

## **As Luxury Fashion Brands Communicate Through Social Networks - A Contribution of Social Networks Online B2C Relationships**

### **Como as Marcas de Moda de Luxo se Comunicam pelas Redes Sociais - Um Contributo das Redes Sociais On-Line nas Relações B2C**

**Maria Nascimento Cunha<sup>1</sup>, Fernando António de Oliveira Tavares<sup>2</sup>, Martim Roquette Durão<sup>3</sup>**

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#### **Abstract**

The brands of the luxury segment have been studied for different areas. There are studies on luxury fashion brands in the area of Marketing, communication, and even history of sociology. The reality is that there is a growing representation of luxury fashion brands in the economic sector, but also an intrinsic relationship between the concept of luxury and your support for the success of the brands. Follow the trends of the luxury fashion industry is part of everyday life of many onlookers. The world came to have access to information in a more simple and practical. And this fact did not happen only at the level of the computers, but also mobile. Attentive to new dynamics of interaction, the brands have asked the communication paradigms. The growth of social media has impacted the communication processes, introducing new possibilities (Cunha & Valente, 2019; Pereira & Schneider, 2017). It is in this context that social networks gain expressiveness, allowing the consumer to interact, by way of response to the brand, advertiser or sharing messages. The general objective of this research is to develop an analysis of the profiles of users of social networks of luxury fashion brands. From the use of the quantitative method, are presented the results of a data collection accomplished through survey, applied in order to confront the opinions of consumers with the content searched.

**Keywords:** Social Networks. Luxury Fashion Brands. Attitudes. Consumers.

#### **Resumo**

As marcas de moda do segmento de luxo têm sido estudadas por diversas áreas. Existem estudos sobre marcas de moda de luxo na área de Marketing, da Comunicação, da História e até mesmo da Sociologia. A realidade é que existe uma crescente representação das marcas de moda de luxo no setor econômico, mas também, uma intrínseca relação entre o conceito de luxo e a sua sustentação pelo sucesso das marcas. Acompanhar as tendências da indústria da moda de luxo faz parte do cotidiano de muitos curiosos. O mundo passou a ter acesso à informação de uma forma mais simples e prática. E este fato não aconteceu apenas ao nível dos computadores, mas também ao nível *mobile*. Atentas às novas dinâmicas de interação, as marcas têm pesquisado os paradigmas comunicacionais. O crescimento dos *social media* impactou os processos de comunicação, apresentando novas possibilidades (Cunha & Valente, 2019; Pereira & Schneider, 2017). É neste contexto que as redes sociais ganham expressividade, permitindo ao consumidor interagir, por meio de resposta para a marca, anunciante ou do compartilhamento de mensagens. O objetivo geral deste estudo é elaborar uma análise dos perfis dos utilizadores de redes sociais de marcas de moda de luxo. Partindo da utilização do método quantitativo, são apresentados os resultados de uma coleta de dados realizada por meio de um questionário, aplicado a fim de confrontar as opiniões do consumidor com o conteúdo pesquisado.

**Palavras-chave:** Redes sociais. Marcas de moda de luxo. Atitudes. Consumidores.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD in Business Sciences from Universidade Fernando Pessoa. Assistant Professor in ISCET-Instituto Superior de Ciências Empresariais and Tourism-Portugal. Rua de Cedofeita, 285, 4050-180, Porto, Portugal. Email: mnascimento@iscet.pt

<sup>2</sup> PhD in Industrial Management from the University of Aveiro, Doctor of Economic Analysis and Business Strategy from University of Vigo. Assistant Professor at ISCET- Instituto Superior de Ciências Empresariais e do Turismo – Portugal. Email: mnascimento@iscet.pt

## 1 Introduction

Luxury fashion brands has always been expressed by codes and languages, which were implicit social ideals of attitude and conduct. Luxury is a type of fashion that characterizes the segmentation of a society in which the distinction between classes is characterized by opulence luxury objects (Reinach, 2005).

There is a growing representation of luxury fashion brands in the economic sector, but also an intrinsic relationship between the concept of luxury and your support for the success of the brands (Bairrada & Pereira, 2015).

Attentive to new dynamics of interaction, the brands have asked the communication paradigms. The growth of social media has impacted the communication processes, introducing new possibilities. Thus, the luxury fashion brands have sought to adapt both to ensure visibility as reinforcing your identity (Pereira & Schneider, 2017). It is in this context that the social networks, earn expressiveness, allowing the consumer to interact by way of response to the brand, advertiser or sharing messages.

Accordingly, this study looked at how the luxury fashion brands communicate through social networks by the perspective of consumers. The objective of the research was to understand the attitude of the consumer vis-à-vis communication of luxury fashion brands through social networks. For this purpose we used an adaptation of the model of Yadav and Rahman (2017). From the use of the quantitative method, are presented the results of a data collection performed by means of a questionnaire applied in order to confront the opinions of consumers with the content searched. In terms of relevance and contribution of research, believes that the results obtained can assist in planning the communication actions of luxury brands as well as bring new information about the attitude of the consumer vis-à-vis social networks.

Luxury fashion has always been expressed by rigid rules, in which were implicit social ideals of attitude and conduct. The sets, by your side, is quite inconsistent, supersedes the luxury fashion. It identifies consumption by the stylistic diversity and the lack of consensus about what is "fashionable" at one time (Cunha, 2014).

## 2 Luxury Fashion Brands

The brands of the luxury segment have been studied for different areas. There are studies on luxury fashion brands in the area of Marketing, communication, and even history of sociology. There is a growing representation of luxury fashion brands in the economic sector, but also an intrinsic relationship between the concept of luxury and your support for the success of the brands.

Since the year 2000, the luxury market has grown exponentially, and your expansion has been very noticeable due to the notoriety that these brands have won (Bairrada & Pereira, 2015).

Luxury fashion is the segmentation feature of a society in which the distinction between classes if checks by the opulence of luxury objects (Reinach, 2005) and the talent of the creator is valued, as if this was an artist (Cunha, 2014). Luxury fashion features, therefore, clothing and fashion products of the highest quality, suitable for a niche market with ability to support their high-priced, boasting a capacity of innovation and design at the highest level.

### 2.1 Marketing and communication of the luxury fashion brands

In terms of marketing and communication, due to the current society and the evolution of social media, most of the communication strategies are directed to social networks (Raposo,

2016). However, it is important to verify that the massification and global reach are directed in the opposite direction to the exclusivity, characteristic of the luxury fashion products. By allowing luxury fashion offerings to emerge easily, beyond the boundaries of exclusive and selected stores, abdicating the ritual of face-to-hand shopping, luxury fashion brands are subject to the consumer seeing them more banal.

As high specialty goods, luxury fashion requires, in operational terms, a large capacity to support its positioning. For this it is necessary, not only combine emotional appeal to product excellence, but also work with limited distribution, premium prices and a high prestige atmosphere (Martins, Ikeda, & Crescitelli, 2016).

According to Martins, Ikeda and Crescitelli (2016) The Internet presents contradictions to the basic principles of luxury: the lack of human and personal relationship, which is an important tool of sales, the exclusion of aroma, taste and touch, which makes much of the Purchase experience is lost, among others.

However, what is perceived is a growth in use and Internet access as well as the increase in virtual purchases in the luxury market. In this sense, Kim and Ko (2012) affirm that the communication of luxury fashion brands in social networks, increases the brand's exposure by promoting a closer relationship with consumers and creating empathy with young users. They also affirm that it is an opportunity to reduce prejudices and create platforms for sharing ideas and information. For his part, Gabriel (2010) states that there is no way to avoid the presence on social networks, since consumers of luxury fashion brands would talk about it in any way. Thus, the best way to protect the brand, is to be present in social networks and the like and have the ability to measure what happens, so as to decide how and when to act. Thus, the Enigma emerges from maintaining the personalized experiences demanded by the concept of luxury with the democratic environment provided by social networks.

## **2.2 Social networks and luxury fashion brands**

Monitoring the trends of the luxury fashion industry is part of the everyday life of many curious. However, in the years 2000, the Internet took a different turn and opened the doors to the luxury fashion. The products began to be marketed in a more accessible way (Raposo, 2016; Ferrari, 2017). The world has access to information in a simpler and more practical way. And this fact happened not only with computers, but also with mobiles.

The digital reaches a huge number of possible consumers, is cheaper in terms of investment, is moldable, is an excellent form of dissemination of luxury fashion products and are various means and platforms to work (Raposo, 2016; Ferrari, 2017).

Social networks are platforms formed by individuals or companies connected by some specific type of interdependence (friendship, kinship, affinity, beliefs). There are thousands of social networking sites connecting people and interests. The connectivity offered has changed the behavior of users by creating new Concepts (Gabriel, 2010).

The growth of social media at the beginning of the 21ST century impacted the communication processes, presenting new technical possibilities. Thus, the brands have sought to adapt both to ensure their visibility and in order to reinforce their identity in a clear and efficient way (Pereira & Schneider, 2017).

By incorporating these new innovative and disruptive tools, consumers have the possibility to create and share photographic, audio and video content. And it is in this sense that the brands opted for, also, disseminate campaigns, messages, products, services and promotions, through social networks. In this way they can, more than disclose their product and philosophy, interact with consumers, answer doubts, receive complaints and make presence. The brands, they begin to make, of the social networks, activating agents for propagation of content (Cunha, 2016).

According to Gabriel (2010) This process of active presence of the consumer, works as a reversal of the marketing vector, because, thanks to the digitization and the advent of social networks, the user seeks the brand where, when and how desired. Torres (2009) states that the strategy must be part of the brand's communication planning, creating integrated actions that allow better use of available resources. Weinberg, Ladwig and Pahrman (2010) and Terra (2012) mention some advantages of corporate communication on social networks (the possibility of exploiting a community, which may not be available in traditional advertising means, visibility and Credibility acquired by the company).

Lapoli, Silva and Santo (2009) also explain that social networks gain expressiveness in the advertising sector, allowing consumers to interact, through response to the brand, advertiser or the sharing of messages. They also have the advantage, the fact that people are in social networks in moments of relaxation (as a form of entertainment), being the ideal situation for companies to offer their services and/or pleasant experiences to the public.

In social networks, the strategy of creating good experiences, as a way to strengthen relationships, has been increasingly assertive and, in a democratic way, allows and enhances the construction and growth of Brand Awareness. The brands invest in relevant and updated content, which will meet their positioning, but also in the interest of the public. It is important to realize that this information is consumed very quickly. Therefore, the brand must transmit focused, accurate and brief messages.

Advertising is already placed directly on social networks, making it necessary to understand the consumer, speak directly to him and take into account their subtleties and criticisms. Recognizing that the communication model has been substantially altered, making the consumer no longer in a passive reception position, on the contrary, actively collaborates by becoming the protagonist of corporate communication.

The possibility of widespread dissemination (large number of people, geographically dispersed) allows to consider that the social networks enable the pluralization of the launches. What can be set a risk for luxury fashion brands (Martins et al., 2016).

The main fear is the banalization of both the buying experience and the brand, which would be caused mainly by two processes: the first related to the fact that the Internet is constantly associated by consumers to discounts; And the second, a little more complex, related to the loss of the "atmosphere" of the physical store in the online environment (Martins et al., 2016).

### **2.3 Consumer attitudes towards social networks**

The best way to understand consumers and their perceptions regarding content on social networks is the study of attitudes. According to Zhang and Duan (2008) and Zhang and Sun (2009) Attitudes are mostly consistent and stable and are integrated by the affectation of positive or negative feelings, cognitions or knowledge, and behavioral intentions.

Due to its cognitive and affective nature, attitudes depend mainly on the perceived value, that is, of the cognitive part and of affective factors that are often utilized as a strong predictor of the behavioral intent of consumers.

The purpose of the study of attitudes towards advertising is to measure the reaction of consumers to stimuli through negative or positive feelings generated in the face of advertising, products or services.

According to the study by Kelly, Kerr and Drennan (2010), in advertising on social networks, the degree of probability of being avoided becomes greater when the consumer has a negative experience, when the advertisements are not relevant or when the consumer is skeptical in Advertising messages or in the middle. Okakazi, Taylor and Doh (2007) claim that a positive attitudes help consumers to effect the purchase. This positive relationship between attitudes and behaviours becomes stronger when consumers deal with a product with which are

highly involved (Tenbult et al., 2008; Chu, 2011).

## 2.4 Elements influencing the consumer sets

In the sector of luxury fashion brands, in the context of social networks, information plays a fundamental role. The essence of luxury fashion product in online context is focused on information, which makes a search product, whose assessment goes through consultation of information related to the same. Similarly, the fact that the product cannot be tested in advance, should be evaluated by the consumer as a reliable product (Bhat & Shah, 2014). In the online context is impossible to perform a pre-assessment of your quality, because time and space between the decision-making of buys and consumption are usually separated. The temporal distance can be reduced by information that is acquired in advance by consumers in the various available platforms.

The high number of knowledge required by consumers when seeking information, refers to the need to develop strategies in order to select the best sources. Depending on the type of products of luxury fashion brands, consumers look for different kinds of information, using different sources of information and assign greater or lesser importance to information found (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007).

## 3 Methodology

From the use of quantitative research with data collection through questionnaire and given the fact that if you want to analyze attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, but also aims to delimit quantitative results, this study is descriptive research (Burns & Bush, 2006).

With the ultimate goal to meet their different characteristics, it was considered that the most appropriate methodological approach to start this research were quantitatively (Günther, 2006).

This study was based on the application of a questionnaire autoadministrado. This questionnaire was composed in two parts. First put a series of questions about the demographic profile of the respondents and their consumption habits of social networks. The second part comprised an adaptation of the scale of Yadav and Rahman (2017) which seeks to measure consumer attitudes perceptions of luxury fashion brands. To assess the scale of consumer attitudes perceptions of luxury fashion brands using a Likert type scale of 5 points (1-strongly Disagree 5-strongly agree). This scale is made up of 11 items and evaluates 5 dimensions, each with 3 items: Interactivity; Informational and capacity, trends and Word of mouth.

The scale of Yadav and Rahman (2017) was adapted and translated to the Portuguese language in order to measure consumer attitudes perceptions of luxury fashion brands. The final version of the questionnaire was pretested with 50 consumers of luxury fashion brands on social networks. After making minor adjustments, the questionnaires were distributed to AutoFill, thus obtaining a non-probability sample, for convenience composed of 607 individuals.

The treatment of data yielded by application of the questionnaire was carried out using the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics. To your use is recognized and applied in various fields such as analysis, consumer behavior (Wimmer & Dominick, 1996) and, for your use, the data obtained should be based on clear, concise questions, according to the objectives of the research. That is, the structure of the questionnaire should, on the one hand, integrate questions clear and unambiguous and

On the other hand, to allow researchers to obtain accurate information. Regarding this last point, Quivy and Campenhoudt, (2008) affirm that the quantitative treatment of data resulting from the application of a survey using a questionnaire implies the pre-coding of the questions, aiming to establish limits Responses from respondents.



The questionnaire is suggested by Quivy and Campenhout (2008), as a method of gathering information, as a way to ascertain ways of life, behaviors, values, knowledge, expectations, opinions and attitudes regarding options.

In the data collection for the empirical work, a self-administered questionnaire involving 607 individuals was applied. This questionnaire included only 8 scales, although they were approached more in the state of art. Obviously, this strategic reduction was basically due to the size of the work and the timings foreseen in the research.

Regarding the scales of Yadav and Rahman (2017), were adapted and translated into the Portuguese language with the aim of measuring the perceptions of consumer attitudes of luxury fashion brands. In the process of formulating the various items were taken into account the observations of Almeida and Freire (2008), mainly due to the respect for objectivity, simplicity, relevance to the objective of evaluation and clarity.

The non-probabilistic sample for convenience obtained was 607 respondents who were aged between 18 and 79 years and residing in mainland Portugal.

The research in communication frequently uses non-probabilistic samples, in which the samples are framed for convenience, as a set of individuals with easy identification and access, by the researcher (Wimmer & Dominick, 1996). According to the authors, notwithstanding the limitations of a sample of this nature, it is often valid and expressive in terms of demonstration of a given reality.

The questionnaires were distributed for self-fulfillment in person. The non-probabilistic convenience sample was initially composed of 632 individuals. It was validated 607, since 25 presented irregularities in its filling. The fieldwork was carried out between June 01, 2018 and January 30, 2019. The completion of the questionnaire took between 20 and 30 minutes.

## 4 Results Analysis

At this point we present an analysis and discussion of the results of the study in question.

### 4.1 Characterization of the sample

#### 4.1.1 Age

In terms of the General profile of the sample, in particular as regards age, the subjects were grouped into five age groups, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Age groups

Age groups	Frequency	Percentages
18-25	105	17,3
26-35	123	20,3
36-45	197	32,5
46-55	111	18,3
56-65	58	9,6
66-79	13	2,1
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>100,0</b>

#### 4.1.2 Gender

Regarding gender (Table 2) of the 607 healthy individuals present in the sample, the existence of a balance relationship between the two sexes was verified. However, the existence of a number of women above the number of men did not have the pretension of a proportional statistical rigor, respecting, in the embargo, the tendency marked by the National Institute of Statistics.

**Table 2**  
Gender

	Frequency	Percentages
Male	235	38,7
Female	372	61,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>100,0</b>

#### 4.1.3 Professional status

Also regarding the sociodemographic characterization of the sample, it is important to understand their professional situation. Thus, Table 3 clarifies this dimension.

**Table 3**  
Professional status

	Frequency	Percentages
Student	38	6,3
Unemployed	82	13,5
Self-employed	73	12,0
Employee on behalf of another person	409	67,4
Retired	5	,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>100,0</b>

#### 4.1.4 Schooling

Regarding schooling (Table 4), the sample indicated that, 240 elements, (39.5% of the sample) have the second degree, 291 (47.9% of the sample) are graduates and only 76 individuals (12.5% of the sample) have specializations such as: Postgraduate, Master's degrees or doctorates.

**Table 4**  
Schooling Level

	Frequency	Percentages
Second grade	240	39,5
Graduation	291	47,9
Pós-Graduation/Master/PhD	76	12,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>100,0</b>

#### 4.1.5 Residence Area

It was verified that the sample consisted of 38% individuals from the North Zone of Portugal, 41% from the center, 17% from the south and 5% from the Islands (Table 5).



**Table 5**

Residence Area

	Frequency	Percentages
North	228	37,6
Center	246	40,5
South	101	16,6
Islands	32	5,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>100,0</b>

## 4.2 Analysis of the internal consistency of the dimensions

When the correlation between the variables is informed, the factorial analysis is analyzed in which the Cronbach's alpha is analysed. The purpose of this analysis was to verify the internal consistency of the dimensions under study. Cronbach's alpha values present the following possible interpretations (George and Mallery, 2003): ] 0.9 – 1.0] = excellent; ] 0.8 – 0.9] = good; ] 0.7 – 0.8] = acceptable; ] 0.6 – 0.7] = doubtful; ] 0.5 – 0.6] = poor; < = 0.5 = unacceptable (Table 6).

**Table 6**

Cronbach Alpha

Dimensions	Itens	Cronbach Alpha
Information	These pages provide useful information about your products. The information these pages offer is easy to understand. The information these pages offer allows your fans and followers to stay informed.	0,741
Trends	The contents published in the social networks of luxury fashion brands show the latest trends. Tracking these pages means being really trendy. Everything that is fashion trend is published on these pages.	0,883
Customization	The social networking pages of luxury fashion brands give recommendations for purchases that meet the consumer. These pages satisfy the needs of consumers. These pages make it easy to search for personalized information.	0,866
Interactivity	The social networking pages of luxury fashion brands allow consumers to share content. These pages make it easy to interact with colleagues and friends. These pages interact regularly with your fans and followers.	0,734
Word of mouth	Share the social networking pages of luxury fashion brands with their colleagues and friends. I would recommend these pages to your colleagues and friends. I would advise my friends and colleagues to visit those pages.	0,788
Brand Value	I consider these marks to be strong. These brands have quality products. These markings are very well known.	0,884
Purchase Intent	I'm willing to buy those marks in the future. I intend to buy those marks. The products of these brands are on my list of future purchases.	0,741

According to Table 6, concerning Cronbach's Alpha, all dimensions are above 0.7, considered as limit or reasonable.

## 4.3 Descriptive analysis of the dimensions

Data analysis was initiated with an observation of the mean levels of each of the

variables under study. Variance and standard deviation are measures that give an idea of the dispersion of a given data distribution (Table 7).

A high value for variance (or standard deviation) indicates that the observed values tend to be distant from the mean, that is, the distribution is more "spread". If the variance is relatively small, then the data tends to be more concentrated around the average. In the variable "information" one can see an average value of  $M = 3.99$   $SD = 0.77$ . This value shows that the consumer gives a positive value to the information on social networks, looking for it when necessary. Regarding the "Trends" the value presented is  $M = 3,91$  and  $SD = 1.17$ .

Similarly, in the case of trends, consumers are sensitive to them when viewed in the context of social networks. In the variable "interactivity" the values presented were  $M = 3.99$  and  $SD = 0.76$ , while for the variable "pass word"  $M = 3,88$  and  $SD = 0.90$ .

**Table 7**  
Descriptive analysis of the dimensions

Dimension	M3dia	Desvio-padr3o
Information	3,99	0,77
Trends	3,91	1,17
Customization	3,91	1,01
Interactivity	3,99	0,76
Word of mouth	3,88	0,90
Purchase Intent	3,99	0,77

#### 4.4 Analysis of the Times spent on social networks

That cell phones and social networks are part of our everyday life to the point where we can no longer live without them is notorious. Trevor Haynes, Research technician at the Department of Neurobiology at Harvard Medical School, presented a study that shows that social networks and mobile are potentiators in the production of dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical produced by our brains that plays a leading role in motivator behavior. He is freed when we eat delicious food when we have sex, after physical exercise and, more importantly, when we have successful social interactions. In an evolutionary context, dopamine rewards in beneficial behaviors and motivates us to repeat them. It is this production of dopamine that causes, the longer an individual is in social networks, the greater its dependence on dopamine, the lower will be its capacity in discernment between Utopia and reality, that is, less will be your mental health.

However, the doubt created is: how long should we stay on social networks each day, so as to ensure that our mental health remains intact? A study has come to say that it is perhaps not a bad idea to start timing the time that is attached to your mobile device and its social applications (Cabrita, 2018). It is known that when opening the Instagram account, for example, there is a no number of stimuli that 'obligate' the individual to stay glued to the screen as if there was nothing else around him.

According to a study developed by several researchers, we can reduce this danger and increase their mental capacities if they spend less than 30 minutes a day on social networks (Cabrita, 2018). Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania analyzed the use of social networks in students aged between 18 and 22 years and divided them into two distinct tests. The first test took place during the spring and, the second, a few months later, already in the autumn.

According to Cabrita (2018), the authors monitored the use of three social networks in these youngsters: Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Then, they evaluated their mental health according to seven different factors: social support, fear of losing life, feeling of loneliness,

self-esteem, anxiety, self-acceptance and, finally, depression.

The next step was to separate the youngsters into groups and analyze their use for three weeks. One group was asked to use the social networks in a normal way, the other was limited to 10 minutes per day on each platform (totaling 30 minutes). The results were enlightening as to the dangers of excessive use of social networks.

After analyzing each young person according to the proposed factors, the group that only used social networks for 30 minutes presented a much higher level of welfare compared to the other young people, not feeling so much feeling of loneliness or even depression .

With the study in question it is "ironic" the feeling of loneliness that the human being feels when using social networks for longer, even because one of the great assumptions of the Internet and the networks is that all are "connected". Still, according to Melissa Hunt (2018), one of the major problems of social networks is precisely the comparison and the utopia that what is in the networks is reality.

There are some safeguards that the authors of the study reveal about their results (Cabrita, 2018). First, only iPhone devices were used in their experiments. Second, only three social networks were analyzed and, finally, there is no certainty that the same scenarios can be replicated in other age groups. Still, the warning is: it is better to reduce your consumption of social networks to 30 minutes daily if you want to avoid feelings such as loneliness and depression.

With regard to the research and, according to Tables 8 and 9, it can be verified that, in Portugal, there is much more than just 30 minutes on social networks. In fact, the largest number of individuals spends more than 2 hours per day in the use of these networks.

**Table 8**  
 Medium Time spent on social networks

	Less then 30'	Between 30' to 1 hour	Between 1 to 2 hours	Between 2 to 3 hours	More then 3 hours
How long, on average, per day, is dedicated to the use of social networks in general?	2,0	4,1	4,6	24,4	64,9
How long to use social networking pages of product brands or services?	1,3	4,4	6,4	27,2	60,6
How long to use social networking pages of luxury fashion brands?	1,3	5,3	4,8	22,6	66,1
How long, on average, per day, is dedicated to the use of social networks in general?	2,0	4,1	4,6	24,4	64,9

**Table 9**  
 Medium Time per social networks

	Less then 30'	Between 30' to 1 hour	Between 1 to 2 hours		More then 3 hours
Facebook	2,3	11,0	4,3	29,5	51,6
Instagram	2,1	6,1	7,9	21,3	60,5
Youtube	3,3	9,7	4,6	37,6	42,3
Pinterest	10,0	5,9	6,1	54,4	22,2

Regarding the social networks under study, it can be verified that Instagram, followed by Facebook, are the ones that most time hold their supporters.

#### 4.5 Analysis of the main components of factor analysis

Currently, researchers face dozens or hundreds of different variables in their analyses. There is often redundancy between several dimensions, leading to multicollinearity problems. Principal component analysis is a method that explores interdependence in multivariate data. If there is substantial redundancy in the data set, it may be possible to explain most of the information in a smaller set of dimensions. For this study, the analysis of principal components of the factorial analysis (ACPAF) was used. For Hair et al. (2005), factorial analysis is a set of multivariate statistical techniques that analyzes the patterns of complex relationships, simultaneously, to define the underlying structure of a set of variables. For Malhotra (2001), ACPAF is an interdependence technique, as it simultaneously examines a set of interdependent relationships, so these variables should be specified based on previous researches or in the researcher's judgement.

It is taken into account that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) criterion or test identifies whether the factorial analysis model used is adequately adjusted to the data, testing the overall consistency of the data. This method verifies that the inverse correlation matrix is close to the diagonal matrix, consisting of comparing the values of the linear correlation coefficients observed with the values of the partial correlation coefficients (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014).

This criterion is based on the adequacy measure given by the following KMO equation:

$$KMO = \frac{\sum_{j \neq k} \sum r_{jk}^2}{\sum_{j \neq k} \sum r_{jk}^2 + \sum_{j \neq k} \sum p_{jk}^2}$$

Where:

RJK is the simple correlation coefficient between the variables Xj and Xk;

PJK is the partial correlation coefficient between Xj and Xk, given the other Xs.

Therefore, it results in an index, being a statistic that indicates the proportion of the variance of the data that can be considered common to all variables, that is, can be attributed to a common factor. High values (between 0.5 and 1.0) indicate that the factorial analysis is appropriate, while below 0.5 indicate that the analysis may be inadequate. Thus, it can be affirmed that: ] 0.9 – 1.0] = excellent; ] 0.8 – 0.9] = great; ] 0.7 – 0.8] = good; ] 0.6 – 0.7] = regular; ] 0.5 – 0.6] = mediocre; KMO <= 0.5 = inadequate.

The analysis of the main components of the factorial analysis was associated with the Bartlett test, in order to be able to perceive the level of significance (Table 10). If this is 0.000, the researcher is led to reject the hypothesis that the matrix of correlations in the population is the identity matrix.

**Table 10**  
 KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		,839
	Approx. Chi-Square	18264,021
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	105
	Sig.	,000

By analyzing Table 10, it can be verified that the value of KMO presented is 0.839, considered as an optimum value, since it is between 0.8 and 0.9 (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014; Marôco, 2014). The value in question allows a good factorial analysis and since the Bartlett test presents a level of significance associated with 0.000 leads to the rejection of the hypothesis of the matrix of correlations in the population as identity matrix. It can therefore be concluded by the suitability of the factorial analysis.

The correlation between the variables in both previous tests can be continued with the factorial analysis, which will analyze the Cronbach's Alpha to verify the internal consistency of the factors. It was also observed in Table 11 that the values of the seven factors are all higher than 1 (Kaiser's criterion). Several attempts were made to allow the loading of each variable to be greater than 0.5, that is, the variables with loading lower than 0.5 were withdrawn, successively (Table 12).

Factor analysis resulted in the extraction of seven factors responsible for 87.958% of the total variance (Table 12). The unexplained variance, of 12.042%, may be related to other less relevant factors, resulting from other combinations of variables. Table 12 shows the seven factors resulting from the exploratory factorial analysis.

**Table 11**  
 Total Variance Explained

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7,375	49,166	49,166	7,375	49,166	49,166	3,765	25,097	25,097
2	2,712	18,078	67,243	2,712	18,078	67,243	3,433	22,884	47,981
3	1,802	12,015	79,259	1,802	12,015	79,259	3,058	20,389	68,370
4	1,305	8,699	87,958	1,305	8,699	87,958	2,938	19,588	87,958

Source: Based on SPSS Output.

Regarding factor 1 (Table 12), the observation of the variables that contribute to explain this factor allows us to conclude that we are facing variables related to the expectations. Thus, this factor is explained by the expectations of people and with aspects related to their satisfaction. These are aspects related to the fact that the social networks of luxury brands offer rich information about products, the fact that they provide recommendations for purchases that meet the consumer and facilitate the search for personalized information. This factor presents excellent consistency.

In factor 2, the observation of the variables that contribute to explain this factor allows us to conclude that we are facing variables related to trends. This factor represents the presentation of the latest brand trends and the feedback given by the customers through the comments made. Thus, this factor is explained by people looking for safe locations, and they have excellent consistency.

In factor 3, the observation of the variables that contribute to explain this factor allows us to conclude that we are dealing with issues related to the word of mouth. Thus, this factor is explained by the stimulus given by people to friends to visit the pages and to share content. This factor presents excellent consistency.

Factor 4 is related to the information presented on the brand pages. Luxury brands are unique and need to interact regularly with their fans and followers, thus allowing them to stay informed. This factor also has excellent consistency.

**Table 12**  
 Factors resulting from exploratory Factorial analysis

Variable	Factor				Dimension	Alfa
	1	2	3	4		
Fans and followers feel that their individual expectations are fulfilled by these pages.	,870				Expectations	0,911
The social networking pages of luxury fashion brands offer rich information about products.	,865					
The social networking pages of luxury fashion brands give recommendations for purchases that meet the consumer.	,828					
These pages are a good place to be aware of fashion trends.	,758					
These pages make it easy to search for personalised information.	,756					
I would recommend these pages to your colleagues and friends.		,917			Trends	0,940
Everything that is fashion trend is published on these pages.		,916				
These pages respond to comments left by fans and followers.		,792				
The contents published in the social networks of luxury fashion brands show the latest trends.		,790				
It would stimulate your friends and colleagues to visit these pages.			,957		Word of mouth	0,989
These pages provide useful information about your products.			,957			
The social networking pages of luxury fashion brands allow consumers to be updated and share content.			,953			
These pages interact regularly with your fans and followers.				,903	Information	0,994
The information these pages offer allows your fans and followers to stay informed.				,902		
The luxury fashion brands that possess these social networking pages are innovative.				,901		

Source: Based on SPSS Output.

## 5 Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to understand the contribution of online social networks in B2C relations from the perspective of companies. Thus, according to the literature review, the emergence of digital platforms, mainly social networks, originated the possibility of smaller companies, with fewer financial and human resources, to be closer to their customers. Thus, it can be concluded that the main contribution of social networks is the proximity with the client and the permanent contact that enhances the relationship between the company and consumers. They are platforms that enhance brand Awareness and branding. It is concluded that, in most cases, brands use social networks as a privileged platform for B2C communication, valuing the fast transmission of messages and the ease of interacting and receiving feedbacks from fans and consumers. The use of social networks complies with the main objective of exposure and becomes convenient due to the low costs (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014), these factors, which can and should be availed by all type of company, especially the small and medium Portuguese companies.

### 5.1 Implication for professionals

In terms of implications for professionals, it seems important to mention that it would



be interesting to direct the study to a different target audience and perhaps even more specific, in order to understand whether the study developed by the companies corresponds to the Expected by customers and how companies can improve their service delivery. In the case of an area that is in a phase of growth, the trend suggests that the relationship with customers is developed increasingly by digital means.

## 5.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Following the analysis of the results of the present study, it is then determinant to recognize the limitations that they present, as they may serve as an indication for future research. Regarding the literature review, since the phenomenon of social networks is still a relatively recent topic, the greatest limitation refers to the fact that the number of scientific articles on some themes is still scarce.

In relation to the methodology, with the objective of obtaining more information on the subject, it would be interesting to complement this study with another qualitative type. In a proposal for future research it is recommended, for example, a study that can encompass a larger sample, which allows to know the whole national panorama and what the similarities and asymmetries geographic in the relationship through social networks.

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