media platform), the endorsement of a product with a low level of involvement will be more persuasive. In addition, under the condition of YouTube (rich online social media platform) the endorsement of any level of product involvement will be highly persuasive.

Moreover, Companies should take into consideration that all online social media platforms are powerful in persuasion capabilities but not all of them should be used the same way. In other words, a brand should not use the same commercial techniques in every online social media platform. Because online social media platforms have different characteristics and each of them needs a different approach when trying to endorse a product.

Another concept, brands should take into account, is the social influence model developed by Kelman (1958). The social influence model is defined as a change in an individual's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviours that results from interaction with another individual or a group. Most importantly, individuals are also influenced by the majority: when a large portion of an individual's referent social group holds a particular attitude, it is likely that the individual will adopt it as well (Rashotte, 2007). Translating this theory into the online world, it means that

companies should not focus on promote their products in the richest online social media platforms because that does not mean that it is the most used medium.

In order to carry out a commercial campaign using online social media platforms. A company first, should recognise which medium does their main target group use and then, adapt their commercial messages to that specific online media platform.

6.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Even though the experiments were carefully designed and executed, there are a few limitations, which might have influenced the results and generalisation of this study.

First, in the pre-test, the platform “Blogs” was not as specific as the rest of the platforms, it could have been substituted for wordpress or blogspot. Then, there are some differences between the pre-study and the study itself. For example, the age range in the pre-study were between 18 and 45 years old and in the main study were between 10 and 70 years old. It is a big difference that may explain some differences between the two tests, in particular that the platform Pinterest obtained a much higher result in richness in the main study compared with the pre-study. Besides that, Pinterest was the platform that less people were able to identify during the pre-test, which could be another reason why this online social media platform was identified as a lean rich media.

In addition, in the main study the product “clothes” was identified as a higher level of involvement than “Plane Ticket” when in the pre-test was the other way around, this could have altered the result of the study. For a future research, it is recommended to choose products with a more clear differentiation of involvement. Moreover, three different influencers with different characteristics like charisma, tone of voice or even speed of talking were used when a more correct study should use the same person to promote the three products. Furthermore, respondents could have had previous opinions about the products due to the use of existing brands. Additionally, it could be discussed that the product “plane ticket” does not have the same characteristics as chocolate and clothes because it not a tangible object.

Another thing to take into account in a future research is that the nationality of the respondents in this study was too wide. In a future study, it would be preferably to choose a specific country or nationality to be able to generalize the results.

6.5 Conclusion

The current era is a digital one in which people communicating and searching for information and products online. It is becoming clear that it is important for a brand to be active online in order to persuade consumers' needs and attitudes. Because of this, it is important for a company to know where to promote their products in such a wide world, as it is the Internet.

To conclude, both survey research parts of this study were successful in answering their research questions and they even provided with some additional information that could be relevant for the online marketing world and its multiple possibilities.

This study explained that applying the traditional Media Richness into the online world to promote products does not work as it is expected according to this theory. It can only be applied partially when it is applied into lean online social media platforms.

The media richness theory has become outdated and it should be revitalized taking into account not only its traditional categorization to consider a medium as rich (multiple cues, immediacy of feedback, language variety and personal focus). But also characteristics from the online environment like options such as likes, comments, sharing etc. The mediums to communicate in the Internet, in particular social media are much more complex than the ones from the offline world (i.e. telephone, letter, face to face) and therefore there should be an adapted theory for them.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Pre-test

Introduction

Welcome to the research study!

This survey is aiming to explore the perception in different online media platforms. The questionnaire will take you around 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Please be assured that this survey is completely anonymous. Your participation will help in my research and I will sincerely appreciate it. Thank you for your time filling this survey.

Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(If pressing “Yes” you go to the next question, if pressing “No” go to the end of the questionnaire)

Demographics

Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What is your age?

(Open question)

Media Richness measurement.

Three out of five stimulus will appear randomly to the respondents. The possible images that they see are the following:

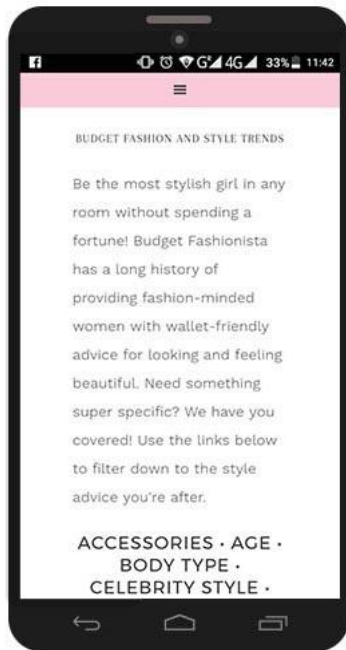


Figure 2 Blog Stimulus

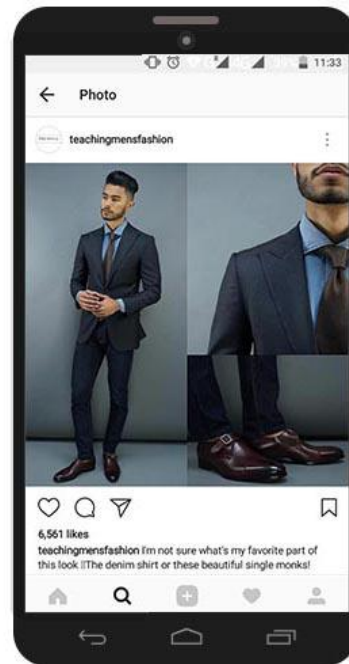


Figure 3 Instagram Stimulus



Figure 4 Pinterest Stimulus



Figure 5 Twitter Stimulus

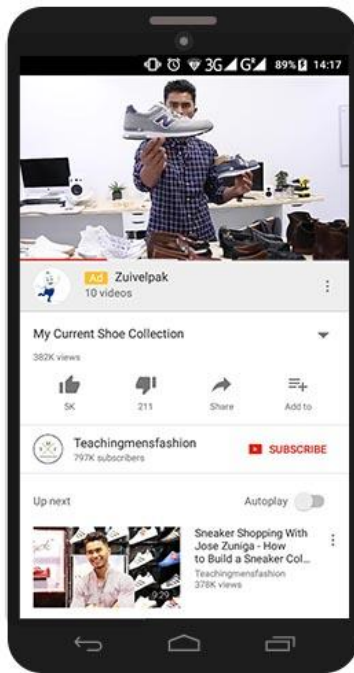


Figure 6 YouTube Stimulus

Then the respondent has to identify the online media platform that it was shown answering the following question:

Which online media platform message did you see?

- ☐ A tweet message on Twitter
- ☐ A clothing post on Instagram
- ☐ A clothing collection on Pinterest
- ☐ A text entry on a Blog
- ☐ A YouTube Video
- ☐ I don't know

If the platform is not identified another platform is shown or if three platforms were already shown the questionnaire will be skipped until the involvement questions. If identifying correctly the online media platform, the question: Do you have an account? will appear with two options (yes or no) in the case of Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter. In the case of Blogs the question is: Do you you read or consult posts on Blogs? With two possible options (Yes or no) and in the case of YouTube the question is: Do you watch videos on YouTube? And as answers yes or no.

After this yes or no question, if answered yes then a question about activity will appear:

How active are you in this online media platform? (Instagram/Twitter/Pinterest)

How often do you watch videos on YouTube? (YouTube)

How often do you read or consult posts on Blogs? (Blogs)

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly

- Monthly
- I barely use it (I barely do it for blog and YouTube)

Then a *Likert Scale of 7 points from strongly agree to strongly disagree* appears.

The statements for the Likert scale is the following:

- With this online media platform I am able to share content with other people.
- This online media platform enables to express feelings and emotions.
- This platform enables the sender to speak out freely and avoids misunderstandings.
- This platform has multiple (video, text, audio) possibilities of communicating content.

Involvement measurement.

Three random product Images out of six appears randomly to every respondent. The possible products that they see are the following:



After every image a *Likert Scale of 7 points and five items* appears. The statements are the following:

- The decisions when buying this product are serious and important.
- It is really annoying to make the wrong choice when buying this type of product.
- Buying this product says something about me and my personality.

- When I buy a product like this I need to be totally sure about my choice.
- Choosing this product means a relevant decision for me.

End of the Survey

Appendix B. Survey Main Study

Introduction

Welcome to the research study.

This survey is aiming to explore online marketing and its possibilities using different platforms. The questionnaire will take you around 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Please be assured that this survey is completely anonymous. Your participation will help in my research and I will sincerely appreciate it. Thank you for your time filling this survey.

By clicking yes, you agree to answer the questions in this survey.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If “No” is selected to the end of the survey

-Page break-

Demographics

1.What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ I prefer not to say

-Page break-

2.What is your age?

Open question

-Page break-

3. What is your highest level of education completed?

- ☐ High School or lower
- ☐ Middle level school
- ☐ Bachelor's
- ☐ Master's
- ☐ Phd or higher
- ☐ I prefer not to say

-Page break-

4. Media Richness and user experience questions:

Then the respondent has to identify the online media platform that it was shown answering the following question:

Which online media platform message did you see?

- ☐ A tweet message on Twitter
- ☐ A clothing post on Instagram
- ☐ A clothing collection on Pinterest
- ☐ A text entry on a Blog
- ☐ A YouTube Video
- ☐ I don't know

If identifying correctly the online media platform, the question: Do you have an account? will appear with two options (yes or no) in the case of Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter. In the case of YouTube the question is: Do you watch videos on YouTube? And as answers yes or no.

After this yes or no question, if answered yes then a question about activity will appear:

How active are you in this online media platform? (Pinterest)

How often do you watch videos on YouTube? (YouTube)

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ I barely use it (I barely do it for YouTube)

Then a Likert Scale of 7 points from strongly agree to strongly disagree appears.

The statements for the Likert scale is the following:

- With this online media platform I am able to share content with other people.
- This online media platform enables to express feelings and emotions.
- This platform enables the sender to speak out freely and avoids misunderstandings.
- This platform has multiple (video, text, audio) possibilities of communicating content.

-Page break-

Product 1, 2, 3 (chocolate, clothes, plane ticket)

One random platform: Youtube or Pinterest and one random product for each respondent.

YouTube:

5A: Instructions: Please make sure that the sound in your dispositive is on. After pressing the next button you will watch a video about a product, please pay attention to it, it will last around 1 minute. Afterwards it is not necessary to watch other films - please proceed with the study after the video has stopped.

-Page break-

Video YouTube chocolate: youtu.be/BDZ-a-O1Upo

or

Video YouTube clothes: youtu.be/XmOPS_n_NQc

or

Video YouTube Plane ticket: youtu.be/EejcVxOKciM

Pinterest:

5B: Instructions: Please make sure that the sound in your dispositive is on. After pressing the next button you will watch a video about a product, please pay attention to it, it will last around 1 minute. Afterwards it is not necessary to watch other films - please proceed with the study after the video has stopped..

Video Pinterest chocolate: youtu.be/HT0shEr---o

or

Video Pinterest clothes: youtu.be/2gRUm_ykHZE

or

Video Pinterest Plane Ticket: youtu.be/evzE5RPCluw

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6. Involvement questions:

Answer the following questions according to the product that you saw
(chocolate/clothes/plane ticket)

7 points Likert scale. Statements (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree):

- The decisions when buying this product are serious and important.
- It is really annoying to make the wrong choice when buying this type of product.
- Buying this product says something about me and my personality.
- When I buy a product like this I need to be totally sure about my choice.
- Choosing this product means a relevant decision for me.

The answers closer to the option “Strongly agree” will be considered as a recognition of high involvement product, on the contrary the answers closer to the “Strongly disagree” option will be considered as a recognition of low involvement product.

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7. Persuasion/Peripheral route of persuasion measurement

Please answer the following statements according to the video that you watched:

(7 points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)

Statements:

- I found this content entertained
- I found this content inspirational
- I enjoyed watching this content
- This video makes me feel good
- The video was lots of fun to watch and listen to

The answers closest to the “strongly agree” will be considered as a more persuasive message

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8. Conviction/Central route of persuasion measurement

Please answer the following statements according to the video that you watched:

(7 points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)

Statements:

- I could understand every provided information about this product
- The concepts were clear enough for me
- I learned something from this video that I didn't know before about (the brand)
- While I watched this video, I thought how this brand/app might be useful to me
- I could explain easily the information given to me in this video to somebody else

The answers closest to the “strongly agree” will be considered as a more convictive message

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9. Change of attitude measurement:

- This content has changed my previous thoughts about this type of products

The answers closest to the “strongly agree” will be considered as a change of attitude

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10.Brand attitude

- This is a good product
- I like the product
- The product is attractive
- The product is nice

The answers closest to the “strongly agree” will be considered as a positive brand awareness

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11.Purchase intention

Please answer the following statements according to the video that you watched:

(7 points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)

Statements:

- After watching this content I would think about this brand/app if I have to buy a product like this
- I am willing to purchase this brand/use this app in the future
- I would recommend this brand/app to my family/friends
- This video makes me want to buy/use the brand/app it features
- With this type of promotion, I feel like buying the product

The answers closest to the “strongly agree” will be considered as a closer intention of purchasing the product.

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Thank you for participating in my study.

If you are interested in the results of the study, please contact me by mail:
r.a.herreramartinez@student.utwente.com

Kind regards,
Rosana Herrera Martínez
Student Master Communication Sciences - University of Twente

-End of the survey-

