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Brand Communication Through Social Media Influencers:

How Organizations Can Advance Effective

Relationships with SMIs in Brazil

Andressa Ferreira Gaertner

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Brand Communication Through Social Media Influencers:
How Organizations Can Advance Effective
Relationships with SMIs in Brazil

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The purpose of this study is to shed light on how brands can build relationships with social media influencers (SMIs). By replicating Pang et al. (2016) research in different cultural settings, the present study identified internal and external influences that are important for SMIs routines in Brazil, generating additional enlightenment into the Mediating the Media model for SMIs and evaluating to what extent cultural differences may impact the proposed theoretical framework. The research was conducted in two major parts. The first replicated the method used previously by Pang et al. (2016), performing in-depth interviews with eight SMIs. In the second part of the research, a qualitative content analysis was pulled of a sampling of the participants' Instagram feeds and assessed whether the strategies exposed by the SMIs during the interviews match what each interviewee revealed. The personal aspects came up as more prevalent in the set of internal influences among SMIs in Brazil. The set of internal and external influences ultimately implied that public relations practitioners should acknowledge that SMIs seek long-term collaborative relationships with organizations. While payments ensure the sustainability of digital influencer activity as a job, interaction with brands without monetary agreements ensures relevant content to followers, creating win-win situations for both brands and SMIs and stating the importance of dialogue between both parties. Therefore, this research provides useful insights for public relations practitioners to approach social media influencers around the world in a holistic and systematic manner and re-evaluate their current media strategies to communicate via social media the brands they represent.

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I owe this milestone to many people. The timeline of events that brought a young girl from the small city of Rio Verde, Goiás, in Brazil to complete her graduate studies at BYU in the United States are too extensive and incredible to outline here. Suffice it to say, I am generously blessed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With the advent of the Internet as a prime source of information, consumer habits and tastes have evolved in such an exponential manner that the efficacy of different communications approaches needs to be evaluated. Furthermore, the rise of social media and blogs has also influenced and changed the reality of how consumers seek information and desire to receive marketing messages.

In many parts of the world, for example, Brazil, like Brazil for example, bloggers and social media personalities (or *social media influencers, SMIs*) now offer highly effective ways for brands to communicate with stakeholders. In short, a shift in consumer habits has taken place and continues to take place. As social media accounts, particularly bloggers, become more and more prevalent and influential, the need to comprehend the usefulness of these new information outlets is relevant and understandable.

However, few studies have focused on the subject of bloggers. The available research suggests that many consumers consider the information presented by bloggers more credible than traditional media outlets (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007), and they appreciate how accessible and participative these bloggers appear to be (Liu et al., 2015).

One study performed in Singapore explored a different perspective of this new reality and interviewed SMIs aiming to identify the factors that contribute to building effective relationships between bloggers and brands. Pang, Yingzhi Tan, Song-Qi Lim, Kwan, and Lakhanpal (2016) proposed the Mediating the Media model for SMIs and identified internal and external influences that are important for the SMIs routines. Their research was later expanded to also present the Social Media Influencer Engagement Model, which includes

suggestions for public relations practitioners to nurture relationships with SMIs.

The purpose of this project was to replicate this study with the Brazilian SMIs to see if the results were similar, further answering these very questions and evaluating to what extent cultural differences may impact the model proposed by Pang et al. (2016).

Because this is a relatively new area of research, this is a qualitative study looking for in-depth meaning related to the relationships of SMIs and organizations that feed them information. Qualitative studies such as this one can help generalize communication processes in the context of theory (Lindlof, 1994), enhancing conceptual understanding of the peculiarity and complexity of relationship building with SMIs. Therefore, this research should provide useful insights for public relations practitioners to approach social media influencers around the world in a holistic and systematic manner and re-evaluate their current media strategies to communicate via social media the brands they represent.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This study looks at social media influencers and their feelings about sources who feed them information for their profiles in different platforms. Such an exploration requires an examination of literature that will shed light and background on this topic.

Social Media

The convergence of media has changed the way individuals produce and consume media (Jenkins, 2008; Deuze, 2007). Jenkins (2008) pointed out that media are in a continuous transitory phase in which "the social, cultural, economic, technological, legal, and political understandings of media [must] readjust in the face of disruptive change" (p. 329). In the last 20 years, this transformation has been reflected in a variety of choices made when individuals seek information. One can select broadcast or print media, go online, or even access by mobile phone. In fact, the internet has emerged as the primary source of information for many Americans (Horrigan, 2006), particularly younger Americans, and this phenomenon has echoed all over the world. And the internet is not only a merely supplemental source of information: once online, the choices are even greater than the possibilities traditional media present. One can select news from a trusted source rooted in traditional media or go to independent media producers on social media channels.

Since social media provide sharing platforms with their tools, such as social networks, forums, e-mails, and the blogosphere, social media influencers (SMIs) are key drivers of this change from the traditional media to the internet. They led a shift "from a model of single authority based on scarcity and hierarchy to a model of multiple distributed authorities based on abundance and networks of peers" (Metzger, Flanagin & Medders, 2010, p. 415).

Blogs, in particular, are said to be influential sources for news and information

(Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Dutton & Shepherd, 2006; Pew Internet and American Life, 2005; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). Studies have found that more people take to blogs (Lenhart & Fox, 2006) and, in some cases, assign a higher level of credibility to blog coverage than to traditional mass media (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). After conducting a thorough literature review of research on bloggers to date, Sepp, Liljander, and Gummerus (2011) concluded that bloggers have a substantial influence on their readers' behaviors.

Additionally, as blogs are typically run by a single individual or by small groups and are conversational in the sense that readers' comments appear along with the bloggers' own postings (Heinonen, 2008), the blogging environment subtracts the gatekeeping process and social pressure (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000) set within the traditional media. Thus, the era of blogs redefined the boundaries of authority and yielded the emergence of new credible sources and perceptions of credibility.

Social Media Influencers

With the rising trend of the digital integration of blogs with microblogs such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, the "so-called 'new' influencers are now bloggers, Instagrammers and YouTuber [*sic*] (to name some social media platform users)" (Archer & Harrigan, 2016, p.68). Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, and Freberg (2011) identified them as "a new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media" (p. 90). SMIs also engage themselves in content creation of particular issues (Liu et al., 2015), take pleasure in offering advice (Straley, 2010), and are perceived as verbal, smart, ambitious, productive, and poised people (Freberg et al., 2011). Brogan & Smith (2010) highlighted the bloggers' ability to "connect with more people than anyone else, and they know how to leave a good impression" (p.15) As these "trust

agents" do so, "they build healthy, honest relationships" (Brogan & Smith, 2010, p. 15).

According to Freberg et al. (2011), the power of SMIs lies in their ability to affect media coverage, improve key publics' issue awareness, and persuade their followers to assume a course of action. SMIs have an effect on the individuals who are of particular communities gathered around similar interests (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). With this in mind, they can potentially "spread their influence faster, wider, and deeper than a typical company's PR or marketing department might be capable of achieving" (Brogan & Smith, 2010, p. 15).

Additionally, SMIs exhibit credibility and persistence in persuading their audience to notice and support their topics of interest (Booth & Matic, 2011). By providing issue-relevant opinion leadership that meets followers' information and emotional needs in particular issues (Liu et al., 2015), SMIs even extend their influence to off-line conversations, given that their followers are likely to influence non-followers through word-of-mouth communication.

Brand Communication Through SMIs

SMIs represent a direct communication channel to the group of people who actively follow them and might comment on what they learned from these influencers in the off-line environment. According to Nielsen's 2012 "Global Survey of Trust in Advertising," 92% of consumers worldwide said that they trusted word-of-mouth recommendations from their trusted influencer, vastly exceeding any other form of marketing, such as advertising or branded communication. In this context, SMIs could "potentially lead consumers to accept recommendations, make purchase decisions, and select transaction partners in e-commerce" (Liu et al., 2015).

Pang et al. (2016) argued that "organizations should consider building relations with SMIs to maximize positive online media coverage." A quote from BBC Business Editor Tim

Weber (2010) encapsulated the power of SMIs: "These days, one witty tweet, one clever blog post, one devastating video – forwarded to hundreds of friends at the click of a mouse – can snowball and kill a product or damage a company's share price." In this same light, Uzunoğlu & Kip (2014) acknowledged that "it is essential for brands to engage with bloggers, online influencers, in order to attain authentic and trustworthy presence among online communities" (592).

For this reason, SMIs have been gaining visibility and prominence among public relations departments within organizations. Research has confirmed that working with bloggers can benefit practitioners and organizations (Porter, Sweetser, & Chung, 2009; Xifra & Huertas, 2008). The Excellence Theory states that effective public relations must be proactive and engaged in monitoring the organization's surroundings and identify strategic publics (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995), and this includes the blogosphere and the social media influencers, respectively. Failing to identify stakeholders and monitoring social media could result in organizations and practitioners being labeled outdated and irrelevant (Waters, Tindall, & Morton, 2010). Therefore, besides monitoring the conversation on social media about the brands they work for, public relations practitioners have sought out these SMIs (Singh, 2015), looking for the best strategies to engage them on their campaigns and to identify the ones that could be a great asset for the brand communication efforts.

Organization-public Relationships

In the last decades, relationships between organizations and their key publics emerged as the main paradigm in public relations research and practice (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Huang, 2001; Ledingham &

Bruning, 1998). In particular, many public relations scholars explored how the interpersonal relationship dimensions can be applied to organization-public relationships (Bruning, 2001).

Organization-public relationships are defined as "the state that exists between an organization and its key publics that provides economic, social, political, and/or cultural benefits to all parties involved, and is characterized by mutual positive regard" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). Ledingham (2003) outlined a general theory of PR as relationship management, identifying 11 dimensions of organizational-public relationships (trust, openness, credibility, emotion, intimacy, similarity, immediacy, agreement, accuracy, common interests and relational history). Since then, PR as relationship management has become a central construct within PR.

Grunig and Huang (2000) stated that organization-public relationships are successful "to the degree that the organization and publics trust one another, agree on who has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another" (p. 42-43). Grunig (2009), the father of two-way communication theory in PR, has argued, "The new digital media have dialogical, interactive, relational, and global properties that make them perfectly suited for a strategic management paradigm of public relations" (p. 6).

Framing & Information Subsidies

While the strategies a public relations practitioner uses towards traditional media might differ from the efforts to engaging with SMIs, the theoretical framework of media relations offers valuable insights for identifying the resources that can yield "at least, a modicum of control over the message she [PR professional] wishes to reach the public, its timing, the source of that information, and the effect on the media agent of the issue presented" (Zoch & Molleda, 2006, p. 280). It is possible to imply that framing and information subsidies are tools PR practitioners can use to participate in the building of the SMIs' agenda.

Information subsidies is a theory that describes one of the main strategies public relations practitioners use in media relations. It can be defined as prepacked information for use by media that aims to reduce the cost of producing news (Gandy, 1982; Turk, 1985). Turk (1985) added that "sources who make information quickly and inexpensively available to journalists through… 'information subsidies' increase the likelihood that the information will be consumed by the journalists and used in media content" (p. 3). Press releases, media conferences, interviews or access to spokespeople are some of the many forms of information subsidies.

Zoch & Molleda pointed out that, even though information subsidies may set the stage for the presentation of particular viewpoints, "they must be reinforced and complemented by interpersonal interactions and a variety of communication channels" (2006, p. 290).

A study with South Korean journalists corroborates this conditional factor for the efficacy of information subsidies. Shin & Cameron (2003) found that the interpersonal relationships between South Korean journalists and public relations practitioners greatly influenced the outcome of an organization's media relations efforts. As two parties cultivate better understanding, public relations professionals are more aware of media deadline and communication preferences, while journalists gain insights into what public relations practitioners can contribute to their stories.

Even though information subsidies studies would refer to providing pre-packaged information to *journalists*, the same concept is applicable to SMIs. As discussed previously, the emergence of social media led to the establishment of renewed opinion leaders, "positioning themselves as information brokers between the mass media and the general population, and as active participants in the WOM [word-of-mouth] process" (Araujo,

Neijens, & Vliegenthart, 2017, p. 498). Prior to emailing bloggers about story ideas, for instance, practitioners are encouraged to participate actively in blogs (Rowse, 2007), understanding SMI's peculiarities and areas of interest.

At this point, framing also comes to play as a valuable tool to achieve social media relations success with SMIs. Even though there are few studies that look at framing and social media (contrasted to the studies in traditional media), the outreach between PR and bloggers is similar. "Frames select and call attention to particular aspects of the reality described, which logically means that frames simultaneously direct attention away from other aspects," writes Entman (1993, p. 54). As Zoch & Molleda (2006, p. 283) explained, "they [public relations practitioners] do this by highlights or withholding specific information about a subject case or issue from those covering the story." They added, "Media framing thus takes into account not just the topic, but how the journalist or media in general cover and package an issue" (p. 282). While media framing is commonly used to examine news coverage, literature suggests that it is possible to at least imply that framing could be taking place in the outreach. From SMIs' perspective, frames allow them to work with the information provided by PR professionals, adapting them according to their profile and target audience.

Earned Media and Paid Media

Organizations can communicate about their brands via paid media (advertising), earned media (word-of-mouth and online social media), and owned media (brand websites and other owned content). Lovett & Staelin's (2016) research indicated that earned media is more impactful than paid and owned media per exposure, but, in a scenario where paid media has far more exposures, paid media's influence dominates earned and owned media.

Earned media coverage is defined by Stephen & Galak (2012) as both editorial publicity

generated through media relations activities and media activity that is generated by other entities such as customers. Earned media has traditionally been the domain in public relations. However, previous research has identified significant evidence of blurring between public relations and advertising practices. This phenomenon is related to the convergence of media genres and practices (Macnamara, Lwin, Adi, & Zerfass, 2016). Today, public relations agencies offer paid strategies for their clients (Bruell, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2015). Neill & Schauster (2015) also found public relations agencies offer clients advertising services such as sponsored, paid posts on social media.

According to Tutak & van Reijmersdal (2012), sponsored content is media content that is produced by a brand or organization in a similar form as original content on a publisher's platform, often in collaboration with the media outlet. While this practice is fairly common in social media through SMIs, it is questioned from the ethical perspective. Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner (2016) argued that the readers may be confused between editorial and paid content, and this confusion may lead to a decline in the trustworthiness of media organizations and business organizations using this method. Macnamara, Lwin, Adi, & Zerfass (2016) also pointed out that a number of these new formats, such as sponsored posts, lack transparency and can involve intentional deception of a media audience in some cases.

Archer & Harrigan (2016) argued that SMIs as stakeholders challenge theories of relationship building in public relations. From the theoretical perspective, given that many social media influencers wish to be compensated with payment or in-kind for any work related to brands, the conventional theory of PR that has been often centered on two-way communication is challenged in the sense that PR practitioners may continue to seek control in relationships via monetary compensation to produce value outcomes and meet measurable objectives for the

organizations they work for. On the other hand, according to Archer & Harrigan (2016, p. 73), "for most bloggers, the relationship with PR practitioners is less about dialogue and more about being given compensation/payment for any mention of a brand or organization." The findings from their research have been echoed in Singapore, where an ethnography of commercial social media influencers by Abidin (2015) showed similar concerns form the mostly female bloggers and other social media influencers she studied.

SMIs in Brazil

Brazil is one of the countries that catches global brands' attention because of its vibrant presence on social media, which, consequently, enhances the power of influence of Brazilian SMIs. With about 200 million inhabitants, the country is the world's fifth-largest market by population and continues to grow on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter (Chao, 2014). Currently, Brazilians spend more time on social media than all other Latin American countries combined, and they are responsible for 10% of the time the world spends on social media, second only to the United States. Chao (2014) pointed out that social media are particularly popular because of Brazil's hyper-social culture, and this factor makes the South American country "a bright spot for social media companies as they seek more growth outside the U.S. and Europe."

According to a Youpix, GFK, & Airstrip study conducted in Brazil in 2016, 60% of the SMIs who accumulate more than one million followers are female, and 2% of the influencers generate 54% of the interactions on social media. Yet, they concentrate mainly on Instagram (31.9%) and Facebook (31.3%).

Consequently, Instagram is one of the most used channels for brand communication via SMIs and "is a uniquely situated social media outlet that specializes in efficiently

distributing visual rhetoric on a personal or global scale" (Holiday, Lewis & LaBaugh, 2015, p. 8). Along with Snapchat, Instagram has become increasingly popular, with some industry analysts saying it is the fastest growing social media platform (Lunden, 2014). According to a survey conducted by Pew Research in 2014, the majority of Instagram's over 300 million monthly active users are outside the United States, peaking at around one-third in the Middle East and Africa (34%) and Latin America (33%), followed by North America (25%), Europe (16%), and the Asia Pacific (16%) region. About 35 million users are Brazilian, that is, 7% of the total ("Instagram ultrapassa 500 milhões," 2016).

Relationship Between SMIs and Brands

Few studies have examined the nature of the relationship between brands and SMIs and the factors that affect these relations. Relationships between PR practitioners and journalists were often (and still are) the focus for PR academics and practitioners when discussing a normative approach to dialogue and relationship building. In fact, there have been more than 200 studies on the relationship between journalists and PR practitioners (Macnamara, 2014). Some of the few studies that focus on brand communication through digital influencers and the relationship that is constructed with these SMIs cover the differences and similarities against the PR theories and media relations models that have been applied to traditional media.

Archer and Harrigan (2016) found that many of the bloggers that were part of their exploratory study wanted to be compensated with cash or product (or both) for writing about brands through product reviews or sponsored posts on social media. In this case, the authors argued that many "PR theories relevant to relationship building and dialogue need to recognise the commercial nature of relationships with some stakeholder, in particular bloggers and other

online influencers, who have loyal followers" (Archer & Harrigan, 2016, p. 74). Other

motivations, such as community and connection, therapy, having a voice, helping people, and

developing skills, were also found to be important for bloggers.

Pang et al. (2016), on the other hand, discussed the relationship between brands and

SMIs from a different perspective. Their research used as a starting point the Mediating the

Media model, a journalist-centric media relations model adapted from Shoemaker & Reese's

(1996) theory of influence created to "equip practitioners to conduct media relations in a

systematic manner with the primary objective of winning the journalists over by the

knowledge of their work and their profession" (Pang, 2010, p. 192).
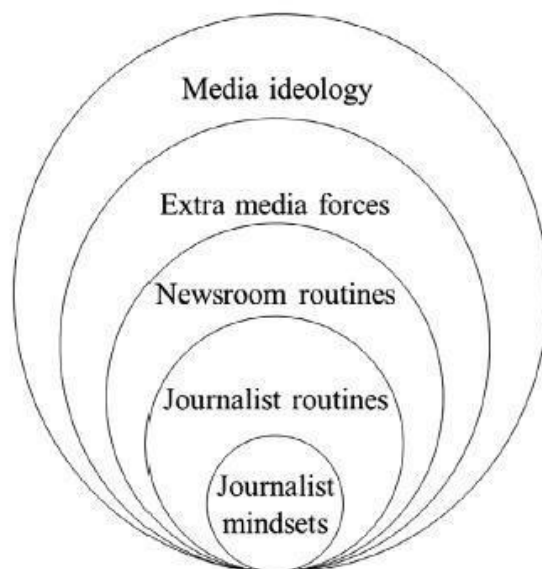
Figure 1. Mediating the Media model (Pang, 2010).

According to Pang (2016), it is valid to use the Mediating the Media model (Figure 1)

as the theoretical lens to examine how relations can be built with SMIs because both

journalists and digital influencers are "channels that organizations would do well to harness

to set media agenda— the journalists to frame the organization positively to general media audiences and SMIs to frame the organizations among target online audiences" (Pang et al, 2016, p. 58).

After conducting in-depth interviews with Singapore-based SMIs, Pang et al. (2016) proposed a revised Mediating the Media model (Figure 2) to build effective relationships with SMIs. Within the Mediating the Media model for SMIs, Pang et al. (2016) identified internal and external influences that are important for the SMIs routines. Those include:
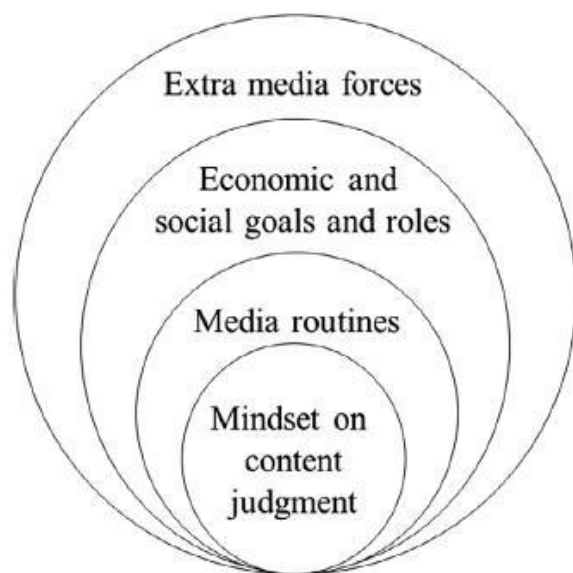
Figure 2. Mediating the Media model for SMIs (Pang et al., 2016).

Internal influences

a) Mindset on content judgment: SMIs choose the content based on "relevance and fit of content to platform themes and editorial independence to maintain their voice and credibility" (p. 58)

b) Media routine: "largely determined by news values, (...) which many of the SMIs consider as crucial in relation to the immediacy and recency of their

postings" (p. 58). All the SMIs interviewed by Pang et al. (2016) recognized the importance of external sources as supplies of information, especially PR practitioners, who "can facilitate SMI's postings by providing multimedia and social media friendly content" (p. 58).

External influences

c) Economic and social goals and roles: Although profitability is not a top priority for the SMIs, according to Pang et al. (2016) research, SMIs expect brands to be aware of the costs involved in their activity and to recognize their social media channels as a business.

d) Extra-media forces: SMIs should be aware of "OB marker", that is, "out-of-bounds" in their country, such as sensitive topics and unsubstantiated criticisms.

Their study discussed the internal and external factors, and yet this differentiation does not show up anywhere in the model. Nevertheless, the study is still useful, particularly due to the way the research was conducted, providing interesting insights on the value of social media and leaving room for replication. Their research in Singapore showed that internal influences were ranked as more pervasive than external influences and that there remained a difference between the way brands treated mainstream media journalists and SMIs.

From the results, the authors also proposed the Social Media Influencer Engagement model (Figure 3), which "conceptually represents the key influencers and proposes strategies" and "aims to provide public relations practitioners with an accessible framework for cultivating media relations with SMIs."

The inner circle in Figure 3 encapsulated the internal influences, external influences, and other factors identified during their research, while the outer circle brings engagement strategies that organizations can use to cultivate media relations and engage SMIs. The model lists the SMIs' mindset and routine influences on the content they post on their social media channels: Immediacy of content, time constraints, credibility and individual "voice", OB markers (or "out-of-bounds", sensitive topics), balance, engagement with followers, and competition among SMIs.
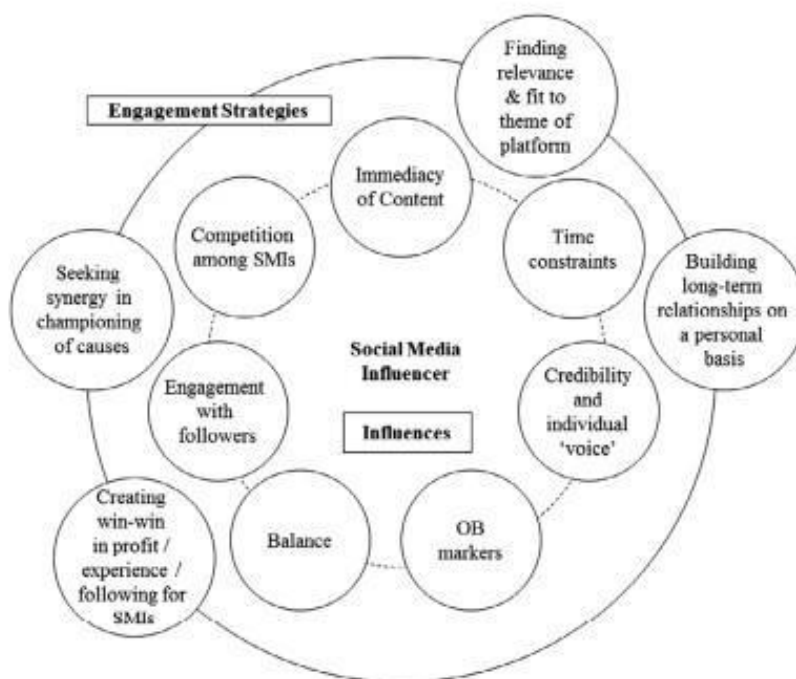
Figure 3. Social media influencer engagement model, Pang et al. (2016)

The figure also suggests engagement strategies that organizations should adopt after acknowledging these influences. These strategies include: Finding relevance and fit to theme of platform, building long-term relationships on a personal basis, creating win-win in

profit/experience/following for SMIs, and seeking synergy in championing of causes. Pang et

al. (2016) explained:

> The seven influences cover external influences such as extra-media forces on SMIs
>
> (competition among SMIs and OB markers), as well as internal influences such as SMI
>
> routines (credibility and individual voice, balance, engagement with followers, time
>
> constraints) and SMI mindsets (immediacy of content). The four engagement strategies
>
> are what the researchers deem as effective approaches in building media relations with
>
> SMIs in relation to these seven influences. (p. 66)

Since social media are still being explored in both academic literature and in terms of

their practical implications, this thesis serves as an exploratory study to test the Social Media

Influencer Engagement model in Brazil, where the hierarchy of the influences may differ, so

as to strengthen our understanding of how to build more effective relations with SMIs. A

comprehensive understanding of the differences and similarities between the Brazilian and

Singaporean social media landscape also took into consideration the cultural dimensions for

each country. Using the country comparison tool available at the Hofstede Center website,

significant differences were found (**Singapore** vs. **Brazil**) on uncertainty avoidance (8 vs. 76)

and long-term orientation (44 vs. 72). Brazilians value good and relaxing moments in their

everyday life as an escape valve for the bureaucracy and its laws and rules, while

Singaporeans abide by many rules due to the country's high power-distance index (PDI). Also,

while Brazil scores as intermediate in long-term orientation, Singapore scores high in this

dimension, valuing cultural qualities that support long-term investment, such as perseverance,

sustained efforts, and slow results. These cultural dimension differences add extra support to

our selection of Brazil as an appropriate target country in which to replicate Pang et. al's study originally performed in Singapore.

This research combined in-depth interviews with SMIs from Brazil, replicating the study Pang et. al (2016) conducted in Singapore, adding to it a content analysis of SMIs' Instagram posts to identify how the factors posited on the model reflect on social media and the way they communicate with their followers. The results are expected to shed light on how brands can build relationships with digital influencers and consequently strengthen relationships with customers through their support on social media.

To this aim, I set forth research questions that guides all stages of inquiry, analysis, and reporting for this study. As the core of this research, they allowed an investigation of Brazil's social media influence context using the insights brought up by Pang et. al's (2016) in Singapore, an analysis of their model, and examination into what extent that model holds up in a cultural scenario other than Singapore. This line of reasoning is incorporated in the questions below.

Research Questions

Several research questions have been developed to frame the study in a way that helps generate additional enlightenment into the Pang et. al model (2016), particularly as enacted beyond the borders of Singapore. These questions are:

RQ1: What do SMIs say an organization can do to use its knowledge of the set of internal and external influences to build effective relations with SMIs in Brazil?

RQ2: What, if any, other influences are at play when building effective relations with SMIs in Brazil?

RQ3: What engagement strategies identified during the study are being implemented and reflected on social media influencers' posts in Brazil?

RQ4: How rigorous is the Mediating the Media model as a framework to build effective relations with SMIs?

RQ5: How do significant similarities and differences found between SMI's context in Brazil and Singapore impact Pang et al's model (2016)?

Chapter 3: Method

This is a qualitative study looking for in-depth meaning related to the relationships of SMIs and organizations that feed them information. Considering that this is a relatively new area of research, it was the prevailing feeling that a qualitative approach would be most appropriate for proceeding. Qualitative studies such as this one can help generalize communication processes in the context of theory (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), enhancing conceptual understanding of the peculiarity and complexity of social media relations and relationship building with SMIs.

The research was conducted in two major parts. The first replicated the method used previously by Pang et al. (2016), which was described in the literature review and yielded rich insights on cultivating media relations and engagement with SMIs in Singapore. The second part expanded its methodology as it is described further in this section.

It is known that qualitative research requires specific procedures for validating the findings, and these procedures were undertaken in the study. For example, a typical procedure for quantitative research is validity, which concerns the degree to which an account is accurate or truthful. Validity, *per se*, typically is not part of qualitative research, but similar procedures are employed to ensure that the results are valid. In other words, it concerns the degree to which a finding is interpreted accurately from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Rather than reliability and validity of instruments (in quantitative research), in qualitative research we talk about whether the research is *trustworthy*. Rossman & Rollis (1998) define trustworthy studies as those that conform to standards for "acceptable and competent practice" (p. 43).

Trustworthiness, for its part, involves establishing *transferability*, *credibility*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. *Transferability* refers to "the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings or groups" (Polit and Hungler, 1999, p. 717); that is, if a qualitative study is done in the same way with similar subjects, it would get similar results. In this light, a clear and distinct description of culture and context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection and process of analysis has been given in this study. Instead of examining stability, qualitative reliability is called *credibility* and indicates that the researcher's approach would be consistent across different researchers and different projects (Gibbs, 2007). A credible study presents strong logical links between data and researcher's analysis. Reliability is not a great consideration in qualitative research mainly because "if [a] measurement is composed of a single, non-repeated operation, there can be no measure of reliability"(Anderson,1987, p. 126). Interviews, for instance, are usually not repeatable because each respondent is asked a particular set of questions only once. *Dependability*, for its part, is evidence that, if a study was replicated with the same or similar respondents in the same or similar context, its findings would be more or less repeated. Finally, *confirmability* is described as "the degree to which [an inquiry's] findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the research" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

Taking into account that interviews are "well suited to *understanding the social actor's experience*, *knowledge*, and *worldviews*" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), this study is unfolded in two parts: (a) selection of SMIs whose experience is central to the research problem in some way to be interviewed, and then (b) analysis of their Instagram feeds to assess whether what they said was consistent with their actual posts. In this study, such an understanding of the actors' experience is crucial to reveal their decision-making process

when creating content and managing their social media channels.

In order to minimize primary trustworthiness concerns, such as researcher and respondent biases (that is, one may lie or try to be too helpful), this research used a triangulation of data, precisely testing the results of the interview against the content analysis of a sample of each interviewees' own Instagram posts. Denzin (1978) broadly defined it as the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon, and Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest (1966) argued that researchers should employ more than one instrument to measure variables. Also, triangulation is pointed out as a reasonable validation technique if one accepts the premise that multiple sources, methods, and researchers can converge upon a single version of reality (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). If the data from two or more methods/sources of evidence point toward the same conclusion, then validation is enhanced. By crossing different data sources and examining evidence from interviews and content analyses, the study builds a coherent justification for themes.

A listening technique of the in-depth or long interview was applied for this first part of the research, as it is an appropriate data-gathering method for the complex and personal nature of the research questions for this study. The technique was also used according to other advantages, such as immediate collections of large amounts of contextual data which provide a broader understanding of specific pieces of the SMIs' routines, placing them in a larger picture; facilitated analysis, validity checks, and triangulation, which help build up the trustworthiness of this study; and the flexibility to form or change hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman, 1989), which is relevant for an exploratory study such as this one.

In the second part of the research, a qualitative content analysis was pulled of the SMIs' Instagram feed and conducted to assess whether the strategies exposed by the SMIs

during the interviews actually match what each interviewee revealed. Besides being a popular

method in mass media research, content analysis was chosen as a complementary research tool

because it is a systematic way of measuring variables and the sample goes through the same

processes to ensure accuracy of the data (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997, p. 156-157).

Sample Selection Process

The sample selection in qualitative research uses non-probability sampling, "in which

the process that determines whether a member of the population is selected for inclusion in the

sample is guided by a non-chance or nonrandom process" (Hayes, 2008), and the number of

people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them. For this reason, I

aimed to select a sample that would ensure the accuracy and unbiased representation of the

universe being studied.

In selecting the sample of SMIs for this study, inclusion criteria were that participants

should be recognized as a social media influencer by a communication professional other than

the researcher, be someone who actively posts and engages on their Instagram account, and be

a person who would consent to a 30- to 60-minute interview over the phone. There were no

exclusion criteria concerning the number of followers.

At the starting point, aiming to gather data from as many interviewees as possible, I

contacted a potential sampling via email, using the contact information provided on their

social media platforms. Between December 2017 and January 2018, 21 of the top SMIs in

Brazil were contacted, as identified by the Youpix, GFK & Airstrip research conducted in

Brazil in 2016. Upon contact, I explained the purpose of the study and that it would be

necessary to schedule a phone call with those who were willing to participate in the study.

Those potential participants were also assured that they would remain anonymous and that

their responses would serve an academic purpose exclusively.

Unfortunately, these initial attempts to reach the people in the list were mostly met with non-responses, so the outreach efforts were expanded by emailing 60 of the Brazilian influencers that were nominated for the *Prêmio Influenciadores Digitais* (Digital Influencer Award) in 2017 by the end of January 2018. A few responded, but still none agreed to be interviewed, claiming unavailability.

The next step was contacting the Youka Agency, journalists, and public relations professionals in Brazil and asking them for their recommendations on SMIs to be interviewed. These practitioners recommended 40 people whom they considered to be social media influencers or with whom they had somehow worked at some point. I contacted all 40 influencers via WhatsApp in February 2018.

Even though the initial goal was to gather at least 10 individuals who met the criteria, only eight agreed to be interviewed. Despite having eight interviewees out of 121 contacts, these eight SMIs had strong presences on social media, they had established partnerships with brands before the interview, and they are considered "elite" interviewees. Because it was felt that they were a sufficiently select group who could grant insights into how that group works (Bowen, 2009), it was decided to proceed into the study with just these eight participants—an adequate number for in-depth qualitative exploration.

Table 1.

Information about the participants of the study.

SMI	Age	Hours on-line daily	Years on social media	Social media presence	Areas of Interest	Followers as of February 2018
1	28	8 hours	6 years	Blog, Google Plus, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram	Beauty & Lifestyle	71,500
2	28	6 hours	5 years	Blog, Google Plus, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram	Fashion, Beauty & Lifestyle	3,200,000
3	25	12 hours	4 years	YouTube and Instagram	Fitness & Lifestyle	163,000
4	25	4 hours	7 years	YouTube and Instagram	Beauty	100,400
5	26	12 hours	2 years	Facebook, YouTube and Instagram	Lifestyle	2,292,000
6	18	6 hours	6 years	YouTube and Instagram	Fashion and Lifestyle	208,700
7	28	5 hours	7 years	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram	Lifestyle	246,000
8	31	2 hours	6 years	Facebook and Instagram	Food	315,000

Seven of the interviewees were female and one was male. Their ages ranged between

18 and 31 years. All of them are active on at least two social media platforms—Instagram

being a common point among all of them. Most of them have been active on social media for

at least the last five years and cover topics such as beauty, lifestyle, fitness, and food.

Participants were also of varied backgrounds, including college students, younger graduates,

working professionals, and stay-at-home mothers, offering sufficient individual differences to

account for bias and reflexivity in the data set. Further details about the interviewees, such as age, areas of interest, and numbers of followers, are displayed in Table 1. Each participant is referred to as SMI 1, SMI 2, and so forth.

For the second phase of the research, in which some of the content of the participants' Instagram posts were analyzed for triangulation purposes, I employed a purposive sampling strategy, also called relevance sampling. According to Krippendorff (2004), relevance sampling "aims at selecting all textual units that contribute to answering given research questions." Therefore, the researcher considered posts that the participants uploaded to their Instagram accounts starting February 1, 2018. All posts were considered consecutively without exceptions until the sufficient data emerged for analysis.

Data Collection

For the first part of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted between February 5 and February 28, 2018. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide modified from the Pang et al (2016) study in Singapore (see Appendix for interview questions). In order to replicate that study well enough to identify similarities and differences between the two markets, the same questionnaire used by Pang et al. (2016) on their round of interviews was adopted for the series of interviews with Brazilian SMIs. However, I followed the lead of the interviewees and allowed them to develop ideas rather than adhering slavishly to the interview guide. This is consistent with qualitative research guidelines wherein the researcher should allow the data to emerge from the participants.

Due to constraints of distance, all the interviews were performed via the voice call software, WhatsApp. This resource should not negatively affect the results of this study, because, "although interviews are usually conducted face-to-face, such technologies as the

telephone and the internet enable researchers and participants to come together even when they are miles apart" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

As the researcher, I am a native speaker of Portuguese and the interviewees are from Brazil, and thus all interviews were conducted in Portuguese. Each conversation lasted about 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. During transcription, I preserved the morphologic naturalness of the narrative. For the translation phase, even though I am also fluent in English, I worked with a Portuguese-into-English translation professional who has more than five years of experience in the field. The content was translated as close to the source language as possible, and to the best of the translators' knowledge.

For the content analysis of the interviewees' Instagram feeds, I gathered data as previously described in the Sample Selection Process section. The researcher looked through each feed until enough evidence had surfaced to either confirm or refute what the SMI stated about his or her dynamics on social media.

Data Analysis

Regarding the variables considered for this study, as I replicated the research performed in Singapore, I explored the same variables used there to understand the reality among Brazilian SMIs. Variables included social media use, time spent online, motives for spending such time online, attendance to events promoted by brands, post-events follow-up, target audiences, stories, corporate communications relations, and insights on the Mediating the Media model.

Interviews. Upon transcribing the participants' responses, I browsed through all transcripts, taking notes about the first impressions and themes that stood up. Participants' names were removed throughout the transcripts to preserve anonymity, and references to any current partnership with brands were also edited to sound as generic as possible to preserve anonymity.

The transcripts were then analyzed one by one and read numerous times. All relevant sentences and sections were open coded under several free codes concerning the set of influences around an SMI, i.e. sections where the participants were talking about different aspects of their routine and content creation. This coded text was stored as free nodes. Secondly, the codes describing similar or related phenomena were merged into categories that were either based on the research questions, theories, and concepts, or emerged during the coding process (i.e. repeated terms, new and uncommon insights). Finally, each category was given a heading, and all codes relevant to that category were stored under that heading.

A supplemental coding process then took place as an attempt to reevaluate the findings. Each transcript was coded and organized using NVivo 12, a qualitative data management software. While the first codes derived from the transcripts following an inductive approach, the subsequent coding process utilized predefined codes based on the research questions and the previous coding work. Additional categories emerged as the research was coded in NVivo, and most of the nodes coded in the first session also emerged during the supplemental analysis, suggesting that the two-phase coding analysis process was conducted in such a way that it "can be repeated, with the same results," (Yin, 2014, p. 26). However, once the coding process was over, Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative technique was used to compare assignment of incidents to categories, elaborate and refine categories, and simplify and integrate data into a coherent theoretical structure. In this sense, all the relevant nodes for this study were assigned to four main themes that reflected the Mediating the Media model of Pang et. al (2016): Influences, Brands, Content, and Insights on the Mediating the Media model. Since one of the goals of this research was to test the model in a different cultural setting, the themes were structured to facilitate the examination of this issue. Therefore, all references that could help me

identify the set of internal and external influences were coded under Influence; all other relevant insights were assigned to the other major themes.

Content analysis of Instagram posts. For this second method, I examined the pictures, text, photo tags, and hashtags that composed the Instagram post of the eight interviewees. The sample posts were analyzed in NVivo 12, following the themes that emerged from the interviews. In this way, data were triangulated, with multiple sources of evidence used (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). About 25 posts were analyzed for each respondent.

A coding frame was created after the results from the interviews, containing the factors that seem to drive the SMIs' posts, especially when they are third-party advocates and promote products and brands, to see how these factors turn into actual communication with their followers. In other words, as just mentioned, the study added a comparison of what SMIs in Brazil say during the interviews and what they post on Instagram. For instance, if a post referenced to friends or relatives, it was coded under the *personal lif*e node. If in the post the SMI expressed his or her love for dogs, it was coded under *personal taste*. If more than one node was perceived during the analysis in the same post, all applicable nodes were selected to categorize it. For example, if the SMI posted a picture at a concert of his or her favorite band with his or her friend at a brand's promotional event, the nodes selected for it would be *personal taste*, *personal life*, *promotional event*, and other nodes that may come up during the analysis. However, it is important to emphasize that the analysis was open to all possibilities that could be found in the data during the initial open coding. Then there were at least two rounds of coding that were based upon the coding frame that emerged from the findings of the interviews.

The data was organized into a category system to serve as an important piece of the triangulation with the results of the interviews. This system of categories helped to come up with

the engagement model that is proposed to cover relationship building between brands and SMIs

in Brazil. With those methods having been completed, the results are reported next.

Chapter 4: Results

This section discusses the key findings relevant to the research objectives. As mentioned in the previous section, the round of interviews and analysis of their answers were followed by a content analysis of each of the participants' Instagram feeds. The same sequence is noted in this section. As I explained each theme that emerged from the interviews, I reported if those findings were also supported by the content analysis.

I used open, axial, and pattern coding to reveal the overarching themes in the first phase of the study. Each of these themes offered insights that included responses from SMIs who are frequently in contact with brand representatives. These categories provided further information on the factors considered when deciding the content of their pages, such as what brand or product to endorse or what events to attend, among other relevant points that would help public relations practitioners to understand what can help organizations to perform media relations with SMIs and, at some point, develop effective relationships with these digital influencers.

Responding to the same questionnaire used in Pang et. al's (2016) study, participants also spoke about other topics relevant for their activity. Figure 4 shows the amount of data collected within each theme. For this study, the themes were renamed so that they could parallel Pang's but also be more readily understood and applicable to the Brazilian social media environment.

One of the themes, *Influences*, contains subthemes and subcategories that define the theme, so that it would be clear when each internal and external influence emerged during the analysis. The other first level themes, *Brands* and *Content*, are complementary for the purpose of this study, so all references made to these topics were coded under the same node. The size of each area reflects the number of coding references under each theme. In this sense, a larger area indicates more coding references.
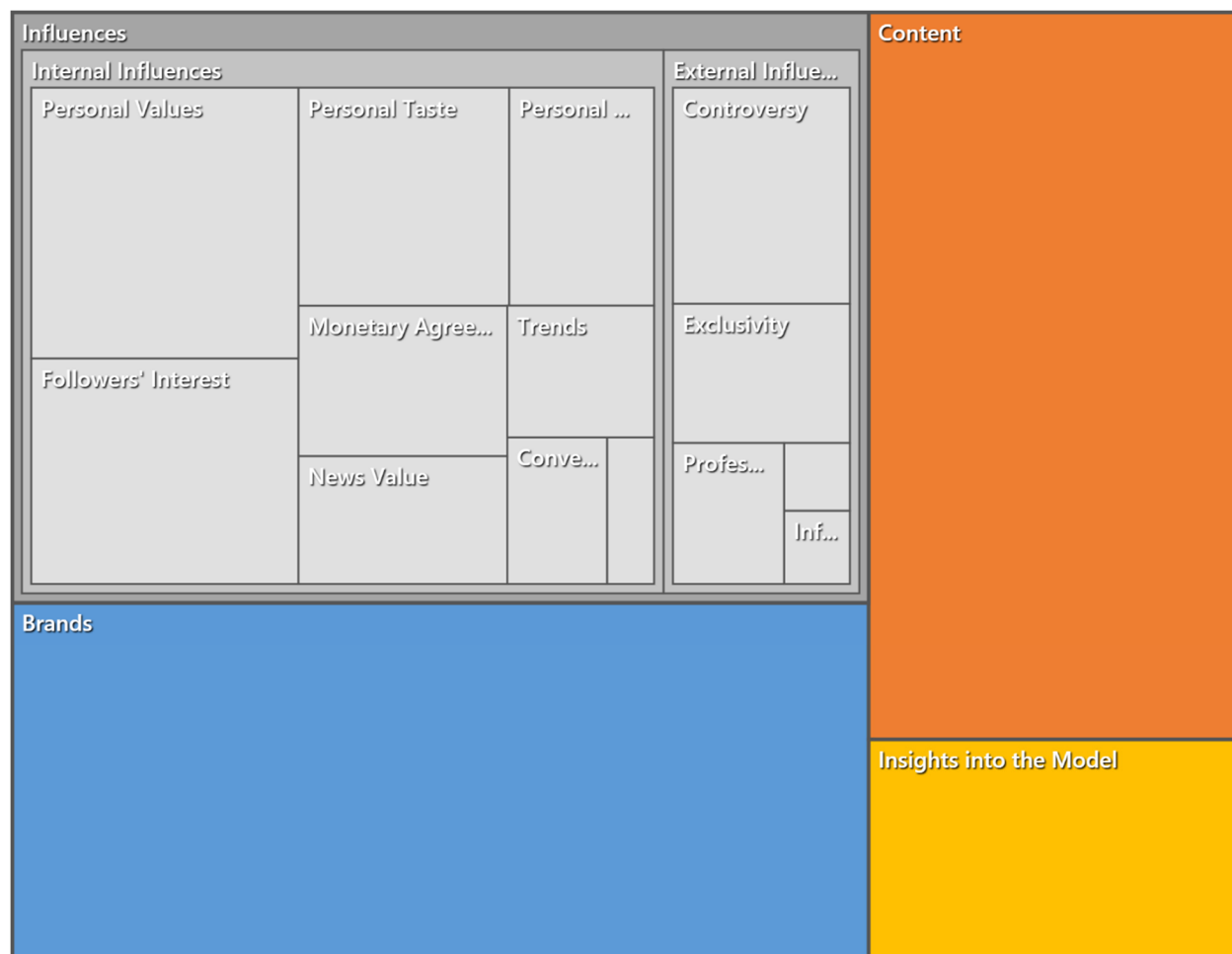
Figure 4. Hierarchy chart for all themes. From top right to bottom left, the hierarchy chart generated by NVivo 12 includes the four categories that emerged during coding of the sources. Influences contains the subthemes *Internal Influences* and *External Influences*. Under Internal Influences, there are subcategories: Personal Values, Personal Taste, Personal Life, Followers' Interest, Monetary Agreement, Trends, News Value, Convenience, and Brand's Approach. Under External Influences, there are also subcategories: Controversy, Exclusivity, Professional Relationships, Legal Boundaries, and Information Subsidies. The other three themes are Content, Brands, and Insights into the Model (Mediating the Media). The size of each area represents the frequency of the coding references.

The first research question covers what SMIs say an organization can do to use its knowledge of the set of internal and external influences to build effective relations with SMIs in Brazil. Before we cover this issue of *how* or *what*, it is of utmost importance to identify the internal and external influences that emerged from the conversation with the SMIs.

Internal Influences

The findings in this study suggest a set of internal influences that affect the SMIs. The subcategories that emerged from the interviews are *personal values, personal taste, personal life, followers' interest, monetary agreements, social media trends, convenience,* and *brand's approach.* The size of each area in Figure 5 reflects the number of coding references under each subcategory; a larger area, for example, indicates more coding references.

Personal values and personal taste. All respondents stated that their personal values and taste greatly influence their social media content, guiding the selection of what is posted or not. The tendency of these SMIs to prioritize topics related to their personal tastes and values yielded a lot of data. As two aspects that were also interchangeably referred to as *personality*, these factors came up as one of the biggest subcategories under the theme.

SMI 1, SMI 3, SMI 4, SMI 6, and SMI 7 indicated that personal taste and personal values highly impact their decision-making processes. SMI 3 said, "You need to put on your personality always, because what sets you apart from others is your personality. My YouTube channel and Instagram are where I show my personality, my values, what I have learned in my childhood." SMI 2, SMI 5, and SMI 8 attributed some importance to this influence, but they were not as emphatic about it as the other respondents.

On the other hand, all participants, except for SMI 1, reported that great influences of their personal values would appear on social media pages. Likewise, all participants said they would only attend an event related only to what they like, their interests, and their values. SMI 7 declared, "I only go to events that are related to the things that I work with. As long as I go to events that are related to the things I work with, it will always work out." Some respondents also linked these influences not only to their selection of content but also their approach, choice of

words, and brands they choose to connect their image with.

Results of the content analysis of the Instagram posts are consistent with the findings

from the interviews. All respondents had in their samples posts that stressed their personal taste.

SMI 5 scored the highest amount of references with seven posts expressing her personal taste,

while SMI 7 had the lowest amount of references under the node, with just four posts in the

category. However, there were no explicit elements in their posts that would allow me to use the

node *personal values*. Therefore, this theme was not coded during the content analysis.
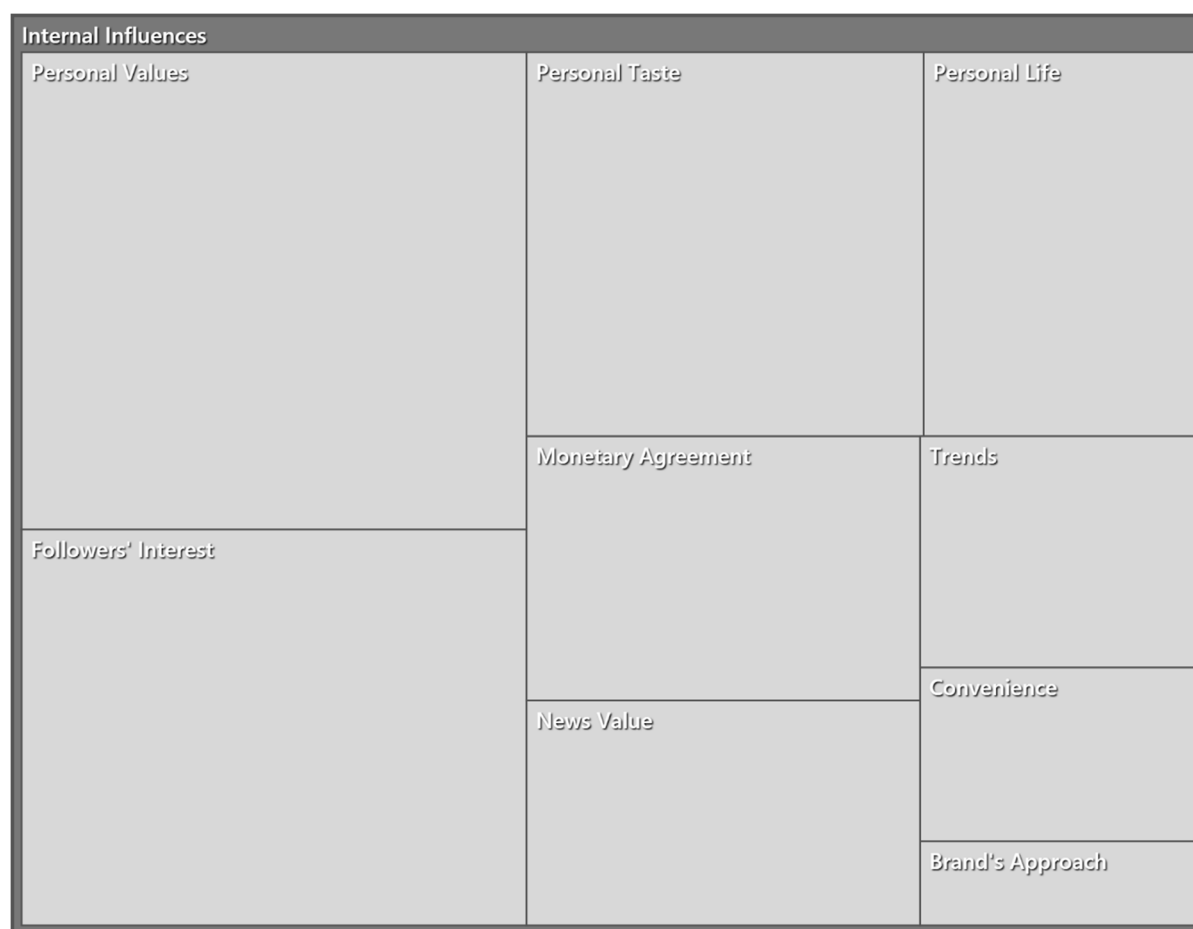
*Figure 5*. Hierarchy chart of all internal influences. From top right to bottom left, the hierarchy chart generated by NVivo 12 includes the themes that were coded under Internal Influences: Personal Values, Personal Taste, Personal life, Followers' Interest, Monetary Agreement, News Value, Trends, Convenience, and Brand's Approach. The size of each area represents the frequency of the coding references.

Personal life. The majority of the SMIs who participated in this study also reported that their personal life highly guides them on the selection of topics for social media. Consequently, little to big events that occur in their daily lives end up being frequently covered in the Instagram posts and stories, YouTube videos and blog posts, with all sort of updates also available in other social media platforms. Both SMI 3 and SMI 8 attributed more relevance to this aspect than the rest of the interviewees. SMI 1, SMI 4, SMI 5, and SMI 6 agreed that it would be difficult for them to reduce the influence of their personal lives on the selection of the content for social media. SMI 4 argued, "There is no way you can dissociate one thing from the other and people like this insertion even. People like seeing who the influencer is through the content." SMI 1 reported that facts about her personal life are brought to her social media as an attempt to meet her followers' interests and offer some help for those who are going through the same things. SMI 2 and SMI 7 did not include personal life as an influence for their posts.

During the content analysis of the interviewees' Instagram posts, it was possible to identify at least two posts for each respondent that addressed some aspect of their personal life. SMI 3 and SMI 7 had the highest amount of posts in the category (seven posts each), while SMI 1, SMI 2, and SMI 5 scored five each, followed by SMI 6 with four, SMI 4 with three, and SMI 8 with two posts.

Followers' interests. All participants revealed their concern about pleasing their audience and posting relevant information—all of which falls under the category of interests of their followers. SMI 2 and SMI 7 attributed the most importance to this influence. SMI 2, for example, who targets women over 28 years old, argued that her followers' interest is the main factor in her decision-making process, "I go to events if I know my readers will like that. Fashion events, events where they showcase beauty products such as O Boticário, Natura, Vult,

Sephora—I know [followers] like that." Among the posts analyzed for SMI 2, there were posts

about events mentioned during the interview. She added, "Although I wasn't paid, I went to an

event two weeks ago and it was nice. I liked the presentations, so I posted about the event on my

blog. I know it's going to call their attention and they will like it."

The other six participants were not as emphatic as these two, but also declared to be

highly influenced by this factor. SMI 5 declared, "I always try to consider if what I'm about to

post will add some value to their lives. That's really how I decide whether or not I'll post it."

Furthermore, these same interviewees reported that covering only followers' interests is not

enough to keep their popularity; it is necessary to always offer a unique perspective about a topic

that seems to be relevant to their publics. SMI 4 summarized the idea behind it: "For an

influencer to be 'approved' by the public, he needs to talk about a subject that interests the public

but bringing something new to it."

Besides catching attention from their followers, all SMIs revealed that their ultimate goal

is to increase engagement. They try to accomplish that by responding to direct messages and

comments and considering the feedback on their posts. SMI 7 explained, "Based on my public

likes and dislikes, it's easier for me to know what to say. I always try to deliver a clear message

to them."

The content analysis of the Instagram posts did not generate data to corroborate or refute

participants' assertions about followers' interests. The concept was not easily recognizable for

coding, so no node for *followers' interest* was captured during the analysis.

Monetary agreements. Another important theme that emerged during the analysis was

monetary agreements with brands through partnerships. SMI 2, SMI 5, and SMI 8 were the ones

who made more reference to these monetary agreements. However, all participants revealed that

these paid partnerships are behind some of their product endorsements, attendance to events, and

mention of brands. All of them also made clear that they would create a contract with a certain

brand only after testing its products and making sure that the concept of the brand and/or product

goes along with their personality. SMI 8, who has been creating paid partnerships for her

Instagram posts in parallel with her baking business activities, explained why she would not

accept an offer before learning about the quality of a product or brand:

> I do not recommend what I do not use. That's why people sometimes trust so much in my
>
> recommendations. They never know when I am getting paid to advertise or just posting
>
> about it as a friendly recommendation. When I say it's good, you can trust it's good,
>
> regardless of whether I'm being paid or not.

> All respondents, except for SMI 1, claimed that their attendance at promotional events

may also depend on what was previously agreed upon with the brands. Not only was their

attendance discussed previously, but also how long they would be there for, number of posts

during and/or after the events, and the like. Also, the contract for partnership may state that the

digital influencer is required to approve the content with the brand's representative before posting

it or even posting the content as the client sent it. SMI 6 explained that paid partnerships might

also determine which other non-paid content will be covered: "As much as I like a certain thing,

sometimes I cannot stop the project that I have in progress, an obligation that I have to deliver to

a company, to turn my attention to something I enjoy a lot too." When determining whether the

proposed partnership meets their criteria for the overall coherence of their social media channels,

SMI 2 and SMI 3 factor in whether the content will interest their publics. SMI 2 reported:

> What's the point in me going and doing something for some brand, knowing that my
>
> presence there won't bring them any profit because my readers won't be interested in that

product or that brand? You know the types of readers you have. For example, Chanel doesn't fit with my audience.

The results of the content analysis corroborated the participants' statements. Three nodes directly related to communication about brands emerged: *Brand Mentions, Brand Tags,* and *Possible Paid Partnerships.*

All respondents had posts where they mentioned the brand's name within the text, linking their profile to the post, and/or tagged the brands in the pictures that fell under their areas of interest. SMI 2 had the most posts with mentions to brands (eight posts), followed by SMI 3 (with seven posts), while SMI 1, SMI 4, SMI 5, SMI 6, and SMI 7 had six posts each with brands mentions, and SMI 8 had five.

Regarding brand tags in the pictures, SMI 2, SMI 5, and SMI 7 had seven posts each where they tagged brands in the photo, followed by SMI 1, SMI 3, and SMI 4 with six posts each, SMI 6 with five, and SMI 8 with four.

From the posts in which brands were either mentioned in the text or tagged in the pictures, some looked like possible paid partnerships. SMI 5 and SMI 6 had seven posts each where it was possible to imply that it was a partnership with the brand, even though there was no hashtag or label indicating a paid partnership. The same circumstances were found in six posts for SMI 2, SMI 3, and SMI 4. SMI 7 had five posts in that category; SMI 8 had three, and SMI 1 had two.

Convenience. SMI 1, SMI 2, SMI 4, SMI 6, and SMI 7 revealed that they might post something or attend an event in case such attendance can potentially bring them some of kind of benefit or advantage in the future. According to them, this aspect also factors in when producing content for the social media channels. Yet it does not bring monetary return; instead, the

participants expect that the effort will bring either return with visibility and networking or will help them establish a relationship with the brand.

SMI 7 shared an example, exposing that a well-known brand of beverages invited her to check their new campaign out. There was no payment involved, but she went anyway, because she wanted to have her image associated with the brand. She added, "Even though they haven't paid me to post, I still create a post on social media because I want to establish a partnership with the person or company." SMI 2 agreed. "I think that even if you were not specifically hired to promote a brand or a product, you can end up developing a kind of relationship with the representatives just by being there." The other participants were neutral about the topic and did not make any statements that show similar decision-making.

The content analysis of the Instagram posts did not generate data to corroborate or refute participants' assertions on this topic. The concept was not easily recognizable for coding, so no node for *convenience* was captured during the analysis.

News values. All participants expressed their concerns about sharing only facts that are true to the best of their knowledge, so that their followers see them as credible sources and trust their statements. Likewise, SMI 2, SMI 3, SMI 4, SMI 5, and SMI 7 consider the lifespan of their posts, especially for seasonal topics (i.e. Christmas, Brazilian Carnival) and new memes. All responses that expressed this concern were categorized as *News Values*, as it carries similar attributes as in the journalistic arena (i.e. immediacy, proximity, prominence). SMI 3, who got his degree in journalism, claimed, "I think the issue of communication is very relevant in general. You have to consider the issue of content, the issue of deadlines, the issue of velocity." SMI 4 also argued that taking too long to post about these topics can affect one's credibility. In her words, "If a new topic arises and we can't record [a video] and create any content when it's

still hot, then it isn't worth doing because it may sound like a copy or not bring you any specific return."

However, even though some of them agreed on the importance of covering current issues and trends, SMI 6 argued that immediacy is not a factor that warrants a post by itself and that she wouldn't avoid posting about a topic even because it is not current anymore. "You will never see me talking about a subject just because all people are talking about it. And I will not stop saying something because people stopped talking about it." SMI 4, who has been posting about beauty products for more than five years, has a similar opinion, "If a product that came out is interesting, even if it's been out for some time, if it's so interesting that my audience will like it, I'll share it right away."

The content analysis revealed that SMI 3 had the higher number of posts linked to current issues. This is consistent with his interview as described previously. SMI 6 had six posts coded under this node, while SMI 1 and SMI 2 had four posts each. SMI 4, SMI 5, SMI 7, and SMI 8 scored three posts each. The current issues covered in the posts included Brazilian Carnival events, product launches, music video launch, and other subjects with certain shelf life.

Social media trends. All interviewees, except SMI 8, ranked social media trends as a factor that influences them on their activity, claiming there's a need to adapt to new trends to stay relevant in the market. All of them mentioned one same trend as an example: organized feeds. SMI 6 explained, "I already understand that this is interesting, especially for the companies that work with me, to see that I offer quality visual content." The SMIs reported using apps on their phones to help them keep visual consistency throughout their feeds, as well as avoiding posting images that repeat themselves.

The content analysis of the Instagram posts did not generate data to corroborate or refute participants' assertions about this. The concept was not easily recognizable for coding, so no node for *Social Media Trend* was captured during the analysis.

Brand's approach. SMI 1 and SMI 5 reported that the way brands approach them can influence the content they decide to create for their social media feeds. While a professional, straightforward, and respectful approach can improve the chances of something being posted, according to SMI 1, she might avoid posting about an interesting topic if she feels disrespected and devalued. "Most of the time, during the event I film everything and post on my Instagram stories, but if they don't talk to us [digital influencers] about the products, I don't post anything, even if I liked the product." SMI 5 shared a similar experience and commented that she feels devalued when a brand representative demands posting about their product but is not willing to create a paid partnership with her. She added:

> There are also many companies that say "I'm going to send you perfumes and clothing, make a video about that" or "I'll give this for that", "make a little basic video." But they can't know that it's taking you ten hours for editing, six hours for filming. It wouldn't be a very sustainable business.

The content analysis of the Instagram posts generated minimal data to corroborate or refute participants' assertions about dealing with brands. There was only casual reference to a brand's approach during the analysis. SMI 1 mentioned in her post the brand representative who had sent makeup products for testing along with tickets to attend a volleyball game associated with the beauty products company, thanking them for the press kit.

External Influences

The results of the interviews clearly indicated a set of external influences SMIs face. The themes that emerged from examining data are *Controversy, Exclusivity, Professional Relationships, Legal Boundaries,* and *Information Subsidies*. The size of each area in Figure 6 below reflects the number of coding references under each theme; a larger area indicates more coding references.

Controversy. All the participants reported that they avoid posting about sensitive topics on their social media channels. Politics was mentioned by all interviewees, expect SMI 2, as the topic they avoid commenting on at all costs. In addition to that, SMI 1, SMI 6, and SMI 8 mentioned religion. SMI 2 and SMI 7 pointed out race as a controversial topic. SMI 4 declared she wouldn't discuss social problems through her social media channels, while SMI 8 believes that posting about sexual orientation could generate unwanted discussion among the followers. The interviewees reported that they refrain from commenting on these themes for different reasons. One of them is to avoid creating a hostile space where followers might offend each other as they discuss several points of views, potentially generating unfruitful discussions. Furthermore, SMI 3 and SMI 4 claimed their social media channels should provide leisure time for the followers. SMI 4 commented on this perspective. "I want to bring that moment where the person will disconnect from the world, where they will think about something good, will think about makeup, you know? I like lighter things, making lighter content." The third reason that came up for not covering sensitive subjects is avoiding misunderstanding. SMI 5 said:

> People whine about everything now and everything is controversial. We often post
>
> something so dumb and innocent but then somebody comes and says "wow…." and takes

it to a polar opposite of what you're wanting to say. So, I normally avoid things like that,

avoid making gender commentary.

The results of the content analysis are consistent with the interview results. There was no

post related to the sensitive topics mentioned previously in this section.

Figure 6. Hierarchy chart of all External Influences. From top right to bottom left, the hierarchy chart generated by NVivo 12 includes the themes that were coded under External Influences: Controversy, Professional Relationships, Exclusivity, Legal boundaries, and Information subsidies. The size of each area represents the frequency of the coding references.

Exclusivity. When asked about exclusivity contracts with brands, SMI 2, SMI 3, and

SMI 7 declared they would be open to a negotiation of this nature with their favorite brands.

However, even though they had no exclusivity contracts in force, SMI 3, SMI 6, and SMI 7 revealed they end up recommending the same professionals and products on their social media channels most of the time. According to them, those choices were based on their preference and the relationship developed with professionals such as hair stylists, makeup artists, and dentists. In addition to that, the same three respondents expressed concern to how the followers would understand, for example, their recommending different professionals every time. SMI 7 said, "I have a partnership with my dentist because he's the one I go to. I wouldn't go to other dentists for that type of work. But not because I have a contract with him. It's all about common sense." On the other hand, SMI 4, SMI 5, and SMI 6 positioned against exclusive stories. SMI 5 argued,

> Take my contract with a hair products brand, for example. In my case I don't only use this brand. I love the brand but I also use other brands. So, if I test other brands, I want to have the freedom to say, "guys, this product here is also incredible."

SMI 4 offered insights into why companies try to negotiate exclusivity. "The company can't deal well with competitors, that's why they're all for this. But I'm pro-influencer. I believe the more he talks about other brands, the more truth he will give to the public."

Likewise, SMI 8 was upfront about her criteria for accepting an exclusivity offer, "If I already know the product and approve it, and the company is willing to pay for the exclusivity, I would at least think about it," she said.

The content analysis of the Instagram posts generated no data to corroborate or refute participants' assertions about these topics.

Professional relationships. The majority of the SMIs that participated in this study reported that professional relationships influence their decision-making process for their social

media profiles. SMI 2 and SMI 4 declared that they might post about something or attend an event just because of the relationship they have with the brand. SMI 4 said, "Sometimes we work with the company for a long time; the company sends product, the agency invites us to an event we wouldn't go to, but we will go because we have that relationship." SMI 5, SMI 6, and SMI 7 emphasized their goal of establishing long-term partnerships, shaping the content clearly for the brands in the niche market that each one targets and can potentially influence. SMI 1 said she is faithful to her favorite brands and offers priority for those who can collaborate with her. However, if a company suggests that she lie about a product, she feels confident enough to cut relations with that brand. No nodes under this theme were coded for SMI 3 and SMI 8.

The content analysis of the Instagram posts generated no data to corroborate or refute participants' assertions in this category.

Legal boundaries. This topic yielded minimal data, making this one of the smallest themes. Only SMI 1, SMI 3, and SMI 8 reported being aware of relevant legal boundaries that would affect their work. SMI 1 mentioned slander. Likewise, SMI 3, who covers fitness and lifestyle on his social media platforms, commented that he is aware of local professional regulations that prohibit people who are not licensed to work as a dietician or physical trainer from recommending diet and exercises online:

> I don't post about diets in my social media because I'm not a dietician, and that could cause me a great problem. Sometimes I post about exercises, but I don't post details about the work out, I just post the exercise as a motivation. I show the foods I eat from my diet, but I don't post about specifics of my diet to everyone, because that's the dietician's job.

SMI 8 pointed out copyright regulations. As she runs a baking business and sells specific styles of cakes, the SMI is aware that other people shouldn't post her pictures without her permission and often reports the users who are using her content as their own.

The content analysis of the Instagram posts generated minimal data to corroborate or refute participants' assertions. There was only one reference coded under this theme. Even though SMI 1 did not mention anything relevant during her the interview, she used a hashtag to indicate that someone owns the copyrights on the picture in her post, also tagging the owner in the photo.

Information subsidies. There were only two relevant references to the influence that prepackaged information might have on the content SMIs produce. SMI 2 reported receiving suggestions of stories from media relations practitioners, but she also argued that they are usually not able to convince the influencers that the subjects suggested will be a good fit for social media. SMI 3 claimed that the press releases support his activity, as it helps him produce content faster and more effectively.

Besides the reference described under the topic *Brand's Approach*, there were no other references coded during the content analysis of the participants' Instagram posts.

Brands

This was the second most recurring overall major theme derived from examining data on NVivo. The theme includes more than 100 references the SMIs made to their experiences and expectations when working with brands. Different from the previous theme *Influences*, which had subthemes and categories, all the nodes under this theme were coded under the same category to be analyzed in its entirety.

SMI 6 and SMI 4 are the ones with the most references to this theme, followed by SMI 2, SMI 5, and SMI 1—these three had a similar amount of references to brands. SMI 3, SMI 7, and SMI 8 came next. All the participants confirmed they had been contacted by brand representatives before the date of the interview. These brand representatives were part of different departments in their organizations; some were from the sales team, others were public relations practitioners who also take care of media relations efforts targeting the traditional media, for example. Most of the interviewees revealed that their final goal was to establish and maintain relationships with brands to have either access to paid partnerships or prepackaged information and event invites. SMI 5 said:

> You have to establish these partnerships. It's important for your work. You are there to influence. If you don't have any products, nothing to influence, you're doing that in vain. You're dedicating yourself to something that won't bring in any money at the end of the day.

It also seems to be consensual among the respondents that reference to brands, products, promotional events and the like might happen for three reasons. First, the SMI really likes the topic and finds it relevant for their publics. Their reasoning is connected to internal and external influences as previously mentioned in this study and the reasoning results in earned media for brands. SMI 3 shared an experience in which she posted about a suitcase she had purchased just because she found it to be wonderful and affordable. Even though she did not receive any press releases about it at the time, she felt like she should post about it on her Instagram page. SMI 2, SMI 4, and SMI 7 spoke about situations in which they attended events or mentioned brands as an attempt to either establish or strengthen a relationship with a company.

Being hired is the third reason for the participants to talk about a brand on social media. The negotiation may include attendance to events; number of products mentions in posts; videos, and Instagram stories; trips; and even the pho caption of the pictures about the products, among other details that can be part of a contract.

When asked about their criteria for endorsing or recommending a product, all respondents listed items considered in the decision-making. They claimed to select products that have to do with them and their publics, and then testing the products or services before closing the paid partnership. The interviewees expressed concern about maintaining their credibility and, for that reason, they consider testing the products before committing to a company as a key step of the process. The results of the content analysis of the participants' Instagram posts suggested that this product testing phase is often described to followers. SMI 1, SMI 3, SMI 4 and SMI 5 had posts where they wrote their first impressions about the products and alerted the followers that a complete review would be coming up soon.

Likewise, SMI 2 and SMI 3 emphasized that they like to consider whether they are a good fit for what the company is looking for, as there are many brands that contact them suggesting a project that would not sound interesting to their publics or would not relate to their personality. SMI 2 commented, "I can't accept any job if a product isn't what my public is looking for; I'm not going to bring money to the company and my followers will think that it is very sketchy that I was endorsing something that is not what my blog is about." Once the SMIs approve the product, feel comfortable associating their image to the brand, and agree on the cost for the job, they close the partnership. In Brazil, the law does not recognize the need to disclose if the post is paid advertising or not, and therefore only SMI 4 reported using hashtags (i.e. #ad, #publi) or social media's respective tag (i.e. "Paid partnership" tag on Instagram or YouTube) to

indicate the paid product mention in some cases. The content analysis results corroborated these findings, suggesting that disclosing paid partnership is not a trend for the SMIs.

The respondents generally revealed that they have experienced uncomfortable situations with brands' representatives. Most of the interviewees reported receiving invites for events or story suggestions that have nothing to do with their personality. SMI 4 mentioned a time when she received in the mail a press kit of a product for curly hair. She thought that was odd, because her hair is not curly, "They didn't bother to find out if my hair is straight or to explain to me what I would even do with that product for curly hair."

Most of the interviewees also pointed that they have already received offers to partner with brands that are incompatible with their lifestyle. As SMI commented:

> You'll see, for example, people who aren't even mothers and who don't even have children advertising children's clothing. If I owned a business related to children, I would want an influencer that is also a mother. It's much more authentic to people.

Another type of issue the respondents reported having with brand representatives is the tone of demand in the approach. SMI 4 summarized the issue:

> Companies have the freedom to send us product and we do, too, [have the freedom] to talk about them if we want to. The only thing is that often we have the opposite, where companies send product and then want to demand that we talk about them.

As a consequence of this kind of approach, all the participants revealed they have felt devalued at some point. There is an appreciation for professionals that treat them as credible sources and understand their job dynamics. On the other hand, they felt disrespected when brand representatives did not treat them professionally nor acknowledged their activity as a business.

Situations when they felt they had been unprofessionally treated included lack of transparency about the product, unclear terms when offering a partnership, and expectations that are not proportional to the amount they are willing to pay the influencer.

Content

The third most recurring overall major theme that came up during the analysis of data is content. Under this theme, there are NVivo nodes in which the respondents reveal the kind of content that is covered on their social media profiles, the approach for each type of social media platform, and strategies implemented in their content for increasing the number of followers and engagement in the pages.

All the respondents reported being very active on their Instagram accounts. Those respondents who also maintain a YouTube channel reported that the YouTube content covers the same areas as their posts on Instagram. Besides posting a lot about their daily life, all of them also emphasized the areas they usually cover. SMI 1, for example, claimed that she covers "anything related to fashion, beauty, gastronomy and anything related to African American hair," while SMI 3 explained that his posts are focused on helping people who are trying to live a healthier life and, along with that, other relevant uplifting topics, "I have a philosophy related to my social media, that I will always post good things. This is what I say: the world is full of negativity, so we need to share good things." SMI 6 reported covering fashion, beauty, and lifestyle, including all her day-to-day life. However, she claimed she does not limit herself to these topics:

Usually my parameter is what would add something for me, be it the outfit of the day, a

beautiful photo, or wise words, motivational words, a "Good morning" in the stories, or a

decoration tip that I'll give while touring my apartment. I usually post what I like to see.

The results of the content analysis are consistent with the findings of the interviews.

There was no post that wandered into irrelevant territory or would go against what the

participants revealed in this regard.

SMI 3, SMI 4, SMI 5, and SMI 6 expressed concern about the quality of the pictures

posted on Instagram. SMI 4 reported, "There are photos there where we're enjoying the moment,

we're eating, and we take a picture, but there are also photos where we do an external shoot and

that takes some time." SMI 5 commented on how careful she is with her content on Instagram.

"I'm all about making new editions and testing new editions. So, not from the very beginning,

but to take the photo, edit it, and post it, it's about 30 minutes."

Only SMI 2 acknowledged changing the type of content depending on the social media

platform. On Instagram, the focus is on beauty and fashion tips, "because the readers share and

tag a lot of friends." The recurrence of this type of tips was noted during the content analysis of

her Instagram feed. There were six posts from her sample that fell under this category. But her

focus shifts to relationship tips on Facebook. She argued that Facebook offers more features that

benefit the conversation with her followers about this specific topic. Her blog, for its part,

includes all the areas she usually covers (i.e. fashion beauty, and relationship).

Even though SMI 3, SMI 5, and SMI 6 reported covering the same areas of interest in

their different social media platforms, they said they adjust their approach of the subjects

according to the type of media. For pictures on Instagram, for example, there is an extra care

with the quality of the photo, scenario, angle, and even with the organization of the feed, as mentioned previously in this study. Instagram stories, on the other hand, receive the more immediate, superficial content. On YouTube, the SMIs discuss their same topics further and create narratives. SMI 5 commented on the difference between the expectations around Instagram posts and YouTube videos: "The Instagram audience wants to see a world, how do I put it, a world that's cuter. On YouTube, however, I have more freedom to be real and to make vlogs, with normal hair and less makeup."

Other concerns that at least half of the SMIs expressed are related to the choice of words and length of the texts. Those who opined about the topic agreed that the captions on Instagram need to be straightforward and sound as natural as possible. "No one is willing to read long posts nowadays", SMI 8 argued. SMI 5 and SMI 6 also seemed concerned with displaying their personality through written or oral communication with their followers. SMI 6 said, "Whether in an advertisement or in a text about my routine, always I try to choose words that pass my essence, without sounding fake." SMI 5 also commented on one of her strategies related to this:

> Another thing I like doing is trying to interact with my audience, have conversations with them. If you aren't having a conversation, it could be just a caption, maybe just emojis. The person might see the picture you posted and might think "how cool!" but you aren't truly interacting. Interacting is what will truly make you grow and have a more devoted audience. So, I'll always ask questions, like "How is your day going?", "What are your plans for the day, what are you going to do?"

In order to assess the acceptance of the posts and followers' preferences, the SMIs reported using different types of strategies. The most common method is the analytic tools for each social media platform. Information about their audience (i.e. gender, age) and post reach

percentages are some of the data they mentioned having access to. All of them also claimed paying closer attention to the comments, likes, and direct messages. SMI 4 said, "I maybe posted a photo and, man, it was horrible, resulted in few likes, low engagement, low visualization, so it means that the people did not like whatever I posted." SMI 8 shared a similar experience. "When I launch a new product, I realize that my followers really like it and there's a lot of engagement. When I travel, I get so many direct messages, they want to know everything about my trip."

All the respondents reported the importance of Instagram stories for engaging with their followers and, consequently, attracting more users to their channels. That's the way they interact more with the audience sharing their daily life, creating polls, asking questions. There also are the direct messages they receive from the followers on Instagram. SMI 6 commented on her experience with actively engaging with followers:

> As my audiences and I have a very close relationship, I say that it really is a friendship [with the followers]. So many people share by email or direct messages via Instagram their personal problems, their secrets. In the same way that they follow my day-to-day, they also want to share some topics about their lives with me.

Mediating the Media - Participant Insights

One of the objectives of this study was to examine how rigorous the Mediating the Media model is as a framework to build effective relationships with SMIs. During the interviews, the participants offered insights into the model that included the influences (1) *Journalists' Mindset*, (2) *Newsroom or Organizational Routine*, (3) *Extra-Media Forces*, and (4) *Media Ideology*. They were asked to point out if those concepts were relevant to them, to rank the influences and

to modify the model so it would be more applicable to their experience. Their responses were coded under the theme *Insights into the Model* in NVivo and presented below, divided per SMI.

SMI 1 believes that the model is applicable to her experience, but she would remove *Extra-Media Forces*, ranking the other three influences as *Media Ideology*, O*rganizational Routine*, and *Journalist's Mindset*. If she could adjust the model further, she would add her personal life as one of the main factors and that the business must be profitable for her.

SMI 2 also thinks the model is applicable, especially because of the element *Newsroom Routine*. The factors were ranked as *Newsroom Routine, Journalists' Mindset,* and *Extra-Media Forces*, excluding *Media Ideology*.

SMI 3, on the other hand, would not change the order of the elements. He would, however, add *Personal Life* as an element as relevant as *Journalists' Mindset*. "When we work with digital influencers, we can't not consider their human side. The audience is concerned with my love life, for example. It is concerned with how my puppy is doing," he justified.

SMI 4 ranked the factors as *Journalists' Mindset*, *Extra-Media Forces*, *Organizational Routines*, and *Media Ideology*. She pointed out that the model is applicable to her experience to some extent: "In terms of mindset, it does have an influence. The rest has an influence on a small scale… it isn't so important for that reason, but it makes sense."

SMI 5 also put *Journalists' Mindset* at the top of the ranking, followed by *Extra-Media Forces* and *Organizational Routines*. She did not consider *Media Ideology* a relevant factor. She explained why the mindset was chosen as the main factor,

> You have to basically be researching what's popular, to try to capitalize on that before it
>
> becomes mainstream. Or even taking that mainstream topic and doing something related

to that. You can't simply take something popular just because it's popular at that moment. You have to take something popular and present to your audience with your own spin on that.

When asked if the model is applicable to her experience, SMI 5 said she would include her personal life as a relevant factor that would come after the mindset in importance. "The hot topics [in your personal life] always attract the curiosity of others", she emphasized.

SMI 6 reported that her personal values have a stronger influence over her social media content. She explained, "I believe the journalist needs to maintain a high level of impartiality. In my case, as an influencer, my job is to express my opinion. My values would be stronger, more latent." This is what her model would look like: *Personal Values*, *Journalist's Mindset*, *Organizational Routine*, *Extra-Media Forces*, and, finally, *Media Ideology*.

SMI 7 did not provide a lot of insights into the model. She mainly pointed out her influence as a public figure playing a great part on her content on social media and emphasized that the market and her followers' interests factor in on her work. Based on what she said, it is possible to imply that she would keep the factors *Journalists' Mindset* and *Extra-Media Forces*, disregarding the other two factors in the original model.

Finally, SMI 8 declared she was not able to rank the factors, because all the factors would play a similar part in her decision-making. According to her, all elements would serve her main goal, which is to reach her followers. She added:

I need to come up with interesting content, so they get interested in my product, that's how I make my living. Secondly, I need to create content that is shareable, so I catch the

other people's attention. Also, even though I don't give much attention to posting my

personal life, I know that is import for followers.

Based on the findings as reported in this section, it is possible to examine further the

research questions set forth in this study. The next chapter covers the contributions each of the

themes might provide to enlighten the theoretical framework for social media relations and

relationship building with SMIs.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Prior to this study, research surrounding social media relations and relationship building with SMIs was limited to a few studies that explored influencers' motivations and the applicability of public relation theories to the dynamic between brands and bloggers. Since companies started using the voices of SMIs to market their products, a hybrid approach has risen organically, in which both earned and paid media can be conquered in the social media platforms and reach an audience that assigns credibility to a SMI.

One of these studies was performed by Pang et. al (2016), in which the influences that impact what the SMIs in Singapore decide to post on their pages were identified as an effort to support public relations practitioners as they attempt to engage with bloggers. Their Mediating the Media model was used as the theoretical framework for the study. In this same light, the present research aimed to replicate those procedures among SMIs in Brazil, where culture significantly differs from Singapore's in two of Hofstede cultural dimensions (1980). The methods and findings of this study were described in previous chapters, including a round of interviews with SMIs and a content analysis of a sampling of the interviewees' Instagram posts.

To adequately explore this topic among Brazilian SMIs, I set forth research questions that yielded an examination of Brazil's social media influence context using the insights brought up by Pang et. al's (2016) in Singapore, an analysis of their model, and examination into what extent that model holds up in a cultural scenario other than Singapore. Findings around the research questions I set forth in this study are again explored in the following discussion.

Research Question 1

The first research question examined what SMIs say an organization can do to use its understanding of the set of internal and external influences to build effective relations with SMIs

in Brazil. Based on the set of influences identified in this research, the findings suggested several

strategies that public relations practitioners can use when working with these stakeholders.

Since the influences related to the SMIs' P*ersonal Taste*, *Personal Life,* and *Personal*

Values proved to be of great importance to the interviewees, working with SMIs means to

research their profile closely (i.e. interests, style, phase in life) prior to any outreach to identify

whether a brand's content is compatible with their work. The pertinence of these influences also

suggested that brands should be willing to allow SMIs to keep their personality and unique

perspectives in their coverage, either paid or unpaid. Different from the traditional media, these

SMIs are individuals who show their personalities in their work.

Regarding payment to a SMI for mention of a brand or organization, the findings

reported under the internal influences *Monetary Agreement*, *Convenience,* and *Brand's Approach*

allowed me to imply that SMIs expect to be acknowledged as professional content creators and

to be paid for a brand's insertions, unless they decide to post about the brand independently

based on other motivations (i.e. personal taste, convenience). In this same light, working with

SMIs should mean understanding the driving forces that motivate each blogger, as payment does

not guarantee acceptance of a partnership offer and, as the findings under external influence

Exclusivity accentuated, not all of them are open to exclusivity contracts. Preserving credibility

came up as a concern during the interviews, and, for that reason, quality of the product or

service, relevance for the SMIs' audiences, and alignment with bloggers' interests affected their

decisions towards creating a partnership.

Additionally, the results under the internal influencers *Followers' Interests, Social Media*

Trends, and *News Values* suggested that, when working with SMIs, public relations practitioners

should provide current and relevant content to their followers, helping SMIs to increase

engagement in their pages. The information subsidies should be social media friendly and framed accordingly for each type of platform and blogger's personality, understanding the relevance the prepackaged information can offer in the social media environment. Findings also indicated that SMIs avoid generating content related to sensitive topics (i.e. religion, politics) and they also are aware of some legal boundaries; thus, they are less likely to cover controversial subjects.

The set of internal and external influences ultimately implied that public relations practitioners should acknowledge that SMIs seek long-term collaborative relationships with organizations. Interviewees recognized the importance of an organization to support their activity as both profitable and relevant business. Even though Archer & Harrigan (2016) and Abidin (2015) argued that, for most bloggers, the relationship with practitioners is less about dialogue and more about being given payment for any mention of brand, this present research suggested otherwise. While payments ensure the sustainability of digital influencer activity as a job, interaction with brands without a monetary agreement can be achieved as long as practitioners can ensure relevant content to followers, creating win-win situations for both brands and SMIs and stating the importance of dialogue between both parties.

The strategies to approach SMIs through social media relations are consolidated in the Social Media Influencer model in Figure 7. The model has three concentric circles. The inner circle contains the internal influences reported in this present study, while the circle in the middle encapsulates the external influences. The outer circle, for its part, posits engagement strategies that organizations can use.
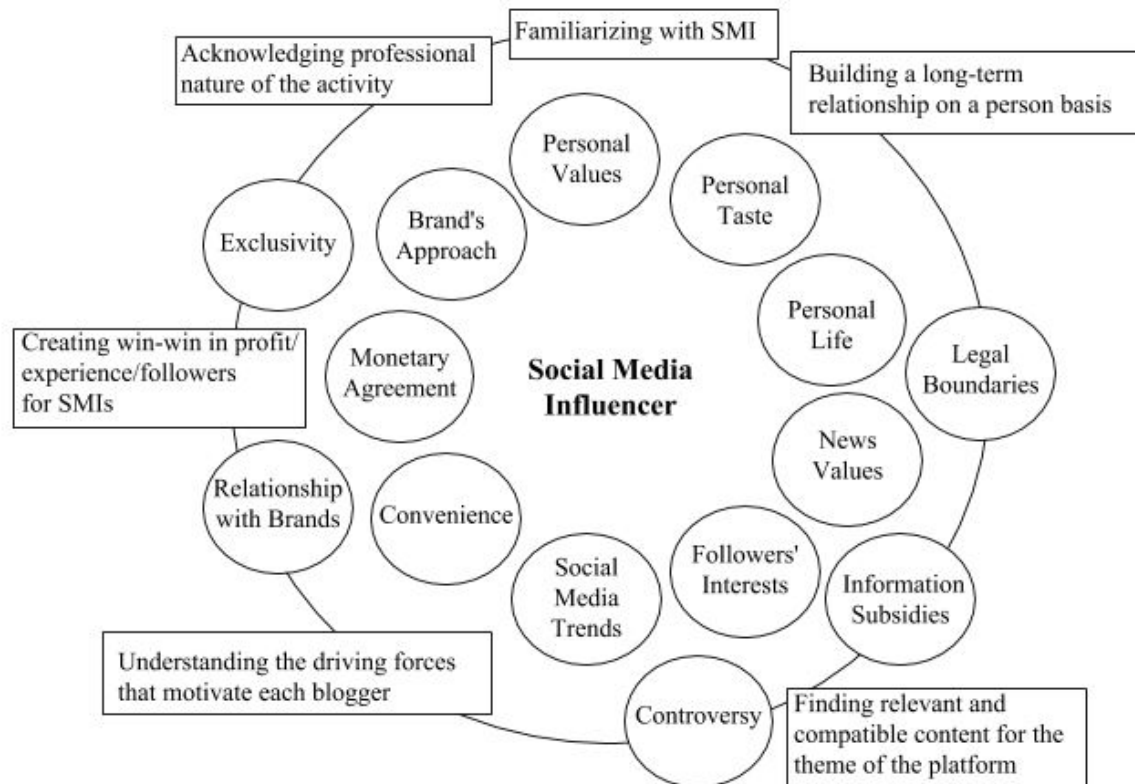
Figure 7. Social Media Influencer Engagement model.

This model can serve as a conceptual representation of the strategies practitioners can employ to build effective social media relations with SMIs. Since personal aspects of SMIs play a great influence in their work, the levels of efficiency in their approach can gain potential if personalized and contextualized for each individual and her or his operational routines.

Research Question 2

The second research question examined if any other influences are at play when building effective relations with SMIs in Brazil. The findings reported under the themes *Brands* and *Content* suggested that concerns with credibility, dedication to social media as primary professional activity, quality of the shared material, and feedback from followers factor into this.

Their concern with credibility directly affects the relations established with brands. The SMIs might reject an invitation to an event or refuse to offer their review on a new product, for example, if that is not a good fit for the audience. This also applies to paid partnerships since incompatibility of content might suggest to followers that the blogger is not true to himself anymore. Therefore, SMIs take some steps to preserve their image before their followers.

Six out of eight interviewees have their activity as SMI as their full-time job. On average, the participants spent almost seven hours online daily. For some, the hours spent daily maintaining their social media pages were over 12 hours a day. Since time is precious, practitioners should engage SMIs on topics that they are interested in or that are highly relevant to the theme of their social media platform.

The quality of the material provided by public relations professionals as information subsidies should be of high standards. SMIs are concerned about, for example, keeping their feed on Instagram organized, harmonious, and aesthetically beautiful, while keeping their text short, straightforward, and relevant for their publics. It is important for practitioners to create content along these lines, understanding that the prepackaged information produced for traditional media, for instance, might have to be adapted to be more useful for SMIs.

The interviewees valued their interactions with followers. While the participants reported using analytics tools to track many important metrics, such as age and gender of the audience, they ultimately resort to the number and quality of comments, number of likes, and direct messages to measure how followers are receiving the content generated in their social media pages. Public relations practitioners can leverage brand communication through SMIs by offering content that increases the engagement between blogger and audience.

Research Question 3

The third research question examined what engagement strategies identified during the study are being implemented and reflected on social media influencers' posts in Brazil. The engagement strategies are consolidated in Figure 8. Unfortunately, the content analysis of the participants' feeds did not provide sufficient data to answer this question; it was not possible to imply which engagement strategy had taken place for the brand insertion to happen.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question examined how rigorous the Mediating the Media model as a framework is to build effective social media relations. All participants reported less relevance of external influences compared to internal influences and recognized that the element *Journalists' Mindset* is applicable to their experience as SMIs. Yet, practitioners need to assess the degree to which internal influences act on each SMI. SMIs 1, 3, and 5 said that they would include their personal life in the same level as *Journalists' Mindset*. SMI 6 declared she would put personal values before the mindset. SMI 2, on the other hand, believed that *Organizational Routines* is the main factor on a model applicable for SMIs like her. SMI 1 put *Media Ideology* on the top of her rank and excluded *Extra-Media Forces*.

Based on the participants' insights into the model and overall data from the interviews, the Mediating the Media model is applicable to the SMIs experience with some modifications. The first one would be to acknowledge that blogging is anchored in the SMI's personal aspects, which, from this study, could be linked to a new term that I refer to as *Social Persona*. In this sense, personal life, personal taste and personal values should come before the *Journalist's Mindset*.

This modification on the framework makes sense even more when we consider that SMIs are expected to share opinions and experiences with their followers, while journalists are expected to report news in an unbiased way. SMIs aim to express their unique voice to build and preserve their credibility, while members of the traditional media are encouraged to suppress their opinions so that their credibility is strengthened based on objectivity. The second change would be to add the influence *Economic Goals*. Since SMIs usually operate as a business and expect to make a living from their activities on social media, this element would be part of the internal influences and would come just after the *Social Persona* and the *Journalist's Mindset*.

The original terms from the Mediating the Media model as reinterpreted by Pang et. al (2016) are also applicable to this present study. *Journalist's Mindset* was changed to *Mindset on Content Judgment* and *Newsroom Routines* to *Media Routines* as they seem to more adequate for the SMI experience. *Extra-media Forces* was kept as is and carry the same meaning as in the original model presented by Pang (2010). As also occurred in Pang et. al's (2016) research, "Media ideology is excluded as it is largely irrelevant to the interviewed SMIs who are motivated by their personal convictions than the overall role that they play in the larger media ecosystem" (p. 65).

In summary, then, each element that composes the Mediating the Media model according to the findings of this present study is defined as below:

- *Social Persona*: All personal aspects of the SMI influence their work. Personal taste, values, and life circumstances differentiate him or her from other SMIs and have a great influence over the content generated for their social media platforms.

- *Mindset on Content Judgment*: In consonance with results from Pang et al. (2016), "it is largely dependent on (a) relevance and fit of content to platform themes and (b) editorial

independence to maintain their voice and credibility"(p. 64); in this context, relevance of content also include concern about pleasing the followers' interests. SMIs aims to create content that will be relevant for their audience.
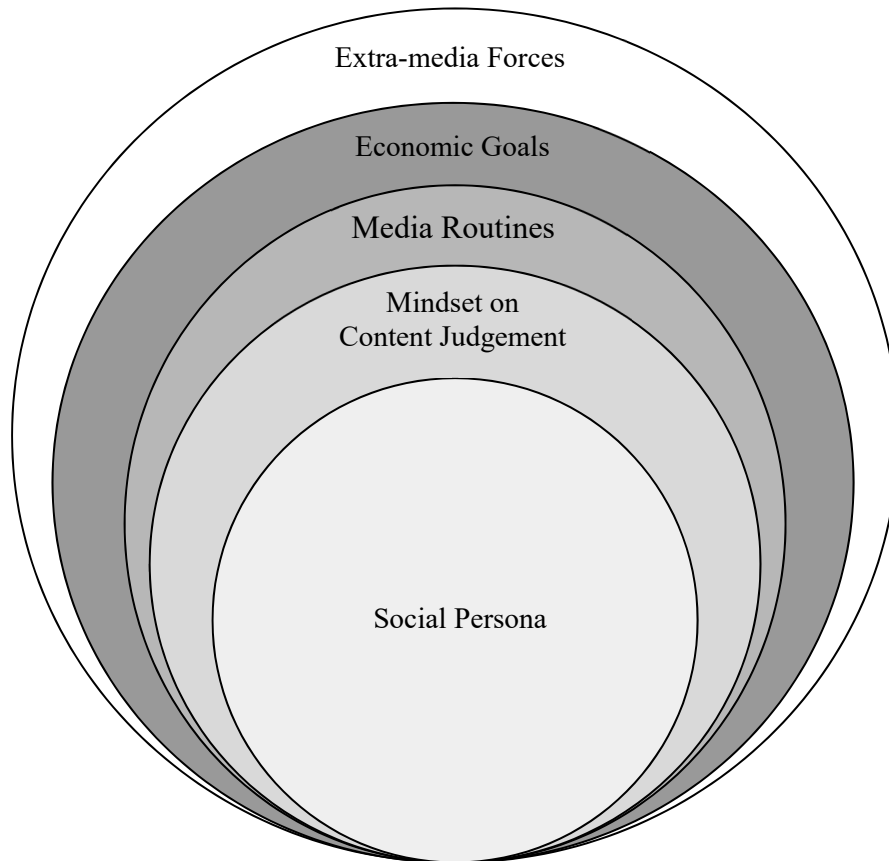
Figure 8. The Mediating the Media Model for the SMIs in Brazil.

- *Media Routines*: Budget and manpower constraints impact what stories get covered. In consonance with results from Pang et al. (2016), "External sources supplying information subsidies are welcomed by SMIs and that is where PR practitioners can facilitate SMIs' postings by providing multimedia and social media friendly content" (p. 64).

- *Economic Goals*: Profitability is a priority for the SMIs. Blogging is a business, and

practitioners should be aware of the time and costs involved in their activity, instead of

expecting SMIs to write about a brand without payment.

- *Extra-Media Forces*: Existing relationships between brands and SMIs, market forces,

    legal boundaries, and the intensity of social media competition might affect the content

    generated in the social media channels.

Research Question 5

The fifth and final research question examined how significant similarities and

differences found between SMIs environments in Brazil and Singapore impact Pang's (2016)

models. There were more similarities than differences, but the discrepancies were relevant

enough to impact the proposed theoretical framework.

Interviewees reported that SMI Mindset, Operating Routines, and Extra-Media Forces are

indeed applicable to their experience as a blogger, in consonance with Pang et al's (2016)

Mediating the Media model for the SMIs. Even though most of the interviewees acknowledged

the importance of the SMI mindset and compared themselves to the traditional media at some

extent, the personal aspects (i.e. personal life, personal taste, personal values) came up as more

prevalent in the set of internal influences among SMIs in Brazil.

SMIs in Brazil also frequently mentioned that they would not cover controversial topics

in their social media, because they believe that their platforms should be used to share uplifting,

fun, and positive messages. On the other hand, the reason why SMIs in Singapore would avoid

sensitive topics was to refrain covering issues that are not permissible for public discussion in the

country. It is therefore possible to imply that this discrepancy is due to how each country scores

on the Hofstede (1980) dimension *Uncertainty Avoidance*. Brazilians score high on this

dimension, valuing good and relaxing moments in their everyday life as an escape valve for the

bureaucracy and its laws and rules, while Singaporeans abide by many rules and, for that reason,

those who work with the media need to work within certain parameters.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study offered valuable insights into how public relations professionals conduct social media relations efforts with SMIs. As bloggers become more and more influential, prevalent, and strategic for brands, organizations need to explore the fullest potential of brand communication through SMIs. Getting to know the influences that impact what is posted on their social media pages is the first step for utilizing this communication channel more efficiently.

Practitioners should familiarize themselves with the SMIs before engaging. Different from traditional media, SMIs anchor their activity on their personality and unique voice, so it is important for public relations professionals to assess their preferences and to know which influences has more prevalent impact for each blogger. Using this exercise as the starting point, the practitioner can explore ways of creating a win-win circumstance for both organization and the SMI, either in generating paid media or earned media.

The challenge is to synchronize public relations practice as recognized in the Excellence Theory of Public Relations Management (Grunig, 1992) with current market circumstances, in which SMIs expect to be paid for brand insertions unless they decide to independently post about a product or service due to other factors (i.e. personal taste, convenience). Even when there is a monetary agreement involved, the approach should be collaborative, transparent, and straightforward. Practitioners should focus on building a long-term relationship with the blogger on a personal basis. As discussed in this thesis, there is much more than money on the table when dealing with SMIs.

Limitations

As previously mentioned in the methods section, the interviews were conducted in participants' and the researcher's native language, Portuguese. Along with a translation

professional with more than five years of experience, I translated the content as faithfully to the original as possible. But I do recognize that it has been challenging in terms of accuracy when translating the content from Portuguese into English, in the sense that some meaning of the original text might have been lost during the translation process.

The initial goal of the number of respondents was not reached. The goal was to have at least 10 interviews, but after considerable efforts only eight people agreed to participate in the study. However, this limitation should not have affected the results, since the respondents offered sufficient relevant insights into all the topics discussed during the interview.

As the research was trying to test the Mediating the Media model in Brazil, the analysis might have been limited to examination of those specific topics. Therefore, it is possible that other relevant topics that are directly related to the investigated issues could have gone unnoticed due to that focus.

For the content analysis of Instagram posts, not all influences identified during the analysis of the interviews could be assessed due to its subjective aspect. Instead of taking the risk of implying too much, I decided not to code themes that were not easily recognizable in the posts. For example, the content analysis of the participants' feeds did not provide sufficient data to answer the third research question, which aimed to examine what engagement strategies identified during the study are being implemented and reflected on social media influencers' posts in Brazil. Since it was not possible to imply which engagement strategy had taken place for the brand insertion to happen, the method should be adapted in future research to ideally investigate with the SMIs what engagement strategies practitioners used to get the brand inserted into specific posts.

Future Research

Just as this research tested the model among SMIs in Brazil, future research could test the model in other countries. It would be helpful to test the model among bloggers that write about different categories that would not normally open a lot of room for personal aspects to see how these influences impact the content of the blog. Future research could also explore the format of information subsidies that caught SMIs' attention more easily.

The convergence of media has brought new interactions where public relation practitioners need to adapt to major changes in the social media environment. Enhancing conceptual understanding of the peculiarity and complexity of relationship building with SMIs, this study provides unique insights into opportunities to advance relationships with SMIs through efficient engagement strategies that should be relevant for the current market settings.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your thoughts are important to us as we look at ways organizations can better and more effectively engage social media influencers.

This questionnaire will take about 20 to 30 minutes of your time, and, in case you are completing it via email, we ask you to fill it out with as much detail as possible.

Your name and all responses you provide for this study will remain confidential. When the results of the study are reported, you will not be identified by name or any other information that could be used to infer your identity. Only researcher and our supervisor-in-charge will have access to view any data collected during this research.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from this research anytime you wish or skip any question you do not feel like answering.

As this is a school-based project, there is no incentive or payment for your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at dessaferreira@gmail.com

Thank you.

1. General information

Age	
Gender	M/F
Highest educational level attained	
Organization	
Current position & brief job description	

2. Social media use

A	B	C	D	E
Social media platform	URL / usernames	Number of years on the platform	Number of followers	Average amount of time spent on this platform daily (mins)

2a. What motivates you to spend this amount of time?

3. Time spent online / Activities while online

How much time (in minutes) do you spend online daily?	
What do you do while online and how much time (in minutes) do you spend on each activity? E.g. Update social media accounts / 120 mins	
On average, how much time do you take to produce one blog post (text & pictures)?	
Is there specific content that you post on different social media platforms? Why or why not?	
How do you decide on the content to post on the different social media platforms?	

4. Attendance at events

Have you been engaged by individuals / organizations to attend events and blog about the events thereafter?	

What are some examples of events that you've been to?	
How do you decide if you want to attend and event?	
What type of events are you more likely to attend?	
How often do you attend such events?	
What type of events are you more **unlikely** to attend?	

5. Post-event follow-up

When do you write/share about the event? Why?	
Do you consider that certain issues have a certain 'lifespan', and would eschew posting about the issue if it's past its shelf life or is no longer current?	
How do you determine if a certain topic is no longer current?	
How do you determine if a topic is worthy of sharing / writing about?	
What are the factors that make it more likely for you to share or not share the event on social media platforms after the event?	
How much does your personal background influence your slant of article and choice of words? E.g. personal experiences, family, ideology	

6. Target audiences

When you post updates on social media, who are the audiences you have in mind, and why?	
How do you seek to understand what interests your audiences?	
How do you try to shape a story so that your	

audiences will be interested in the posting? In your opinion, how important is this? Why or why not?	
What do you do to increase your influence (with regard to number of views, number of shares, number of people who take action, etc.)?	

7. Stories

Do you offer exclusive stories for different media organizations? Why do you think exclusive stories are important to media organizations?	
How much does balance or neutrality matter in your writings? Would you seek the other side of the story before your post?	
Who do you consult with regard to editorial decisions, if any?	
How do you think competition among bloggers or social media influencers affect your postings?	
Are there other external factors that influence what you choose to post?	
How does the prevailing social media landscape affect your postings?	
How does the prevailing socio-political climate affect your postings?	
How do you plan your postings around Brazil's multi-racial and multicultural environment?	
To what extent do/would government interventions affect your postings?	

What are the legal boundaries and OB markers that you are aware of and to which take care to adhere to? How do you find out about these OB markers and keep track of changes?	

What are other considerations before posting any content on social media? Why do you have them in mind?	
Are there any areas that you would not cover? Why or why not?	
How do you seek to use your influence to create positive change (e.g. share postings of missing children)?	

8. Corporate Communications relations

If a corporate communications officer from an organization/agency reaches out to you to present their side of the story for an article you posted, would you engage the officer? Why?	
If a corporate communications officer / marketing officer approaches you for a branding exercise, would you agree? Why or why not? What are your top considerations?	
In your opinion, what other factors should be considered when building strong social media relations between corporate communications officers and social media influencers like yourself?	
If an organisation were interested in engaging you to be their social media commentator or to write an endorsement piece for them, what would be your consideration/s?	

9. Mediating the media model

Figure one presents the mediating the media model.

The model posits several types of influences that influence the traditional media.

Journalists' mindset is guided by traditional news values like immediacy, excitement, and novelty, which help them to sieve through large volumes of information passing through the newsrooms daily.

Newsroom or organizational routines revolve around each media company's specific roles and objectives in a community. Ensuring profitability and sustainability influences editorial decisions. Budget and manpower constraints impact what news gets covered.

Extra-media forces include the existing relationships between organizations and media establishments, market forces, governmental regulations, legalities, size of the media industry and the intensity of media competition.

Media ideology refers to media organizations' role in society and their reasons for existence.

Which factors are relevant to you and which are not? Why?	

Please rank these factors in terms of how accurately they describe your experience	

Do you think the model is applicable to you and other bloggers you know? Why or why not?	
If you could improve the model to make it more relevant to your experience, what would you add in or remove?	
Do you believe that PR practitioners can cultivate social media relations with influencers such as yourself?	
In your opinion, how do you think public relations practitioners can approach social media relations in a more systematic and effective manner?	
In your opinion, what do you think is currently lacking among practitioners (skills, experiences, resources etc.) when trying to cultivate strong social media relations? How can this be improved?	

###

APPENDIX B

Interview transcripts

* The answers for topics 1 and 2 were consolidated on table 1. Therefore, the transcripts start on

question 2a as shown below.

2a.   What motivates you to spend this amount of time?

SMI 1: What motivated me to spend that time on social media, at first was to keep me busy and entertained, now my goal is to have a growth in following and engagement and turn that into a steady income.

SMI 2: Well, I like it, so I spend as much time I can with my readers and followers.

SMI 3: I'm a journalist, so I love the communications area. Since I was a child I was in love with communication and I fell so in love with the digital communication area that became very common in my life. It is part of me, it's part of my life so it is easy for me to do it. What really motivates me is the passion for communication.

SMI 4: In reality, we're on Instagram all the time, aren't we? Even more so in my case, because aside from my Instagram, I also take care of the Instagram accounts of various companies in the agency, so on Instagram social media I am present the whole time I'm awake but on my personal account I probably spend some two hours per day, which I spend editing photos and posting. In fact, today, previously it was a bit different because my career as an influencer brought me more than just relevance in the market, it was always very good and relevant me being a communications professional. I'm a digital marketing expert so having that influence for me as an influencer always helped me in my career so often I worked and I had a relevance in digital marketing because I was able to leverage my own profile so I was also apt in leveraging the profile of companies, does that make sense? So it turns out that my work as an influencer was more than a ladder to leverage my work as a digital marketing professional today, it also ends up helping me because the agency having this knowledge and being known in the market as an influencer also makes me able to help other influencers grow in the market, so it's also important for the agency that I have this visibility.

SMI 5: This is what I've loved doing since I was little. I used to love photography and making videos. My family had a video company so I would always see my parents doing weddings and videos. It was always something I enjoyed. I got my first camera when I was seven years old. I got into the area of photography, I still make videos where I talk about photography. I found a whole new side of me when I moved to the Caribbean. I wanted to show people a little of what the day-to-day is like for somebody who lives on

an island. It was something so bizarre and I had never seen that before. So I fell in love with sharing a little bit of my life and having that interaction. You see comments such as "I was having a bad day but your video brought my spirits up a little" or even "Because of your photography tips I was able to find work, I was able to improve." These things are so surreal, and they motivate me. It motivates me to want to do more videos and to improve the quality of my videos.

SMI 6: I started very young. I saw on social networks (on YouTube, on Instagram and then on the blog) a great opportunity for exchange. I've always been very passionate about learning and knowing new things, new people. And having it in such a healthy, cool way is what motivates. Meeting so many cool people, so many special people, being able to share a little bit of the I am, bring a little good thing to other people. That is the essence: to be able to take a little of myself to others, and to bring a little of others to me. This is what motivates me, far beyond money, which ends up being a consequence.

SMI 7: *Skipped*

SMI 8: My motivation is to keep my profile updated as much as possible. The photos of the cakes that I'm baking the day can now also be posted on my stories, right? Recording stories take a lot of time. I publish the photos of the cakes that I showed in the day and to interact, right? My followers look for updates about my daily routine, they ask many questions, so I try to interact with them as much as I can.

3. Time spent online / Activities while online

How much time (in minutes) do you spend online daily?

SMI 1: I Spend about 2 hours a day on the social media platform.

SMI 2: *Skipped*

SMI 3: Look, let me think about it, with social media there's work that is external to the social media, it's an offline work, it is connected to social media like, for example, editing pictures and contents, so you're not totally "online" doing that, but at the same time you are producing something to go online, that is why it is hard to measure the time spent online. Since this is my only job, I have all day to work on it, I like to say that people who work with social media doesn't have a set workload, for example, eight hours a day, you are working all day,especially now with the addition of live videos. You are constantly recording stories, like for example, on instagram you are showing your daily routine, so you always produce content all day.

SMI 4: Wow, all the time. In the morning, I'm on the whole time from 9am to 1pm more or less, I'm online this whole time working, right? In my office I'm working and in the

afternoon when I'm not in a meeting, I work the whole afternoon until evening or I go to a meeting with my clients but I believe the average is more or less 6 to 7 hours per day.

SMI 5: Look, my days begin at 7 am and end at 2 or 3 in the morning, so it's very hard. I record by myself, I edit by myself, I write the script by myself, I answer things by myself. One thing that people do not observe is that they watch a video on youtube that's 3 minutes long and there it is, just that… but we do not have to answer emails, we have to respond to comments. A day in the life of an influencer isn't just always being present on the networks, so if you are not commenting you are not responding, you are not present. And so work does not end when we take a video to the public and so the video can take 10 hours to edit. To record, for me to get ready, it can take 5 or 6 hours per video.

SMI 6: When we work with social media, time is our exchange currency. I keep joking that my work consumes 24 hours a day, because it is a job in which I share my life. That's the truth. And I'm constantly sharing a bit, because in addition to having that production of content, it's a production of content about my life as well. I do not know exactly how much time I spend on social media X or Y, it's an extremely difficult thing to assess that, because it's very hard for me to disassociate social media, work and life. Everything is very sewn. Even when we try to disconnect from social media, I'm still on.

SMI 7: I usually spend about three, four hours a day on my phone. Instagram is where I spend most of that time, but I've never measured how many hours I spend on there. But I dedicate more time to Instagram because of the stories, the photos, the photo-editing features. So Instagram is where I invest most of my time.

SMI 8: *Skipped*.

What do you do while online and how much time (in minutes) do you spend on each activity? E.g. Update social media accounts / 120 mins

SMI 1: I spend online 1-2 hours per day, I post on Instagram, answer comments on all my social media platforms, like Youtube and Instagram and check other fashion blogs and people I follow. I search for content ideas for my blog during that time too. I try to find relevant information for my blog.

SMI 2: I spend about two hours updating the blog and the dealing with the posts on facebook. The, on Instagram I spend more time because I have to produce the content, which include pictures and, therefore, I have to work on my outfit of the day, too.

SMI 3: *Skipped.*

SMI 4: Yes, so most of the time I'm resolving office stuff actually most of the time I'm on WhatsApp because today all my work contacts are also on WhatsApp so I talk to my clients via WhatsApp, I talk to my influencers' customers via WhatsApp, so most of the time I'm on WhatsApp. In the background I have my clients' email, their Instagram. The time I have to update my own social networks is very small because truly there is not a lot of spare time left over but previously I spent more time and I also spend a lot of time in an image editing program.

SMI 5: Well, I never took time to count because I don't have to clock-in. And so, anytime I'm on the cell phone, I am working… like, there aren't vacations. So you're on vacation but you're working during your vacation. You always have to be responding and updating your stories, Instagram, and later YouTube. There are moments where I wake up, there are moments where I go to sleep.

SMI 6: I decided to organize myself this year to post more videos on YouTube. I came from a very intense study routine. I was a high school student, graduated high school in 2017, and I've always been a very good student. My social networks come from a very turbulent year. My focus has always been on studies, so I had to split myself into a thousand pieces to see if I could organize everything. I've been better organized for four months. I'm doing a schedule for my YouTube. I release content video twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In exceptional cases, I release extra videos - when it's a very specific subject. So at least twice a week, I'm working for about 5 or 6 hours a day, because the production of video, as I do everything. Twice a week I spend about 10 hours on YouTube. For example, on YouTube I get comments from videos I posted years ago, impossible for me, alone, to be able to update everything, answer all the comments... But as I release a video, I try to respond. I will not be able to compute this in hours or minutes for you. It's a bit different on Instagram, it's a very instant social media platform, right? It's all about what is happening now. We can post content using the smartphone. Sometimes you're on the street, you want to take a picture, you do it on your phone. I edit the picture on my phone, post it through my phone. I reply to comments on my phone. So it gets much more practical. And that ends up involving me a lot. You're waiting for a medical appointment, but you're posting content, answering comments, answering direct messages, which is something that is almost impossible. I get many DM (direct messages) during the day, because I post many stories. In fact, the Instagram stories are our virtual journals, right? You can post things with even greater spontaneity. It is available only 24 hours. So people can keep up. My audience interacts a lot. It's all day, and I cannot beat the directs that keep coming in all the time.

SMI 7: *Skipped*.

SMI 8: Almost half of my time online I am just responding to messages from followers who contact me via direct message or customers who want to know prices, so I usually re-direct them to my employees available via Whatsapp. For that reason, I need to be attentive to customers that are interested in my product and redirect them as soon as

possible to the right channel so we won't lose the sale, I pay attention there. I am very careful with these people who, even though they are not my client, follow me because they are inspired by the work that I do.

On average, how much time do you take to produce one blog post (text & pictures)?

SMI 1: If you're taking in consideration the moment I take the pictures, edit, pick which ones to post and write the text, I spend 1-1.5 to create a blog post.

SMI 2: Since I always work on the look and pictures in advance, I only need to create the text or the subtitles. So, depending on the subject it takes me about 20 minutes for each post on Instagram.

SMI 3: So, for example, today you are going to post how long you take to take the picture and prepare the text, right? Then you can divide it in two parts, one is the post, that is more personal and is related to your routine, family. Something that I like, that usually takes ten minutes to post, let's say ten minutes if I write a text with the picture.Let's say thirty minutes to choose the photo and edit. Now when I create a content related to a specific subject, even though it is related to the blog content, for example, if I talk about diet, I write about a specific recipe and that takes more time to create a post, let's say three hours.

SMI 4: On a daily basis, I spend thirty to sixty minutes per photo between editing and writing a caption. That's with a prepared image, the time it takes to do all the editing, writing a caption, planning a time to post all takes an average of an hour per post.

- *And what if you also take into account the time it takes to prepare a photo?*

Man, that's more difficult to answer. There are photos there where we're enjoying the moment, we're eating and we take a picture, but there are also photos where we do an external shoot and that takes some time, so it's all very relative.

SMI 5: For Instagram, it's a little easier. I really value the editing, it's my favorite part because I'm a photographer. I'm all about making new editions and testing new editions. So, not from the very beginning, but to take the photo, edit it, and post it, it's about 30 minutes.

SMI 6: Instagram is a lot easier for me. To take the photo, edit the photo and make a caption, it does not take less than half an hour. Sometimes we do the production to show one specific outfit, and that outfit is exclusive to that photo. It can take even longer, from an hour and a half to two hours.

SMI 7: It takes me about 30 min to edit and post one picture; in 30 minutes, I choose a picture, create a caption, and post it. For example, if I post 3 pictures a day, it will take me about an hour and a half to post them.

SMI 8: I usually take 10 minutes between taking the photo, editing the photo, deciding on a caption. No, 10 minutes is a lot. 5 minutes.

Is there specific content that you post on different social media platforms? Why or why not?

SMI 1: All my social media platforms basically have the same content even though I have different kind of followers in each of my platforms. That way I try to get more engagement from my public.

SMI 2: Not really. I post about relationships both on facebook and on my blog. On Instagram, however, I don't post about that.

SMI 3: Yes, for example, recipes is a subject that I'm only posting on my YouTube channel, because YouTube lets you post longer videos, while on Instagram your videos can be one minute long. So on YouTube, I can make a recipe, explaining in details, step by step to the viewers. I work with platforms that have different niches, for example, Instagram is more oriented to pictures and short videos, while YouTube is oriented to long videos and no pictures. So for each platform I have to make different adjustments specific to it.

SMI 4: The ideal would be that, yes, but today, due to all the time, I cannot. Previously, I had specific content for each platform but today, considering that my main focus is not to be an influencer, my main focus is the agency so in the end it turns out that I do whatever is quickest so normally I publish on Instagram and it goes automatically to Facebook also and for YouTube it needs to be exclusive content, doesn't it? But my YouTube is the least updated due to lack of time.

SMI 5: There are two different audiences. The YouTube audience is very different from the Instagram audience. The Instagram audience likes things more related to, for example, fashion… more related to style advice… they want to see a world, how do I put it, a world that's cuter.. On YouTube, however, I have more freedom to be real and to make vlogs, with normal hair and less makeup. But on Insta, it's an audience that really values this other version, this cuter feed, as they say.

SMI 6: As in my social media channels my audience is very keen to accompany me, has a very great identification with the person, the personality, so there is not much content that I only cover with on Instagram or only cover on YouTube. It's my very essence. Also, we have to define this for the client so that I can prospect in the right way so that the right clients can find me. Just to label me something, I like to say that I cover fashion, beauty and lifestyle. Lifestyle includes behavior and my whole lifestyle, my day to day life. So I always delimit myself with these three things. But it ends up being much more than that,

right? It's a great virtual journal.

SMI 7: No. There are all the same.

SMI 8: No. All content I put on the Instagram is automatically posted on my Facebook page. There's a message on the top of my Facebook page stating that my account is linked directly to my Instagram profile, that I do not usually access that page, and that whoever wants to order one of my cakes should look for me by phone.

How do you decide on the content to post on the different social media platforms?

SMI 1: How I decide on content is very random, it is whatever comes to my mind on that day then I make a video about it.

SMI 2: Well, my facebook and blog readers look for content about relationships. But, on Instagram, they look more for tips about beauty products and clothes you wear in your day-to-day life.
- So, you post the content according to the demands of your readers and followers ?
- Yes, according to what they like, what my readers are looking for.

SMI 3: *Skipped*.

SMI 4: Look, in reality people like myself who work with this, are constantly researching so that we know what's in demand, what will bring results, what does the public expect, we analyze the social media analytics to see what type of content will bring more results. So it's a foundation of research many times, but also other times on a daily basis it's something we take. I say "we" because I speak for myself and my influencers, something we take into consideration it also the harmonizing of the feed. So, for example, we use an organizing app. We have the images, we prepare the images ahead of time, and we organize it all on this app before uploading it to Instagram. And so, for example, if I have an image of an outfit, I won't post any other images with other outfits. So all the posts are organized, we truly have a lot of planning. It's an app that allows us to see beforehand how the feed will be after we publish the post.

SMI 5: *Skipped*.

SMI 6: *Skipped.*

SMI 7: *Skipped.*

SMI 8: *Skipped*.

4. Attendance at events

Have you been engaged by individuals / organizations to attend events and blog about the events thereafter?

> SMI 1: Yes, I'm starting to get invited to events here in Brasilia, while at it I record InstaStories. After the event if I post about it or how, is up to my decision and choice.

> SMI 2: Yes, I have. I go to a lot of events. I've been to Fashion Week in New York, São Paulo and Rio.

> SMI 3: Yes, It always happens , practically everyday I receive invites to cover events and to let my followers know. For example, when there is an event specific to that town or a theme, we receive invites for that all the time.

> SMI 4: Man, a long, long time ago I used to go to two, three events per day – practically every day. Today, since my time is much more limited due to the agency, I am more selective of the invitations I receive every day. However, I still choose the events I am to attend. I only attend events that will bring me some return, whether it's a return with some relationship, a return with visibility, or a monetary return.

> SMI 5: The web-series that was filmed on the outskirts of São Paulo was called Summer Games. They brought 10 digital influencers together from all over Brazil as we filmed for four days. There were brands like Truss and Submarino, so it was a web-series that I recorded with them. Right now, I have a really cool partnership with Submarino's travel agency. I don't know if you've heard of it before but the partnership I have with them entails them taking me on a trip once a month to somewhere. I always find out where the week before. They have me travel so that I can later offer tips and advice to the public, to be able to recommend where to stay, places to eat, things to do. That partnership is really cool. I also have a partnership with hair products brand, which is a marvelous hair product. If you've never tried it before, you really should because it's great. The first time I tried it out was at those Summer Games, their products were on display there. Aside from these examples, I have an agency, so they're the ones who take care of all of that. They schedule things for me and coordinate my partnerships. Next month I'm going to Brazil for a different project that is going to be really big for another web-series with them. I also have invitations, for example Loreal just launched a new product and they send me invitations but it's hard to manage it all.

> SMI 6: Yes, yes.

> SMI 7: Yes.

> SMI 8: Yes, yes, sometimes I go to events.

What are some examples of events that you've been to?

SMI 1: When a restaurant makes any changes to their Menu, they invite us to try it and post on our social media, and when brands come out with their new products. Those two types of events are the most common invites I get.

SMI 2: I go to events if I know my readers will like that.Fashion events, events where they showcase beauty products such as O Boticário, Natura, Vult, Sephora -- I know they [followers]like that, clothing brands.

SMI 3: Recently I hosted the Oba Festival, that is one of the biggest carnivals of Sao Paulo, in reality it is considered one of the biggest carnival events of Sao Paulo, it was in the City of Votuporanga and it was a big event. I live in Goiania and I went to Votuporanga and stayed four days to host all the days of the event.

SMI 4: There are a lot of product launch events, various types of products, like hair products. There are menu launch events for food companies and also workshops. For example, Saturday there was a knowledge workshop about people's hair. In fact, I organize most of the events that go on in my city because, as I'm also involved in this aspect of the business, I have many clients in this area so it ends up that I'm behind many of the launch events or events to strengthen relationship with influencers, I am also involved in the organization.

SMI 5: *Skipped*.

SMI 6: There are some events to which we go as a kind of spontaneous media for companies. For example, a new ice cream store will open in my city tomorrow, and their PR invited me to go to the event. By coincidence, I'll be close to the place, so I'll go there to get to know the company and everything. There are also those events that we go to for marketing, paid advertising. Usually I'm invited to a new collection launch, and I make a VIP appearance. There are also some events where I end up being the attraction of the event. For me these are the coolest to go to because I can meet my followers. I love this social media universe. I wanted to have more time to watch other people, it's such a rush. I cannot keep up. I'm in the craziest phase of my life. I cannot keep up with the content my colleagues are producing.

SMI 7: I'm Miss Brazil. So because of that I usually go to many beauty pageants. People usually invite me to go and do marketing or to be a judge on this type of events. But they also have invited me to go to pubs opening party and fashion shows. There is a little bit of everything, but it is always related to the beauty industry.

SMI 8: I've been to restaurants, bar openings… I'm not going out a lot these days but, when I decide to go out, it's more gastronomic events..

How do you decide if you want to attend and event?

> SMI 1: Like for me, If there are events that are not my Style I won't attend. For example, I'm black with curly hair, If I'm invited to an event where they will be talking about a hair-straightening product, I won't be attending because it is not my niche, not what I talk about. I also always go to events that are of my Interest. Or If it is an event with food and drinks, I might go too just for fun.

> SMI 2: I will attend an event if it fits the profile of my readers. What's the point in me going and doing something for some brand, knowing that my presence there won't bring them any profit because my readers won't be interested in that product or that brand? You know the types of readers you have. For example, Chanel doesn't fit with my audience.

> SMI 3: When I say blog, I'm referring to my blog, Youtube channel and Instagram. You need to put on your personality always, because what sets you apart from others is your personality, you have to pick the events that are related to you, something that you like a lot. Of course, you need to be open to try other things, but is always related to you. For example, I'm not a fan of stock car, this would never be in my events list, it would never be my priority, understand? I think my followers would wonder why I would go to such event if I don't know anything about it and not interested. Now , with Carnaval, Im and very fun and happy, I say that I am Carnaval all year long, so when it's Carnival time, I talk about it because it is totally related to me.

> SMI 4: If the event will bring me some return... when I was smaller and just starting, the more events I went to the better, since it's good for people to see me, right? Nowadays, as I already have recognition in the market and I do not have as much time to spend. It turns out that an event will serve for three things: (1) It can help with networking, for you to meet people that will help you in some way, some time, or (2) it can help you have other people see you or companies see that you are at that event, or (3) if it's because you are being paid to be at that event to publicize it. So usually there are three reasons.

> *- One thing that you mentioned that I found interesting is that you used the phrase "when [you were] smaller", right? When did you realize you made it?*

> Well, today I don't esteem myself to have made it because my focus is no longer on being an influencer which made my work become stagnate in that sense. But there was a time where my social media accounts began to grow very much. I would speak at events, I would be recognized on the streets, in that moment I saw that I was gaining momentum but then I began to dedicate myself more to my life as a marketing professional than as an influencer. Of course, that led to some stagnation because I could have really, really, really been at the forefront. I'm aware of this, if I had dedicated more to this, but it wasn't my intention. But it could have been, but it was in that moment in which all the companies

holding events would certainly invite me. If there was a new product, I would certainly receive the product in that very moment. I saw that I was a little above average. I no longer had to chase after the companies—they would contact me instead.

SMI 5: At the moment, I'm focusing more on the partnerships. I have so many events to attend. One thing that I always valued before becoming a digital influencer was the authenticity and truthfulness that people displayed. I'm the type of person that will watch things to get tips and advice, such as makeup tutorials. I always look for honest reviews, especially since money doesn't grow on trees. I only bring content to my channel that I feel will really fit with my audience, things that I've tried out and tested myself. Everyday there are lots and lots of emails about products, such a weight loss supplements, pills to make your hair grow, fat-reduction belts, and more. I don't accept the offers because if I haven't used it nor tested it, I would introduce it to my audience.

SMI 6: I decide to go to an event if I can relate to it somehow. This is something I carry for life. You'll never see me doing something I do not relate to in any way. So I always wonder if that somehow represents me, if I like it somehow. I do not even work so hard on that "we're going to increase profits!", "I'm only going if I get paid" issue ... No. If I relate to the brand ... for example, this ice cream shop tomorrow. The ice cream is delicious. I need to honor the brand. How cool that my city will receive such a nice company.

SMI 7: I only go to events that are related to the things that I work with. I believe I was never invited to something I didn't feel comfortable with. As long as I go to events that related to the things I work with, it will always work out. I also take in consideration how much I will get paid and how much time I'll have to be at the place.

SMI 8: It is so difficult for me to decline an invitation to go to an event, because, for example, look what happened for the opening of a new store. The owner of the store first became my client and now we are very good friends. She opened a makeup store, so I attended the opening event to show my appreciation for her. Of course, she knew I was going to post something about it. I got there, she surprised me with a wonderful gift that I was not expecting, but I felt it was in exchange for the publication on my social media channels. You know when the thing is implied, so I always try to attend an event because of the person, regardless of what the person is going to give me or not. I go there to show my appreciation for the invitation, because it is a good friend or a nice person and I end up posting because I like the person. If it is a recommendation of a product from a store or some service, on the other hand, I make sure I test it before I do. I do not recommend what I do not use. That's why people sometimes trust so much in my recommendations because they never know when I am getting paid to advertise or really spreading because it is a tip. When I say it's good, you can trust it's good, regardless of whether I'm being paid or not. I'm always receiving and testing a lot of things so I feel responsible about what I post to my followers.

What type of events are you more likely to attend?

SMI 1: Anything related to Fashion, beauty, gastronomy and anything related to African American hair.

SMI 2: Events for national brands of beauty products, Sephora… at any rate, anything that can be of interest to my readers.

SMI 3: Events related to health, that is a topic that I learn about a lot, fashion and events related to pop and electronic music.

SMI 4: At an event which will offer me one of these three advantages. But I normally don't participate in events for visibility anymore because I'm not interested in only visibility. I want relationships…if there is an event where I know there will be people who are interesting to me. I never participate in events where I would make an appearance acting as an influencer or working with marketing.

SMI 5: *Skipped.*

SMI 6: Events related to fashion, events related to art - I am very passionate about art, I like it very much. Events related to gastronomy, anything related to a restaurant I'll attend for sure, because I love it, I love it! I'm an aspiring cook, so whenever I can get to know a new chef in the city, a restaurant that is coming to town, a new menu, I'm there too.

SMI 7: Those usually meet all the criteria that I need and with the things I want to post on social media.

SMI 8: *Skipped*.

How often do you attend such events?

SMI 1: In Brasilia I seldom go because events rarely happen, last month I was invited to go to a movie Premiere and the release for a product. So last month I was only invited to two events. However, this month I was invited to a tasting at a restaurant, there aren't many invites, they are few. Usually 1-2 times a month.

SMI 2: I would say once a week.

SMI 3: About three times a week, it varies depending of the time of the year, for example,in January and july are months that rarely we have events, but in the rest of the year there are more events going going on, then I start getting invitations two to three times a week.

SMI 4: *Skipped.*

SMI 5: *Skipped.*

SMI 6: Attending events, especially those more spontaneous that do not involve paid advertising, depends a lot on how my routine is. Invites we receive all week, there are many invites. And we end up having to select according to our time available. As much as I like a certain thing, sometimes I cannot stop the project that I have in progress, an obligation that I have to deliver to a company, to turn my attention to something I enjoy a lot too. So it varies a lot. Sometimes I go on two events a week, sometimes I do not go anywhere. There are weeks that have four events.

SMI 7: About three or four events a month lately.

SMI 8: I'd say twice a month.

What type of events are you more **unlikely** to attend?

SMI 1: Release of a hair-straightening product because it is something I don't use, maternity related things, Basically those.

SMI 2: I don't know.

SMI 3: I am a very eclectic person , so I have the example of Stock Car, that would be one of the last things I would like to do, but I also would just not go if I didn't have any other plans. For example, I am free and an opportunity to cover the Stock Car event came up, I would no refrain myself from going, but I would never put on my top priorities , another example is something related to agronomy , like state fair shows, that's something that is not related to me at all, not my lifestyle, so I would never go.

SMI 4: Look, an unlikely event in Goiania still has a lot to offer, despite it still being an emerging market. But there are many events where the company doesn't understand why they're calling an influencer, so an event at a store that's having some launch but the influencer attends as an ordinary customer and there aren't any advantages for the influencer. And, additionally, sometimes there are events where the company sends you an official invitation. They want to force you to do something, like "go write a post about this" but in these scenarios, we get nothing—simply nothing—in return, not even product samples. So, it is very unlikely that I would make an appearance at these types of events, in fact, it's probable that I come to resent that company.

SMI 5: *Skipped*.

SMI 6: It is very unlikely that I attend events that in any way attack what I believe, events that make the women seem less important, something in this sense, you know? Events

that are there to value something I do not believe in, something that does not represent me, has nothing to do with my values. You can be sure that you will not see me at this kind of event.

SMI 7: I don't know. But I wouldn't go to something that is not related to the things that I do or something that is against my beliefs and values. I wouldn't go to a brothel opening for example.

SMI 8: I wouldn't attend events to support a social cause. I think it is complicated to associate your name with that kind of cause without sounding fake. When I do help with a social cause, I don't want it to be made public and I don' post about it on social media.

5. Post-event follow-up

When do you write/share about the event? Why?

SMI 1: Most of the time, during the event I film everything and post on Instagram, But if they don't talk to us about the products, I don't post anything, even if it liked the product. Now, if after the event they follow up with me I go ahead and post about the product and give my opinion. In other cases, If I like the product right out the bet I go home start trying it out and make sure to share my opinion with my public right away.

SMI 2: It depends on what my agreement with the brand was. I usually write about the event on my blog, post pictures. If it's the presentation of a product, I show that product, etc. There are some events that you'll attend and not post anything on your blog, not even on Instagram. You just post to your Stories. That brand might negotiate with you to just do coverage through Stories. The events are the way the brand decides it will be when negotiating. If a brand negotiates an Instagram post and three Stories, then you go there and post one picture on Instagram and you do your Stories. There is also the stories on Facebook that I also do. You show what's going on and that's it. And that's what you negotiated, you'll be paid for that. So it depends on what was negotiated. Then I go and do it. I think that even if you were not specifically hired to promote a brand or a product, you can end up developing a kind of relationship with the representatives just by being there. And that can lead to something in the future. For instance, although I wasn't paid, I went to an event two weeks ago and it was nice. I liked the presentations, so I posted about the event on my blog. When I know it's going to attract their attention and they will like it.

SMI 3: I have a philosophy in relation to my social media, that I will always post good things, this is what I say: the world is full of negativity, so we need to share good things, so what makes me write about something, is when the event is fun and happy, it will be a good content and my followers would benefit from that.

SMI 4: When the event is interesting to me and offers some sort of return. Normally, I post because if I attended, in some moment that brought me some advantage. If it brought me some advantage, I share at the very least social media stories of me participating, what that event had to offer that was interesting. And if it's an event where I was paid, it's justified because that company paid for me to be sharing that, right? Of course, everything still falls within the truth, right? The only caveat is that I didn't attend the event spontaneously, which I make known if that truly added in some way. Oh, and there was a launch for a plate but it was a really nice plate. So it's worth it for to share that with my followers because it's something that I'm endorsing. And, of course, I'm not going to endorse a product that it is not true, because it my my image that will be associated with that product, but when it's something that's worth I'll share it with no worries.

SMI 5: Something I value is that Trus, for example, will tell me will stipulate how many posts per month I need to do and they'll tell me when to post and let me compose my own caption. There are companies that will send you pre-written captions. I always prefer writing my own captions and then I send it to them for approval, so they can check to photography of my post and such. They then send it back to me. But you'll see many posts that are very robotic. There are influencers that use these pre-written captions to reduce the amount of effort they need to put in. But I prefer my posts to have my own flavor. People notice, too.

SMI 6: I share about an event when my expectation of an event exceeds or is what I expected, which I think is worth sharing with my audience. If it is unpleasant, it will be very difficult for you to see me speak ill of any institution, only when it is really something very serious. But, for example, I went to an event, it was not very cool, I'm not going to post about it. I will not say it was good, but I will not say it was bad either. I will not call them out.

SMI 7: Well, usually I post something about it because they hired me to do it. But sometimes even though they haven't paid me to post, I still create a post on social media because I want to establish a partnership with the person or company. For example, Coca-Cola invited me to check their new campaign out. I went to the event even though they didn't pay me to be there. But I want to be associated with the brand. So, I went to the event anyway.

SMI 8: I usually share something about the events I attend the same day or the next day. I usually post on my Instagram stories and add it to my timeline only if I think the event was really, really special and it has to do with the theme of my profile. While I am a social media influencer, per se, I'm not only a social media influencer, I need to care about my clients and what they like to see. I am a baker who has a lot of followers, so I need to associate my image to events that are somehow related to my area of work, for example, food. Who follows me is interested in food. Sometimes when I show myself on stories people notice my earrings or necklace, they ask where I bought them, so I notice there's a potential there for more partnerships. For examples, sunglasses, so I can make a partnership with an eye care center, depending on my followers' interests. I try to figure

out of kind of extra content besides food can be included on my social media. I can't include content that has nothing to do with my followers, or else they will not be interested on my posts anymore, it won't be interesting for them anymore.

Do you consider that certain issues have a certain 'lifespan', and would eschew posting about the issue if it's past its shelf life or is no longer current?

SMI 1: Hmmm, I never analyzed anything that way, like I don't take into consideration the "after", I'm more impulsive and think of what's happening now.

SMI 2: No, I don't think so.

SMI 3: When there are events that are like, for example, carnival, I can't wait to post the next month, I need to write a post right away. So topics with specific dates, like Christmas, New Years, Carnaval and Easter I have to post as soon as I can.

SMI 4: Yes, lifespans do exist. When at a certain time, for example, a song is released— like Anitta's new song—and we then rushed, rushed, and rushed to create a parody for Camila's channel (speaking of which, I think you should talk to her. Camila is our biggest YouTuber here in Goiás). And so we knew that if we could not produce a parody in under a week, there wouldn't be any sense posting that because it would no longer be topical. So that's always something to consider. If a new topic arises and we can't record and create any content when it's still hot, then it isn't worth doing because it may sound like a copy or not bring you any specific return.

SMI 5: Topics have different shelf lifes. There are topics that are hotter than others. If I like a certain topic and I feel like talking about it, I'll go and post about it. Whatever I post is to try to showcase who I am. I post whatever I truly love and like, despite some having a much shorter shelf life.

SMI 6: Sometimes I post a video of a tour of my apartment on YouTube and get 200,000 views in a month. Then I talk about gratitude and get two thousand views. Social media are increasingly focused on leisure, to entertainment. People are not serious about social networking. And sometimes it's something that makes me sad, because there are issues that people should talk about, like intolerance, prejudice. I really wanted to talk about it more. But people unfortunately do not give much importance to it. They prefer to watch tutorials, which are things I love watching too. But it would be cool if we could also discuss more serious matters.

SMI 7: I think so. I could post something about it now because most people still talk about this meme. The public would still like to see something about it. But if post about this meme in two months, it will not be relevant or interesting anymore.

SMI 8: *Skipped*

How do you determine if a certain topic is no longer current?

SMI 1: Look I don't think that way, but I try to work with what I usually do. When I talk about something new is because my readers suggest it. But I usually just talk about hair and beauty and I don't like to cause controversy in any way.

SMI 2: If I don't like a product, for example, I don't post anything about it. I wouldn't show them anything that I don't like or would not wear.

SMI 3: I try to see what topic is more relevant, if the topic is ok, I move it to a different time, so I give priority to the more urgent ones, when they have to go up on a specific date, for example, if a concert happened on that date or a video clip was released or a song, I need to post them asap because if you wait a month, it might become old news. Some topics can just and they will always be fresh news. I think the issue of communication is very relevant in general. You have to consider the issue of content, the issue of deadlines, the issue of velocity.

SMI 4: The Internet, small searches like that. For example, the song "Que Tiro Foi Esse" was a meme that broke out just before Carnaval, but now it's old news. If you make a joke with "Que Tiro Foi Esse" it'd be sort of dead already. Up until last week it was still a bit lukewarm, right? Now it's over. If you still do it, people will think "wow, how boring". So it's usually a week, but it's very fast nowadays.

SMI 5: *Skipped.*

SMI 6: I'm not that kind of person who needs to talk about what everyone is talking about. I have a very strong personality. I am not much of fads or trends. You will never see me talking about a subject just because all people are talking about it. And I will not stop saying something because people stopped talking about it. Of course, there is a timing on the internet for countless things. For example, my video on school supplies. Every year is success, it is one of the most watched videos on my channel. I know that after that date it will not work anymore because of several tests I've already done.

SMI 7: It's not hard to figure this out. I just have to keep an eye on what's being said about the subject on social media.

SMI 8: *Skipped*

How do you determine if a topic is worthy of sharing / writing about?

SMI 1: When somehow something touches me, like if I use something I liked or read a book or watch a movie that I liked and wanted to share with others. It depends of how it makes me feel.

SMI 2: *Skipped*.

SMI 3: I see if a certain topic is going to add anything good to people's lives , being a blogger you end up learning what is good to share or not.

SMI 4: It depends on what I believe and what my audience believes, for example, if it's a song that's just exploded but it's not at all my style, not at all my audience's style, even if it's something that's going to be huge, that's going to bring me a lot of followers, it is not worth sharing, you know? It has to be something interesting, something that's my style, because being an influencer is very tenuous if you do something wrong. At the same time, as the influencer becomes influencer all at once and quickly, very often their destruction is also very fast. So there is anything that you do that people can criticize, it can be a hazard so it has to be considered very carefully.

SMI 5: *Skipped*.

SMI 6: I don't even know if that's right or wrong, but I use my rule of liking, feeling, "that motivates me", "that adds something up" on my social media channels. I put there not everything I would like to see on another person's social media, because I could not reach the point of pleasing myself completely. But usually my parameter is what would add up something to me, be it a look of the day, a beautiful photo on my Instagram, or wise words, motivational words, a "Good morning" in the stories, or a decoration tip that I'll give it while touring my apartment. I usually post what I like to see.

SMI 7: I post things that are related to the things that I believe that doesn't go against my values and principles. I will only post things that I believe are interesting to my public. I don't think I've ever posted something that wasn't relevant to my public. I think a lot about the subjects I post. It has to be something my public will like to read about it.

SMI 8: Everything that might be interesting for the female audience might be worthy of sharing on my social media. My audience is 90% female, so I think of what can be interesting for them.

What are the factors that make it more likely for you to share or not share the event on social media platforms after the event?

SMI 1: It depends if People have talked to us about the event and how they treated us,

sometimes we are not treated like professionals. Some people won't even provide seating for us and they expect to get publicity posts on our social media, but that is not very professional. It seems that we are not welcomed there and I feel disrespected.

SMI 2: I think that the main idea is to show only things that I like or would wear. Not that I'll only post things that are interesting to me, but things that I believe my audience will also like.

SMI 3: This is how I see things, for example, if I go to an event that is fun and well organized and that will make people wishing they were there, I end up sharing on my social media. If it's a boring event, then I don't share. I don't post things just to post. I like to post about things where my followers will wish to be part of it. Before accepting an offer to go to an event, I always analyze if the event will be relevant for me and my blog.I have received invites to the events where I was offered to be paid but I didn't accept it because it didn't match my personality. Having a blog you have to take that into consideration, you owe that to your followers.

SMI 4: Yeah, it depends a lot on interest, my interest and the interest of my audience. For example I speak a lot about beauty, right? So, if a product that came out is interesting, even if it's been out for some time, it's interesting that my audience will like it, I'll share it right away. If it's a subject I do not talk about, I do not talk about humor, so, for example, if a new meme just came out, then I will not publish anything since it has nothing to do with me, it has nothing to do with my audience.

SMI 5: *Skipped.*

SMI 6: *Skipped.*

SMI 7: *Skipped.*

SMI 8: *Skipped*

How much does your personal background influence your slant of article and choice of words? E.g. personal experiences, family, ideology

SMI 1: 100%, I'm not too worried if they are inviting me back to another event or not, normally I ask if that will influence my work, because if they expect me to lie about something, I won't do it.

SMI 2: I am a really straightforward person and real. I don't like to hide or disguise anything. If I am not feeling good about myself or not in a good mood, I don't even want to show up or post anything. I think that I'm on social media to bring joy, motivation to people.

SMI 3: My YouTube channel and Instagram is where I show my personality, my values, what I have learned in my childhood. For example, with carnival, you will see my personality, my values, everything I learned as a child, all the experiences I have had throughout the years.

SMI 4: A lot, one hundred percent. People follow other people because they are interested in the person's life, so I do not know if you read a little bit about me, but I have a lot of research on influencers, on celebrities, I've even studied with Simone there at UFG, I even started a special master's degree studying celebrities with her, right? It's a subject I like very much, and I talk a lot about it in my research, in my articles that people become interested in other people. They want to follow that person who has an ideology that they admire, if they are a person who is more beautiful than them, if they want to be like that person, if they want to have what that person has. So for an influencer to be "approved" by the public, he needs to talk about a subject that interests the public but bringing something new to it because it does not help. Many people will make a character out of thin air but, like it or not, at some point the personal life enters because there is no way you can dissociate one thing from the other and people like this insertion even. People like seeing who the influencer is through the content.

SMI 5: *Skipped*.

SMI 6: My personal background influences my slant of article and choice of words a lot. We are the result of all the influences: our family, our religion, our spirituality, our education, our friends, what we see, what we hear. So everything that surrounds me greatly influences my work. It's my job, actually. It's sharing a little bit about me with people. For me it is inconceivable to create a character, to be something different from what I am. What you see in my Instagram, in my stories, is exactly the same as I am. I do not change the way I speak.

SMI 7: *Skipped*.

SMI 8: My personal background influences a lot, especially because I started it off as a hobby. I'm not a professional baker, who took formal baking course, none of that, so I am usually careful with what I write. I am not a teacher, so I avoid teaching how to bake.

6. Target audiences

When you post updates on social media, who are the audiences you have in mind, and why?

SMI 1: My Target audience are less fortunate girls, lower class and black girls, I would like them to understand they can have a better life with opportunities no matter where they come from, they can dream and go after their dreams.I was like them one day, what

motivated me to change my life was to believe and go chase my dreams.

SMI 2: Women, I address my message to women. 97% of my audience is female and above age 28.

SMI 3: I have a great male public, which is about 55%, but I also ended up getting a lot of female followers, since I talk a lot about health and fitness. When I create a post, I take in consideration people that are wanting to have a more healthy lifestyle. Sometimes I want to cheat on my diet, but then I think that I can't because I know it will influence people that are trying to be diligent on their own diets and I want to be an example.

SMI 4: My audience is a female audience from ages 18 to 34 and my audience is located mainly in Goiânia because it is an audience that will like what I say, I think in a manner directed towards this audience but, like it or not, we end up reaching other audiences, right? That is the audience that I want and an audience that is interested in the subjects that I speak, namely beauty, lifestyle...

SMI 5: My audience is very diverse and that complicates things a bit. Some influencers have audiences that are 95% female, so they'll post more, say, makeup tutorials and it works out great. My audience, however, is more diverse. My audience has children, elderly people, teenagers, adults, so it's a bit of a mix. My general public likes seeing my day-to-day, so I post lifestyle videos, vlogs. They really like that. I also have a segment interested in photography. It isn't a very big segment compared to the others, but I have a photography segment, a beauty products segment. I don't often talk about beauty products, but whenever I do they seem to really like it.

SMI 6: I have been trying to make my content a bit more suitable for college people and try to bring myself into this new phase of my life, college phase, to make clear to the brands that I do not work only with the teen audience. I have a teen audience, but it's not my main public.

SMI 7: About 70% of my followers are women and 30% men. The age varies from 18 to 35. My followers and I are in the same age range. So all my work is not only related to me but also to my public since we are in the same age range. It would be very different if I was a fifteen-year-old woman trying to talk to a third-year old public. It wouldn't be able to connect and relate to them the same way I do. For me it's very important to be able to communicate well with my public. I try to be authentic with the things that I do. People follow me because they like my work and because they can relate to it.

SMI 8: When I post, I think of my potential client, who live in my city, loves sweets, because that's how I make money. My client is my priority. It took me a while to realize that, besides selling cakes, I had become a social media influencer. The process was very

organic. As it was my personal account on Instagram, it had my pictures, pictures of my family, my daughter, and when I started baking cupcakes I used to post a picture with a caption that would say something like, "look, friends, I'm baking cupcakes", and I would give cupcakes as a gift to friend and family. Soon my friends started ordering cupcakes, people I didn't know started following me and ordering cupcakes as well, so that's how I started posting pictures of the bakings goods along with my personal stuff. It was personal account that turned into something professional, it was impossible to dissociate one from another.

How do you seek to understand what interests your audiences?

SMI 1: According with the feedback I get from my audience, if I post a picture and it gets lots of likes and comments, then I know that is something my followers like, if I Post something and it doesn't have a lot of interaction, I understand that that is not a popular subject.

SMI 2: I've grown to understand them over time, because I've been a blogger for five years now; I've learned what they like. Just to let you know, I communicate with sixty-year-old women who ask me for advice about relationships. I wrote a book about relationships. The first piece I wrote about was on relationships and beauty tips. And it worked. I write about beauty tips mostly on Instagram. On Facebook I write mostly about relationship, because Facebook allows you to address people with more privacy.

SMI 3: I always do research through stories, now they have the poll feature, that way I can ask my followers and receive feedback. By that getting that feedback I will narrow down to what is cool and what they are enjoying to see.

SMI 4: So much, nowadays people interact less than before so it's very difficult for me to say that it's just by the comments. You're going to have exactly what your audience likes or dislikes because people often comment to have a comment back, or they'll comment "beautiful", so it is difficult to understand your audience as you understand somebody in a blog, for example, where the person opened their heart and would say everything, right? At the time, blogs were very good, so I try to understand them according to the result of that photo I posted, that video and whether I had good results. I know that content that my audience likes, I maybe posted a photo and, man, it was horrible, resulted in few likes, low engagement, low visualization, so it means that the people do not like whatever I posted. So normally I go through the same reports of social networks.

SMI 5: Analytics are very helpful. Youtube has an analytics tool that gives me a lot of useful data about the age of my audience, their interests. I can see which keywords were used to find my videos. I feel I do this analysis on a weekly basis. I also take into consideration the feedback given in the comments section.

SMI 6: As my audiences and I have a very close relationship, I say that it is really a friendship [with the followers]. It is very difficult for you to see in my Instagram a malicious comment, a comment from a person who does not like me and does not follow me in fact. Because of our very close proximity, I give a great deal of freedom to the girls and boys who follow me to think of me as a friend. So many people share by email or direct messages via Instagram their personal problems, secrets. It's a relationship of friendship. In the same way that they follow my day to day, they also want to some topics about their lives with me. So, due to being so close to them, I end up capturing their preferences, what they want me to do, what they want to see.

SMI 7: t's mostly based on feedback from the public. I like to ask and survey my public to know what they think. I read the picture comments related to the channel and I ask them to give their opinion about the channel and the things they want to see. I always answer all the inbox messages. That's how I know what is interesting to them.

SMI 8: I feel like there's a great responsibility involved in all of this. There are so many people following me and I receive so many direct messages from people telling me how they like me and admire my work, how my work inspire them. I feel like it is my responsibility to give back some of the attention to these people, so they feel appreciated too. It's because of the visibility that they give me that companies reach out to me for partnerships, trips… By the way, I've been recently to Dubai so I could be a special guest in a baking class. All happened because of my Instagram account. If it weren't because of my followers, that are always commenting on my posts and sharing my content, I wouldn't have had that opportunity. If I take of my followers, even though not all of them are my clients, I'm preparing the path for other opportunities besides selling cakes and cupcakes.

How do you try to shape a story so that your audiences will be interested in the posting? In your opinion, how important is this? Why or why not?

SMI 1: The way I talk to them, a person who knows me personally don't see a difference, I am myself in the social media, I don't worry about speaking correctly in front of everyone. I think that we need to be ourselves, it is a personal work, you have to be you, the worst thing is when you follow someone that you love and when you finally get to meet the person and it is someone totally different from what they post on social media.

SMI 2: I usually turn my answer to a reader's question into texts that I post, without tagging or exposing the person who asked the question. On Instagram I write mostly about the events and products, something I've worn and would like to share about, etc. My posts on Instagram are usually what comes to my mind at that moment. Since they are mostly captions, they're much smaller.

SMI 3: Nowadays, for example, there are many bloggers in my segment, especially women, like we have Gabriela Pugliesi. What makes it unique is to put your personality in what you are doing, that's what differs me from other bloggers.Its very important to write a well structured text, I never write everything on instagram at first, I usually keep a notebook and write down the ideas, I read and reread to make sure the idea is concise. I don't want to post something where people will interpret in the wrong way and to be the clearer as I can when writing about something. I believe text is even more important than pictures.

SMI 4: I always observe the text a lot so that it is light because people are on social networks not to be feeling that they are working or studying. They like to have leisure time, so I observe the text very much, the grammatical part so that it is a very well-written text, written with lightness. It's as if I had spoken to that person but without writing incorrectly because there are people who go, "I'm going to write incorrectly because it's a social network" but it isn't in my nature—I do not like it. I like to write correctly but in my way of speaking so that the person feels as if they were talking to me and I were talking to them. So, specifically with Instagram, being very sincere, it is very difficult to measure the percentage of people who read a caption. A lot of people do not. So, your photo has to catch the interest of the person reading the caption. I consider the content of the caption very important but I cannot tell you that all the people who will go through my post will read my caption, so it isn't 100% important because everyone just sees the photo.

SMI 5: On YouTube, I was try to start off in a manner that's really fun and happy. I really value giving them a message. So if you watch one of my vlogs, for example, it isn't just a vlog - I'll be eating, having lunch, there is always a story behind whatever is going on and I try to do a storyline for the video. So in preparing the vlogs, I always consider what I want my message to be and I plan my day according to that. Another thing I like doing is trying to interact with my audience, have conversations with them. If you aren't having a conversation, it could be you use just a caption, maybe just emojis. The person might see the picture you posted and might think "how cool!" but you aren't truly interacting. Interacting is what will truly make you grow and have a more devoted audience. So I'll always questions, like "How is your day going?", "What are your plans for the day, what are you going to do?"

SMI 6: I have always tried to adapt my language to sound as natural as possible, whether in an advertisement or in a text about my routine, always trying to choose words that pass my essence, without sounding fake.

SMI 7: My posts are very direct to the point. I don't like writing a long text and people don't usually like to read a long text either. Also, the name Instagram already suggests that it has to be "instantaneous", fast. I try to keep things straight to the point. I also never write hashtags on the caption line. I always write them on the first picture comment. The text looks "polluted" with too many hashtags on the caption. I think a clean text is only one of

parts. It's important to have a good caption and a photo that goes with it. Another thing that people have been talking a lot is the organization of the feed. I always try to be careful to have my feed organized. As you can see, it's not only the caption that is important. It's a group of things.

SMI 8: When it is a style of cake that I've been baking for a long time, I don't really put a lot of thought on the caption for the pictures. When I'm posting about a new style, I explain what it is, why I thought about it, I mention that I really thought of my clients when I created it and that I hope that they like it. If I am posting about an event, I write my opinion about it and provide basic information about the company or the restaurant, address, hours… My goal is always to write short, straightforward captions, because no one is willing to read long post nowadays. My followers also like me to post things about my personal life as well. They like it a lot and I think this is cool. They like when I put stuff on my stories. When I don't put something on my stories for a while they send me direct messages to check on me.

What do you do to increase your influence (with regard to number of views, number of shares, number of people who take action, etc.)?

SMI 1: I always look for new content, I'm always making changes and I also look to make friendships with other girls in our area and make collaborations with them.

SMI 2: I focus on the beauty tips, because the readers share and tag a lot of friends.

SMI 3: Instagram has features like hashtag, for example, where you can hashtag something and it will reach out lots of people. Bloggers work well together and there is so free media that is really great. For example, if I post a recipe, then other people that liked the recipe end up sharing it in their own social media, bringing more traffic to my account.

SMI 4: It's two things: one thing is content quality, so always observe photo quality, editing, etc. And also, interacting—social networks are made for you to interact, to enjoy, to comment, to follow other people. So I observe this a lot. I interact a lot with other people and I observe the quality of content.

SMI 5: With YouTube, it's definitely consistency. Consistency is the key for you to truly grow your channel. I remember when I started my channel, I started posting videos in August of 2016. I had 1,000 subscribers. In less than three months, it jumped to 10,000. After another two months, I had 100,000. So I went from 10,000 to 100,000. It's really difficult to leave the ballpark of 500, for example, to 1,000,000. It's a big jump. But from zero to 100 is even more complicated. So one thing that I saw that worked really well was

consistency. It's just like the soap operas in Brazil. Everybody knows that at 9pm there will be a soap opera to watch. I did the same thing. I posted videos every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Aside from consistency, being present to respond to comments is useful. Back in the beginning, I would respond to every single comment. Unfortunately, that isn't possible anymore. I try responding to as many as I can, comment with a little heart emoji. That isn't just a way for the influencer to engage with the audience, but also as a way to show you care about them and to show some love. I always have to consider the fact that the person took time out of their day to comment. So I always try to respond to the comments. That's why I don't normally have an actual time set aside for me to post on my Stories. But if I don't post any of that, by the weekend people are asking me if I'm okay, if I'm sick, they ask my mother if I was in an accident or something. And then I have to calm everybody down.

SMI 6: It is very important lean to give back what the followers do for you. As much as I can I'm there responding, being active, giving all necessary attention. The key factor in engaging my audience is the response they have from me. I always try to answer the direct ones, even though I cannot answer every single message or comment. A person who has never commented on anything, likes my photos a long time, then she sends me a direct of something, I go above and beyond to respond. After that day when I respond, you realize that the person starts to be much more engaged, commenting more and more because she feels that she is give back the affection I gave her.

SMI 7: I always try to post interesting things that I know my public will like it. Things that I know that it will increase my number of followers. One thing that it's important on social media is the word of mouth marketing. If there's someone that likes my content, they will share it with someone else and that will help me to be more popular.

SMI 8: I don't really do anything to increase the number of followers. I try to focus on the captions about a new product. When I launch a new product, I realize that my followers really like it and there's a lot of engagement. When I travel, I get so many direct messages, they want to know everything about my trip. I've been to Dubai recently and I can tell my followers enjoyed seeing my stores and posts on Instagram, because I was very detailed and explained the culture. I aim to create the kind of content I'd enjoy watching. I am an impatient person, I prefer being straightforward, fast, informative, so I don't feel like I am wasting someone else's time.

7. Stories

Do you offer exclusive stories for different media organizations? Why do you think exclusive stories are important to media organizations?

SMI 1: I look to be faithful to the same brands, ones that I liked. There was a brand that I

always liked and after a while they started following me and asked for collaborations, I always gave them priority. But I try to not do collaborations that go out of what I talk about in my blog. I think that, maybe that audience is what interest them, and if I have more frequent posts about them, they think that it can help them gain more followers on their social media.

SMI 2: I used to, but not anymore. I had exclusivity contracts with brands like Vult (for 3 months) and Niely Gold (for 6 months). I think brands like that because it generates customer loyalty and gives credibility to the brand.

SMI 3: I work a lot with my personality, so if there is a brand or company that I identify myself with, I will always be working with them. I think being exclusive with a few brands is important because it gives you credibility. For example, I have exclusivity with a beauty salon in Goiania and say Gisele is the best hairstylist in Brazil, then the next day I go to a different salon and say that person is the best in the country and keep going to different salons and saying everyone is great. That doesn't give me any credibility, because people will say, well I thought Gisele was the best in the country. People won't trust you as much, there of course, exceptions, in cosmetics you will always have more than one favorite. Publicity with social media is very competitive, so companies look for exclusivity, so they can be on the media constantly.

SMI 4: Look, a lot of companies ask for exclusivity but I'm very against that, I'm categorically against that. What's more, I don't believe that a person uses a only one brand, understand? So, I believe that transmits a lot of falsehood for the follower, if you speak only of a single place, for example. So when a company, many companies look for a lot of exclusivity, I do not accept it. I have some influencers in my agency that have exclusivity with some brands but I am against that because I know she uses it in real life. Let's suppose she uses Loreal but in real life she uses Lancome, so it's not true, do you understand? And social media, like it or not, is not 100% true, actually, has actually very little of the truth, right? But I also do not like being false, lies... And so, I do not like exclusivity because, for example, I use dozens of hair product brands. For example, I cannot tell people that I only use Loreal. Companies do not like to show, let's suppose, that they want to link the brand to an influencer. They wish that every advantage in the influencer's hair be that brand's, because, like it or not, the influencer becomes the face of the company. So let's suppose if I talk about Vult, for example, my face, for example, every person who looks at my face will think that all lipstick that I'm use is Vult. If I say that the lipstick I'm using is from Tracta, Vult may think it's bad because maybe the lipstick was more beautiful and they're paying me to talk about Vult. And so sometimes the company, I think it's bad because I'm talking about the competition. The company can't deal well with the competitors, that's why they're all for this, but I'm a pro-influencer. I believe that the more he talks about other brands, the more truth he will give to the public.

SMI 5: No, I don't. Take my contract with a hair products brand, for example. There is no exclusivity so it isn't a reality because in my case I don't only use this brand. I love the brand but I also use other brands. So, if I test other brands, I want to have the freedom to say, "guys, this product here is also incredible".

SMI 6: I do not work with contractual exclusivity, which would determine that I would post for x months only for that brand in a certain segment. At times, I think the exclusivity is not right. For example, my hair salon. I met the salon in 2014, they were always nice to me and they trusted me when I was 13 and 14 years old. That salon met me at that time, they trusted my work, and I work very gratefully. The person who believed in me when I was a nobody, I do not forget. And with them that happened. Every week I receive proposals to do my eyebrows, my makeup, to cut my hair, to paint my hair, to do my nails, but since I started going in that salon I never switched. So, I do not think it would be cool for me to endorse this salon for you today, and in a month or so you me painting my hair in another salon and endorsing that one. People are going to wonder which is the good one. Another example happens with an amazing and wonderful cosmetic company. They believed in my work when I was very little. I'm constantly receiving proposals from companies that are direct competitors of theirs, which sometimes offer me more money. My image is impossible to disassociate with the original brand. And that's what I like. I like authenticity, identification, creating bonds, and that people make these associations.

SMI 7: I don't have exclusivity with anyone. I don't have any type of contract with any company or organization. But for example, I have a partnership with my dentist because he's the one I go to. I wouldn't go to other dentists for that type of work. He is the only one I go to. But not because I have a contract with him. It's all about common sense.

SMI 8: I don't offer exclusive stories. There's a company, for example, with whom I have ket a partnership for a while. When I posted something from another company that that first one also offered, they sent me a message questioning why I had done that. I explained to them that it's not just because a company is good that the other one won't be. I won't my followers to have access to different options. However, if I already know the product and approve it, and the company is willing to pay for the exclusivity, I would at least think about it. Other than that, I wouldn't close an exclusivity contract.

How much does balance or neutrality matter in your writings? Would you seek the other side of the story before your post?

SMI 1: When I post a product, I test it first then I give my real opinion about it.

SMI 2: I always seek the other side of the story before my post. It's important to be careful with the words you use too. You should always be careful with what you write.

SMI 3: When I create a post related to topics about health, aesthetics, they are more serious subjects. I do a lot of research before posting anything about it, for example, there's a new laser hair removal, I learn more about it and how it works then I go to the clinic and have it done on myself, so I can talk about results.

SMI 4: Always, I do not talk about things that I do not believe so even if a brand offers me "I'm going to pay you", I don't know, maybe they're going to pay double for a product post… if it's a product that I do not believe in or that I tested and it was not good for me, I do not speak about it. I'm not the type of influencer that gains fame by criticizing brands. I'm not that kind of influencer. I do not criticize if it did not work for me because sometimes the product can be for a kind of person and maybe I'm not that person. So if a foundation did not work with my skin, for example, I will not speak poorly of that foundation because sometimes someone else's skin worked out but I also do not say "well, I tried it and it didn't work out and so I won't say anything". I'll instead only talk about the things that were cool for me. And when I refer to things that were cool for me, it's only if it was 100% true but that's not always the case. It's a specific case because I know there are a lot of influencers that are all about the money and can be bought.

SMI 5: I always try to learn more about the company before I close a deal with them. I test their product. At the moment, I am testing some online language classes and they already want me to decide on a deal with them. I told them no because I want to do the first class for at least two or three months for me to truly see if it's good or not, to see if it's worthwhile for me to tell my audience about it, if it's worth giving it a shot. It's important to me to test and evaluate. For me, money doesn't grow on trees. I would feel so trashy if I told somebody to buy something just because I'm being told to push that product. When you get into this line of work, people's eyes can shine bright because the contracts are really big. You might be tempted to just say "let's do it! I want it!" but you should never do that. Your credibility drops. I bet you as a researcher have probably seen lots of influencers that end up committing that sin. They end up getting lots and lots of contracts and then later their audiences find out they don't really use those products. So I don't know…. as a human, I couldn't do that. I wouldn't be able to sleep at night.

SMI 6: Absolutely. I think this has a lot to do with my personality. I try hard to be fair and ethical in what I do. I avoid posting very controversial content, which I know I could not approach with neutrality and without all sides being represented by my voice. So I always try to weigh up some issues and I avoid them when I notice that I'm not going to be able to give the chance to cover all the sides of the story, every side of the situation.

SMI 7: I don't always know 100%. But based on my public likes and dislikes, it's easier for me to know what to say. I always try to deliver a clear message to them. So we can have a easier connection between me and the person who is reading my material.

SMI 8: I try to stay away from sensitive topics. I've been asked to post about politicians

and religious leaders, but I don't do it. I avoid talking about anything related to politics and religion on Instagram. I don't like controversial issues.

Who do you consult with regard to editorial decisions, if any?

SMI 1: My husband.

SMI 2: No. I make my own decisions.

SMI 3: I make my own decisions and don't usually consult anyone. When I'm not sure if something will be cool to post, I ask for a second opinion, and I consult with my manager Karen and ask what she thinks. But in 90% of the situations I make the decisions on my own.

SMI 4: In my case, it's just me. The girls consult me sometimes but I do not consult anyone.

SMI 5: I do everything myself. Unless it's in the contract or within a partnership, then we speak with them, they approve the photo to make sure it's in line with their brand. But if it isn't within any partnership, I post and make the decisions myself.

SMI 6: My mom usually helps me with that. When I'm very hesitant, I talk to her, who is the person who knows me the most in the world. My content is so essentially me.

SMI 7: No. no one, just me.

SMI 8: I don't consult with anyone, only my conscience.

How do you think competition among bloggers or social media influencers affect your postings?

SMI 1: It [competition among bloggers] affects a lot my posting, because there is a rivalry and even jealousy when you get a good job and "that" other blogger doesn't. I don't think it affects on what I post, but it affects in relation to my work. It doesn't affect me in anything, for example I follow a fitness girl, and she is very religious, being completely the opposite of me, I don't agree with everything she posts but I respect our differences, we then later became friends. I Love to drink beer and for her it is not healthy, but I don't take offense on that, I just understand we are very different and we have specific followers that we target.

SMI 2: I don't even think there is any competition. I've traveled with other bloggers who were going to the same events, and we even helped each other.

SMI 3: I think the same way that happens in other areas, we want to be the first one to post about something, obviously having a blog you end up writing things on the more personal level and that are more you, for example, if someone tries to copy you, it might not work as well for that person, because you need to be authentic, so competition goes beyond just content, it is also who is going to be responsible to write about topic X. I believe a little competition is healthy in relation to the public, if there was no competition, things would always be the same.

SMI 4: No, actually, oh my, I even have a little article ready… I don't currently have a blog, but anyway… I had a little article about it on my blog and I do not believe in competition, you know? What's more, I believe that everyone can work together, I am very much in favor of the same unity; so much so that, today, my agency's main focus are those people who make good content and unite these people to make videos sticky, to make posts in which they are together. I believe that this unity makes the growth happen faster because uniting one and two different audiences and also because one's audience… it isn't because they follow a person that they will stop following another person. They can follow both. And so, that's why I do not believe; however, in the market, there is a lot of competition with me. It does not affect me because I do not consider myself a competitor but I know that it exists and it's strong.

SMI 5: At first, I used to look at the world of influencers and think "wow! Everybody is friendly to one another, they're skipping along holding hands" and then you get into the world and you find out it isn't like that. Some want to pull the rug out from under you. You'll hear comments like, "there's no way that brand will want a partnership with you". Or you see people who never even spoke with you before and, as you start having a lot of success, they come up to your as if you're BFFs. So, unfortunately, it's something that is common and something you have to be careful with. You have to be careful about what you say, who you say it to, and who you're saying it about. I was growing quickly, in less than one year I already had more than 300,000 but after a big event in my life I had that "BOOM" moment. So I went from 300,000 to 1,000,000 in two weeks. People took notice of that. Not only YouTubers try to get close to me, but also TV celebrities. It's a world where you're always on your guard. It doesn't affect my posts. Knowing what happens behind-the-scenes doesn't affect my content.

SMI 6: It doesn't really affect my posts.

SMI 7: To be honest with you, I don't really worry about that. First, because this is not my main source of income. I'm not only a digital influencer. Second, because I believe there's enough space for all of us to do this. It's better to worry how to make my social media and

my publications more attractive instead of worrying about what someone else is posting. That's how I do things in life. I try not to worry too much about competition. Competition is something that will always exist. Regardless where you work. Competition will be present all over the world. So instead of wasting time thinking about it, I prefer to spend time thinking what I can do to be better.

SMI 8: I believe some people are not authentic and want to be recognized by the media, trying to mimic other influencers as an attempt to accomplish what they are looking for. I don't think it's competition, but just people being fake in order to be successful.

Are there other external factors that influence what you choose to post?

SMI 1: Yes, sometimes things that happen In my personal life, I end up sharing with my followers, because it might be something they are interested and could get help with.

SMI 2: No, there are not.

SMI 3: I take in consideration my public's interest, something they will like. Because I know that are things that only interests me but other people wouldn't care about, then I don't post about it. I share with close friends and family only.If I see that is something that would interest my public as well and is something that agrees with my personality, then I share with my public. I don't like posting things that are not my personality because it looks fake and that is a problem in the social media nowadays.

SMI 4: No, but I always share what I believe and what I know that can give something good to my audience.

SMI 5: I post a lot of what's happening in my life at any given moment, my reality. For example, I moved - I'll post about that then, about where I'm at, the culture and atmosphere of that place, I'm moving to Brazil next month and I'll post a lot about that move. My life dictates what I end up posting.

SMI 6: I always wonder if it would offend anyone, if the language I'm using offends someone in any way, offends some belief. I always try put myself in someone else's place.

SMI 7: Yes, absolutely. Fashion, politics are things that ended up influencing us not only on your personal life but also on your professional life. It's something I take in consideration. It's important to know what it's going on in the world today. There's always interesting discussions on social media stories on current issues. It's all about the

content. A well-expressed content makes a whole difference.

SMI 8: I usually choose to post what I think will please my follower and client. For example, a partnership with a lab. If I can get a discount for my client who orders a cake for a gender reveal, I will post that content because it is interesting for my client. They will benefit from it, and I will benefit it from as well consequently.

How does the prevailing social media landscape affect your postings?

SMI 1: I don't let myself influence to anything, social media is very polluted nowadays, I try to take more the positive side of it and just stick with what I post. I try because it looks better, to create a more harmonized feed.

SMI 2: Although some readers say that by doing that you lose personality or you're just copying others, I like to keep my feeds organized.

SMI 3: I started my blog four years ago and I say my blog is completely different from when I started. We should always be open to change and adapt to situations that are happening, you always have to be recycling yourself, for example, my feed was completely disorganized and I didn't care much for that, but then I noticed the necessity to organize my feed, wanting or not that Is the first thing people see. When Anitta released her song Machika, I made a parody of the song, because we need to be following the media.

SMI 4: Me, in particular, I'm not much up-to-date with the internet. I know that a lot of people enjoy it, that it gives results, that it is good but me too because of lack of time, you know? And since it happens very fast, since things happen very fast, today I do not have much time to dedicate myself to something that will end very fast so it is not a type of content that I create, makes sense? But I know that there are advantages of making a video that everyone will be talking about that will give you a notoriety at that moment.

SMI 5: It doesn't affect too much, to be honest. I'm out of the loop with all the pop culture stuff because I've been living out of Brazil. Memes are something all the influencers do and I'm all "Guys, I don't get it". Being a Brazilian digital influencer but at the same time not being in Brazil has sort of alienated me to some popular things the come about and I just feel lost a lot of times. By then I figure out what it all means, it's no longer topical.

SMI 6: Just as my audience is influenced by me, I'm also influenced by the prevailing social media landscape. For example, the trend now is organized feeds. I already understand that this is interesting, especially for the companies that work with me, to see

that I offer quality visual content. I avoided that for long time, I did not want to be neurotic with photo, wanted to post a beautiful photo and that's it. But then after so much rubbing in my head I understood that it would be something interesting and that I ended up liking it.

SMI 7: I try to post only what I think it's interesting. I don't talk about all the current topics in the media. For example, I didn't do any videos on "Jojo Todinho" and "Que tiro foi esse", even though everyone was taking and making videos about it. I didn't want to be like everyone else. This doesn't make me better or worse than everyone else. If I don't agree with something - even though everyone is doing it - I won't do it.

SMI 8: No, it doesn't affect my postings at all.

How does the prevailing socio-political climate affect your postings?

SMI 1: I post a lot of day to day things, so once in awhile I might post about something that might be happening at the moment. For example I rely a lot on public transportation, I might share my struggles with it.

SMI 2: Well, if you get into it, yes. But I don't like it and just don't get into it.

SMI 3: I don't talk about politics in my social media because I know there will be people opposed or in favor certain issues and politicians, so I like to keep that away from my social media.

SMI 4: It doesn't have an affect. I believe that social networking is a leisurely time, you know? That the person wants to disconnect from the world, so much so that there are people who talk that discuss politics, that discuss social problems… anyways, but I see everything with lightness. So I want to bring that moment where the person will disconnect from the world, where they will think about something good, will think about makeup, you know? I like lighter things, making lighter content.

SMI 5: *Skipped*.

SMI 6: I try to avoid posting a few things, but I cannot always get 100 percent neutral. You will be able to get to know about my vision of the world and my position as a citizen. The story is something more intimate, closer to reality. The feed is organized. In the feed I do not appear without makeup, but in the stories, I do. Sometimes I cannot address a certain subject in the feed, but I can talk about it in the stories.

SMI 7: Well, this is something I have to be a little more careful about it. Politics is always something that creates a lot of discussion. I've never disclose what I agree with or don't. for example, I don't ever say if I'm favor or against Lula. I don't want to have more discussion on social media. I respect everyone, and I hope everyone respects me too. I try to fulfill my role as citizen. I tell people to think before voting and things like this – not choosing a side.

SMI 8: No.

How do you plan your postings around Brazil's multiracial and multicultural environment?

SMI 1: My Instagram is completely turned to the same type of people, but I don't offend people that are white or just black. If I use a colored lipstick, I share it and say that it could look good on anyone.

SMI 2: I don't think it is wise to take sides regarding that kind of subject, so I don't show my opinion in my posts.

SMI 3: It doesn't affect my content.

SMI 4: So, in my content I do not think about it because I know that the people who follow me, follow me for who I am. So no matter whether the person is black or… anyways, she knows I'm going to talk about things that have to do with me, with my skin, with products that I use, understand? However, with my clients I think, for example, I take care of the Instagram of a cosmetics store, my agency takes care of it, so we think we need to have posts for redheads, for blondes, for black women, brunettes, curly hair, anyway… We already think as a company but me, as an influencer, I do not have this need because it is Influencer-Karen, not a company or a brand.

SMI 5: The way I see it - there isn't anything racial to consider when I'm going to post something. To me, everything is equal, nobody is different from anybody. So I think I never stopped to think about that because for me it isn't a big deal. I don't see those differences so it isn't a problem.

SMI 6: *Skipped*.

SMI 7: I've never stopped to think about this. I've never published something regarding race or culture either. The only thing I talked before was regarding the prejudice with the northeast population. This is something I don't agree with. I love all the states and different cultures of this country. I know the whole country. So, this is something I talk about it because for me shouldn't be no differences and prejudice.

SMI 8: I just post it about once when Giovanna Ewbank's daughter was victim of racism.

I tried to be as brief as possible on Instagram. Everyone is equal, and I am against any type of discrimination. I had to share my position about all of that.

To what extentdo/would government interventions affect your postings?

SMI 1: Well, I don't think affect anything.

SMI 2: It wouldn't affect at all, in my opinion.

SMI 3: Even though we are going through a rough patch in Brazil with our politics, we still have freedom of speech, so the government doesn't affect my work.

SMI 4: It also doesn't have any effect for the same reason.

SMI 5: I've never made any political statements and will never take any position. I don't want any controversy. I'm that way on social media, as well. I want to remain neutral. As an influencer we tend to have a lot of influence. I don't like using political factors. I wouldn't get involved - especially with Brazilian politics.

SMI 6: Up until now it did not affect, but I imagine it would affect one day if someone was to censure me in some way.

SMI 7: I don't think it does affect me. I don't post anything about any sides. The only thing I care about is respect. As long as everyone respects each other, it's all good.

SMI 8: No.

What are the legal boundaries and OB markers that you are aware of and to which take care to adhere to? How do you find out about these OB markers and keep track of changes?

SMI 1: Slander, I don't follow any of these things, I try to praise the black women and I use myself as the role model and example. Show other girls what we are capable of. I don't comment on posts that are controversial, I feel people don't have to think the same, and because of that you don't have to say everything you think and cause drama.

SMI 2: I would never offend or use aggressive words, or even a photo that's too revealing.

SMI 3: I try to be careful with that, very very careful. So careful that I avoid talking about controversial things because I know that I work with people and they all have different opinions, some people will understand your opinions and ideas and others won't take it

very well. I am always careful, like for example, I don't post about diets in my social media because I'm not a dietician, and that could cause me a great problem. Sometimes I post about exercises, but I don't post details about the work out, I just post the exercise as a motivation. I show the foods I eat from my diet, but I don't post about specifics of my diet to everyone, because that's the dietician's job.

SMI 4: Yes, here in Brazil there was previously a lot of problem in relation to this, but today everyone knows that the bloggers are paid, so if the company asks to say that I was paid, I'll do so. If the company does not ask me to say that, then I'll say the truth "Guys, I received this product and I liked it", even so because I wouldn't suggest something that I don't believe in, understand? So, for example, if the company paid me to do that but I didn't think it was such a cool product, I can put "hashtag advertising"—here in Brazil we usually do with a hashtag, right? So, #ad, #advertising… anyways, ah, there's also that tag that has not been released to everyone yet so I still cannot use it, for example.

SMI 5: People whine about everything now and everything is controversial. I often stop and think twice. For example, if I want to post a picture of a pink skirt and then people see that say "man, she's being super feminist" or "she has some nerve trying to suggest that women can only wear skirts" and so forth. They take something so simple and innocent, something common or romantic or feminine and they take it to the opposite extreme. It's pretty restricting. Whenever I'm filming a video, we often post something so dumb and innocent but then somebody comes and says "wow…." and takes it to a polar opposite of what you're wanting to say. So I normally avoid things like that, avoid making gender commentary.

SMI 6: I am one of those annoying people who create controversy and discussion with things in my head. But I struggle against prejudice and try to apply that to my content. If I can see a word there, an expression that can be misinterpreted, I do not put it. I do not want to take the risk of anyone feeling bad because of a publication of mine.

SMI 7: I'm not the kind of person that likes to be in the middle of discussions. The less discussion involved is always better for me. I always say that just because I like or believe in something, it does not mean that you have to like or have the same opinion about it. As long as we respect each other, it's all good. The less discussion about it is always better.

SMI 8: I know I can't post someone's content without their permission and I know people shouldn't post my pictures either. I get mad when I see someone posting my content without my permission. I make sure I report them publicly and let people know that using someone else's content is not okay.

What are other considerations before posting any content on social media? Why do you have them in mind?

SMI 1: I consider if my content is going to help someone or not. I worry about people that are following me, People are going through a lot of different things and depending of what you post you might offend someone.

SMI 2: *Skipped*.

SMI 3: *Skipped*.

SMI 4: *Skipped*.

SMI 5: I consider whether or not my content will add something to that person's life. That person is taking time out of their day to watch one of my videos, to see one of my pictures. Even if it's just to help that person distract themselves or to teach them a little something about photography, about entrepreneurship, about culture, to show them different places. So I always try to consider if what I'm about to post will add some value to their lives. That's really how I decide whether or not I'll post it.

SMI 6: *Skipped*.

SMI 7: *Skipped*.

SMI 8: People like giveaways. When there's an opportunity to have a giveaway, I always do. It's a way of pleasing them, because I don't really make anything out of that. I just want to see my followers happy and engaging.

Are there any areas that you would not cover? Why or why not?

SMI 1: About maternity, things related to politics or religion.

SMI 2: Someone asked me to write about sex shop once, but that's another subject I would never talk about. I think it's a really intimate subject. Writing about it is the same as exposing women's or couples' privacy. That's just not me.

SMI 3: *Skipped*.

SMI 4: *Skipped*.

SMI 5: There are many. Tattoos, for example, I wouldn't cover because I'm not into that at all, it's pretty unrelated to my lifestyle… tobacco, drugs, I wouldn't ever cover any of those things.

SMI 6: *Skipped*.

SMI 7: *Skipped*.

SMI 8: Religion and politics. I think both subject matters and sexual orientation are very sensitive topics.

How do you seek to use your influence to create positive change (e.g. share postings of missing children)?

SMI 1: I don't do that [share postings of missing children]. I only work [to create positive change] about posting about acceptance, subjects about abortion. But I try to not bring that too much to my social media platforms.

SMI 2: Yes, I surely do. I've posted about blood donation, clothing donation, and also wrote about the case of a boy, who needed people's help to be healed from his disease.

SMI 3: Every time I get a request, I share on my social media, like missing children and animals. I use social media as a way to also collect money and help charity, I'm also a volunteer in some institutions in Goiania, and I use my influence to get donations for these institutions. Recently, we worked with a charity to get milk donations, we got 2000 liters of milk for an institution, I didn't necessarily work on my social media but I was one of the collaborators. Doing this kind of work not only helps create content but also do philanthropic work.

SMI 4: So, actually my influence, specifically, I try to improve the person's life, the person themselves, I make the person analyze themselves, make the person feel happier think about how it can improve them as a person. I've posted missing animals before… anyways, but if that happens it's a little complicated because if we start doing that, then a very large volume of people will show up after us wanting us to do it for them, understand? So my life would consist only of content of children and animals or whatever, because the amount of people who come after me wanting me to do something, you do it just once and then it's additional things for you to do ends up raining on you. That might be unfair to you to share something about one person's child and not to divulge someone else's, so I prefer not to do this type of content. However, in my posts I always preach self-love, taking care of your interior, just things that will help them improve as a person. I believe that, by doing this, I am helping in the person evolve.

SMI 5: I always receive messages in my Direct Messages talking about people who are, for example, needing donations at a hospital, needing blood donations. I try my hardest to share that on my Stories. But you always have to double-check if that's actually happening, I go after the original person to research a little. Unfortunately, there are people who do that just for attention, to get more subscribers. It creates a false campaign to generate subscribers. I always make it a priority to talk to the main person involved. When it's true, I try to make a point of sharing that on my Stories and with others.

SMI 6: I always shared advice on how to study better. Many people send me a message telling me how my posts encouraged them. For me, it's one of the parts of my content that makes me happier as a citizen. I am also very dedicated to the social work, serving other. I do not even share that much in my social media channels, because I'm don't look fake. But I try to ask for donations through my Instagram stories for a retirement home I attend.

SMI 7: Yes. I try to do this [use my influence to create positive change) through my positive attitude and happiness. I try to share this with the public and a lot of people identify themselves with it. I talk about chasing dreams and work for what you want. I believe that everyone is capable to achieve what they want. So, I always try to share this as a citizen, a positive attitude regarding everything.

SMI 8: Yeah, I try to encourage people to donate to social institutions. I also share information about missing pets occasionally.

8. Corporate Communications relations

If a corporate communications officer from an organization/agency reaches out to you to present their side of the story for an article you posted, would you engage the officer? Why?

SMI 1: I would talk to the corporate communications officer about their side of the story of an article I posted, because we need to have partnership and also feedback from both sides.

SMI 2: Yes, I would. I don't see any problems about that.

SMI 3: I'm always open to hear what they have to say, if they convince that I was wrong, I wouldn't mind to post on my social media that I was wrong and needed to make a correction.

SMI 4: It depends. Since social networks are a public space, you can express yourself freely. It would depend a lot, for example, I spoke poorly of a product but in fact that product did not work for me because it wasn't my type, right? And if the company sought me out to portray that, I would do so without problems because it was a piece of information that I did not have at the time, for example, "it didn't work with your hair" but on the label it says that it's for curly hair but on that label it didn't say that, I did not know any better but the company asks me to post something. So, I do not see a problem if it's something that's the truth, "I used this product, it gave me allergies, it ruined my skin," and if the company asked me to delete the post or to lie about my experience, I

would not do it—unless there was information that I did not have at the time, that would really make sense to the public, because it is a place of free expression, so if it didn't work for me I can share what went wrong to help other people so that they won't have the same problem.

SMI 5: I would if whatever they were saying made sense. Like, if they told me the coconut oil was good for your hair when it in fact is bad for your hair, I would go and let make everyone aware of that. The responsibility rests on my shoulders but I'm the one that shared that false information with people.

SMI 6: It is a wonderful experience to be in contact with companies. Whenever I can establish a little more in-depth contact with some company, you can be sure that I am going to embrace that idea. I would love to talk to all the companies I work with about what I think of that company, what I can add to that company and what that company can add to me whenever possible.

SMI 7: I would talk to him. Everyone has the right to talk about their opinions. Even though it's my social media, I would still talk to him. It doesn't hurt to talk to a person.

SMI 8: Generally, there's the commercial side and the marketing side. I'm always open to new products but I wouldn't like to participate in a competition between companies. I don't want to get caught up in the middle of that crossfire. I don't do exclusivity. But, for example, if I didn't like a certain product I don't go and say "I don't like the product." I simply don't say anything. However, if I do like it, I'll say so and recommend it. Yes, if I like the product I'll accept in the approach. I always make that clear. When somebody approaches me I'll already say "I'm going to test it first to later tell everybody about it if I like it."

If a corporate communications officer / marketing officer approaches you for a branding exercise, would you agree? Why or why not? What are your top considerations?

SMI 1: I don't think so, because I'm not sure. Might not be something that interests me.

SMI 2: I would, depending on the situation. I would if I like the product, for example, and the possibility of return of investment to the company's brand. If it isn't going to generate any profit for the company, I'm brave enough say that I don't do that job.

SMI 3: I'm not a marketing specialist, for example I don't work with advertising and marketing, so I would refer them to a professional in the area, even though I have knowledge in the area I don't want to mix things. I love working with social media, for being in this field for so long I believe I have the legal knowledge in the area, but when I need legal advice in marketing, I look for a professional.

SMI 4: Yes, I would do it—in fact, that is what most happens most of the time, right? Many companies seek us out to send products, they want to us to get to know them in a spontaneous view. So, companies have the freedom to send us product and we do, too, to talk about them if we want to. The only thing is that often we have the opposite, where that companies send product and then want to demand that we talk about them, right? In these cases, I am against this because if you send product you want it to be tested spontaneously—like it or not, being an influencer is a job, right? So, if you want the person to talk about it, you have to pay them for the insertion, but it's very normal for a company to tell us to test their product, like it or not. Anyways, that happens a lot and I usually say if I liked that product, I'm going to talk about that product.

SMI 5: If it was related to my profile and of interest to my audience, I would do it. If it's of interest to me, if the product is legitimate and works, if there is a good cost-benefit to the product also because it wouldn't be smart for me to post about a product that costs R$10,000 knowing that the price is out of the price range my audience has in mind. If I talk about a product, they'll want to buy that product. I really consider that. I always put myself in their shoes. If I buy it and like it, then I'll tell them about it.

SMI 6: For me, it is very nice to be able to give my opinion when I'm asked about the reputation that the company has before an audience. When a company is wonderful, we say that it is wonderful, incredible and everything. When it has negative points, I provide an evaluation by pointing out the things that can be improved in a very professional way.

SMI 7: Yes, I would. There's no reason why to not do it.

SMI 8: *Skipped*.

In your opinion, what other factors should be considered when building strong social media relations between corporate communications officers and social media influencers like yourself?

SMI 1: Both need to be open to accept suggestions and positive criticism. Be open to be perfected. More credibility and trust from both parts.

SMI 2: Quality products or services, the way they approach the influencers to make offers, being straightforward about what the product really is.

SMI 3: I think first thing is respect, respect that people are different, respect the work too, sometimes people that don't get social media judge the work wrong. What would make me have a good relationship with these people is if they have an open mind about

social media and respect other people's work.

SMI 4: I believe that companies have to stop viewing the influencer as merely media, because they often send product and tell the person to post, and why is that? They just want to reach the audience of that influencer but don't want to see how they can help that influencer, how they can make a difference, you know, in that influencer's life. I like companies that they care of them. For example, I once received product for curly hair. They didn't bother to find out if my hair is straight or to explain to me what I would even do with that product for curly hair. Anyways, I like companies that care or at least pretend to care, companies that will send a little message telling me a little about that product line because that product line will help me… anyways, not companies that say "give her product and she will post", that only see us as objects, really.

SMI 5: I believe that the transparency companies have is important to consider. I think that a lot of times they try to sell an image that simply isn't real and they try to hide things. You have to have transparency between the companies and the digital influencers because we're there to help them. Like it or not, we're spokespeople for their companies. We're representing their companies. It puts our own personal image at risk. So they have to be transparent since the initial contact through the moment they deliver the final work.

SMI 6: The first point is for the person to value my work. There's nothing more impolite to me than a company thinking that they are doing me a favor when, in fact, our work is collaborative. So the first thing is the appreciation of my work. In the same way that I value all companies that contact me, I also like them to value my work, to at least try to understand what I do, to show interest.

SMI 7: Good communication. It's all based on a good communication [as a factor that should be considered when building social media relationships between corporate communications officers and social media influencers]. Another good factor is the target public. Not all companies would hire me because the target public they are trying to reach is not my public that follows me. And as I told you before, communication is very important. The public that follows me are the people who admire and like my content – which is always based on my principles and values.

SMI 8: Girl, I don't honestly know how to answer that question. The product has to be good in the first place. It has to have quality, it has to have value. A person has to value my work and my messaging. The product has to be accessible to my audience, as well. In a local store or on some website that can sell in all of Brazil. So I worry about that, too. Because if it's only available in one city, how am I going to advertise that?

If an organization were interested in engaging you to be their social media commentator or to write an endorsement piece for them, what would be your consideration/s?

SMI 1: Before engaging with an organization to write an endorsement piece for them, first thing I would ask is If I can be honest and sincere. If yes, then I would be in interested in doing based in my personal experience.

SMI 2: Product quality of product, if it is what they say it is. Quality is the main factor.

SMI 3: First of all, I would research on my own the company and the product and I would analyze if that is a good fit for my social media and public. Because I can't accept any job, if a product isn't what my public is looking for I'm not going to bring money to the company and my followers will think that is very sketchy that I was endorsing something that is not what my blog is about. So I think those are the two main factors.

SMI 4: So, it's all that: it's gotta be that, in reality. So, if the company seeks me out, it's to tell me to talk about a product that did not work for me and it really did not work out, I won't lie, understand? I could just not talk about it but if they send me cool products, products that are awesome, that are going to be interesting for me, I can talk normally about—so much so that what happens often is that we do not have access to a product, I have never tested that brand because I was never interested in doing so… when we have the opportunity to get to know a product, being a great product. So that's why I am not against the company sending us product—only always spontaneously. When there is payment involved, the company says, "I want to pay you to talk about this product." So, sometimes you have to be aware that you have to have truth so you have to test it, you have to see if the product works and all before making a speech.

SMI 5: Like I said, if I trust the product, I would use it. The services that companies offer like Submarino, for example, before closing our deal together I went and did some research. I even asked my family if any of them had every used Submarino as a travel agency, if they were legitimate and trustworthy. I looked on Google to see if there were any issues, if anybody had any problems with their ticket, if their packages work out. I always try doing a lot of research. If I give a bad recommendation, the person with the most lose is me because my reputation is at stake and I'm the one who will suffer in the end. Think of how many people will trust in what I am saying about how they can lose their money. You can miss out on the opportunity. So I only trust it if I believe in it, if it's something legitimate. A lot of fake things show up all the time wanting to form a partnership with you.

SMI 6: First thing: I need to test the product or service, I need to know what I'm talking about. I need to get to know the company first. For example, I work with a pharmacy. It is a very delicate business, because imagine I recommend for a person to submit a prescription there and the product is not good. I value the trust that the market already has in me, that my audience has in me. So, I need to know what I'm talking about. Did I like

it? Go to the next step. Do the company's demands match what I can offer? If we can these things right, we can continue with our partnership.

SMI 7: I would you do it [write an endorsement piece for them] if the company and product is in line with the things I believe. If the product is something that relates to my values, I would do it with no problems. But if it's something that doesn't agree with my values, I would thank the opportunity, but I would not do it. I'm sure they will find someone else that can advertise it for them.

SMI 8: For example, there was a company that came looking for me to use my photo and my signature on the launch of a new product of theirs. I felt so honored, you know? It would be the labeling of the product that would have my photo with my Instagram and all. With the catchphrase I use and the words "I recommend this" in quotation marks. I thought it was such a cool idea but they didn't value me. They weren't willing to pay me for anything. That's why I discarded that opportunity. If I don't feel financially valued and won't be paid or remunerated (because it's my image and my endorsement that will be used) then I won't be willing to do it.

9. Mediating the media model

The model posits several types of influences that influence the traditional media.

Journalists' mindset is guided by traditional news values like immediacy, excitement, and novelty, which help them to sieve through large volumes of information passing through the newsrooms daily.

Newsroom or organizational routines revolve around each media company's specific roles and objectives in a community. Ensuring profitability and sustainability influences editorial decisions. Budget and manpower constraints impact what news gets covered.

Extra-media forces include the existing relationships between organizations and media establishments, market forces, governmental regulations, legalities, size of the media industry and the intensity of media competition.

Media ideology refers to media organizations' role in society and their reasons for existence.

Which factors are relevant to you and which are not? Why?

SMI 1: I think the Extramedia forces doesn't influence me.

SMI 2: I think " Newsroom routines " is the main one that digital influencers should care about, because it affects your decisions on what to publish, which, on the other hand, affects your readers. "Journalists' mindset is also important, because influencers always want to show what is new to their audience. The one I think to be the least important, in

my opinion, is "Media ideology ".

SMI 3: I believe they all have a lot of influence, but I believe that there are some factors that also have a lot of influence because when we work with digital influencers, we can't not consider their human side. So we would add here a few factors. For example, not only his relationship with the public and with the media, but his relationship with those people who are close to him, his romantic relationship, his relationship with family. Those are things that really influence the production of content. There are, for example, personal matters. Blogs, digital influencers, youtubers… it's a person that's behind all of that, producing content. He's exposed and vulnerable. That humanity exists. It is truly important. So these additional factors I take into consideration--the rest, relationship with family, lovelife, the state of that person's spirit on that day.

SMI 4: The mindset will always have a lot of relevance because what we think, what we believe, how we are as influencers, the person… so I am an influencer so what I think is important, the mindset, what I believe… will always have great relevance to the routine. It depends. It's what I told you, as long as the publicity is, at last, linked to my values, to what I believe, also has an influence, understand? But not that it influences in a way that we only think of it as, "oh, it's bringing in money, it is providing, so that means I am doing it"… no. So, it is linked to other factors. It's also influenced by the media. Yes, it has an influence because sometimes we work with the company for a long time, the company sends product, the agency invites us to an event we wouldn't go to but we will go because we have that relationship… so it does have an influence. I believe that helps people… just by sharing our lives, you know? But who knows… like it or not, it helps people—and that, in some way, has an influence but it's not just that. It isn't that strong.

SMI 5: So the *Journalists' Mindset* is referring mainly to what's popular at any given moment, right? I think it's definitely the first one that any digital influencer needs to have in mind. You have to basically be researching what's popular, to try to capitalize on that before it becomes mainstream. Or even taking that mainstream topic and doing something related to that. For example, Shakira recently released a new music video and it was really popular. People all over the world were listening to the video. Two days later, I made my own video with my own theme. You can't simply take something popular just because it's popular at that moment. You have to take something popular and present to your audience with your own spin on that.So I took the music video that Shakira made. She made in a really cool way, with a bathtub of milk and all. I then took that idea and made it my own. I taught my audience how to take photographs with the same style of Shakira's music video. You can't let that popular thing expire.You have to always be paying attention to what's going but also you need to translate that in a way that your audience is going to like. I did that for Carnaval, for example. A certain topic was really popular at that moment and so I went and showed some Carnaval-inspired makeup. So that's something that influencers try

doing… taking whatever is popular and translating it in their own way. So *Journalists' Mindset* would be that main one.There are also many companies that say "I'm going to send your perfumes and clothing, make a video about that" or "I'll give this for that, make a little basic video." But they can't know that it's taking you ten hours for editing, six hours for filming. It wouldn't be a very sustainable business. So the influencers of today have many ways to earn money. Lots of people see YouTubers with one million or five, ten million views per month and think "man, that person is making lots of money". That is not the case. YouTube doesn't really pay that well. Many people think they do. But influencers really make money with partnerships. There isn't a way to stop doing that this-for-that exchange because it's work. You wake up at 7am and go to sleep at 3am everyday. It's really intense work so you have to be paid for that which you're dedicating some much to. So you really have to value and close those partnership deals. But at the same time, you can't just along closing every deals that presents itself to you. If you don't believe in that product, it won't matter. You have to find balance and take it one month at a time.My day-to-day as an influencer definitely has an effect on what I cover or not.You have to establish these partnerships. It's important for your work. You are there to influence. If you don't have any products, nothing to influence, you're doing that in vain. You're dedicating yourself to something that won't bring in any money at the end of the day. You're doing slave work, not just doing a hobby. That's why it's so important for you to define your niche really well and then to establish long-lasting partnerships with companies. I think you'll never be able to satisfy everybody. If you were to try to please everybody there, you wouldn't be you anymore. You'd totally lose your essence, your authenticity. I believe the audience that is there, is there because they like you and believe you. It's from that moment on that you begin to lose yourself and to listen to everybody, to please everybody just to be sweet and that's when people accept you. But I think that in doing that, you are totally losing your essence. So I don't think Media Ideology is relevant.

SMI 6: The most important aspect for me is my values, it's what drives me. The extra-media forces, of course, also influence, but my values are the factor that influence me on social media the most. I believe the journalist needs to maintain a high level of impersonality, impartiality. In my case, as an influencer, my job is to express my opinion. My values would be stronger, more latent. Routine would come second. And the extra-media forces influence us and we don't even notice.

SMI 7: I think so. it shows the quality of my work as well. Being Miss Brazil is something that already helps me a lot to influence other people. I'm already a public figure; even if I wasn't on social media people would know me. This has helped me a lot with my work as a digital influencer.
- *How big is the market influence on your publications? Does that affect your work?*
Big. It does affect my work.

Do you believe that your posts, as a digital influencer, get affected by what the media expects you to post? People usually expect that the influencers will recommend good, new, and interesting things to them. Do you think this affect your work somehow?

No. I don't think so. As I told you before, I post what I think it's interesting to my followers. It might not be as popular as I want it to be; but this doesn't affect me.

Is there any other influence factor for the media – which is technically for journalists – that you think it might influence you as a digital influencer?

No. I think that's all.

SMI 8: People are interested in immediate information, so they go to the internet to look for it. We used to have to wait for the TV newscast. But now we can just go to social media to learn what is happening in the world. We want to access information through social media so we can access information faster.

Please rank these factors in terms of how accurately they describe your experience

SMI 1: I think that, media ideology, routine, journalist' mindset.

SMI 2: First, " Newsroom routine", then " Journalists' mindset", then " Extra media forces " and I would remove " Media Ideology".

SMI 3: For me, considering how this is something personal for me, it's a bit hard to rank these because I am a journalist and I put a lot of my journalistic side in my work. I don't think i would change the ranking.

SMI 4: Mindset, extra media forces, routines, and ideology.

SMI 5: I think Mindset would be first but then I think the second would be Extra-media Forces and then Newsroom/organizational Routines

SMI 6: First, my life perspective as a person. Second, mindset. Third, routine. Fourth, extra media forces. Like it or not, it's my job. It's how I make my money. So companies end up influencing my work. Not always I can do 100 percent the way I want, I must also meet the parameters of the companies. So we always have to be in consensus. Fifth, media ideology – People get along with me and give me credibility to what I say.

SMI 7: *Skipped*.

SMI 8: I wouldn't rank them. I would put them all together. The main goal is to reach my followers, so I need to come up with interesting content, so they get interested in my product, that's how I make my living. Secondly, I need to create content that is shareable,

so I catch the other people's attention. Also, even though I don't give much attention to posting my personal life, I know that is import for followers. I can tell that they like to know as much as possible about me, the person behind the posts. That is clear to me when I am on the street and people get excited to see me. They ask for a hug and want to take a picture with me. That surprises me every time.

Do you think the model is applicable to you and other bloggers you know? Why or why not?

SMI 1: I think so; most of the bloggers I know are similar to me. Considering the fact that this activity isn't always really *work*, we do it because we enjoy it.

SMI 2: I think so, especially because of the element "Newsroom routine".

SMI 3: People who work a lot with this digital content production work a lot, for example, by immediatism and they want that newness of posting something new, so that is really important. That already has a really big importance to begin with and then it follows suit, so I believe so.

SMI 4: More or less. In terms of mindset, it does have an influence. The rest has an influence on a small scale… it isn't so important for that reason, but it makes sense.

SMI 5: I believe it is. I liked the model, it truly says it all. You have to be guided by the values of the story. It needs to be this immediatism business. You have to have relationships with the organizations. It's all of that. You have to be guided by the values of the story.

SMI 6: I would put my personal values before mindset.

SMI 7: *Skipped*.

SMI 8: Yes.

If you could improve the model to make it more relevant to your experience, what would you add in or remove?

SMI 1: My personal life. Where I live and what I do, places I go. I would put the first that the business has to be lucrative for me.

SMI 2: I think it's complete. I would only remove "Media Ideology ".

SMI 3: I think it depends on the mindset of journalist, together with personal life the two aspects really go hand-in-hand. The audience is concerned with my love life, for example. It is concerned with how my puppy is doing. So that is something important and ought to not become something mechanical.

SMI 4: I would add what is in demand, do what is happening… it influences a lot and brings a very good result, an immediate result, and the routine has an influence. I do not know if it would be too much, because what often happens is that the influencers are professionals and all, but it is not always the only profession. For example, I have a marketing agency—as much as my Instagram is not bringing me money, I am posting there by my own free will, which I like to do even without gaining anything from it, because it is not my main source of income—it's extra income and I believe this happens a lot, especially here.

SMI 5: This part doesn't mention anything about being engaged with your audience, right? I would add something like because it discusses the create, to talk about what's hot at the moment… but what about the people who will receive all that? The audience is the one who is going to see it. One big influence on my work is what my audience is wanting and what I'm living at any given moment, what I want to share with them.

I would put first immediatism. We can't be hypocrites. So maybe something that is a hot topic in your personal life? The hot topics always attract the curiosity of others in that. So definitely immediatism, followed by your personal life.

SMI 6: *Skipped*.

SMI 7: *Skipped*.

SMI 8: *Skipped*.

Do you believe that PR practitioners can cultivate social media relations with influencers such as yourself?

SMI 1: I believe so.

SMI 2: Yes, they can. By the way, there are many journalists that contact me through emails with subjects suggesting that I post them on my blog.

SMI 3: Sure!

SMI 4: Yes, yes, definitely—in fact, it is important for the company to have public relations because it can to bring this vision, despite thinking a lot about the money, of what it will bring in return… but this professional, he is a relationship expert so telling the influencer that he is important, bringing an exclusive control to that influencer… that makes the influencer feel important to the company—that professional knows well how to do it.

SMI 5: Sure, why not?

SMI 6: I do believe that PR practitioners can cultivate social media relations with influencers. It's crazy when you see a public relations practitioner not wanting to cultivate a relationship with me. It's very contradicting.

SMI 7: Yes.

SMI 8: Yes.

In your opinion, how do you think public relations practitioners can approach social media relations in a more systematic and effective manner?

SMI 1: I think that we should dialogue more and exchange more experiences. Also have more respect from their part and treat us professionally, giving us more credibility.

SMI 2: Bringing new things. And I think digital influencers should even write more about that subject; I mean they need to discuss more about new topics, not only advise about beauty products or something like that. Especially because, nowadays, people are to lazy to read, and you can tell that by seeing how much youtube has catched on. So, I think the journalists should work approach digital influencers about   reporting news on youtube, for example. Even children don't even care about T.V. anymore, they only watch youtube videos. So it's possible to do it.

SMI 3: The first thing is to recognize the work of new media because the challenge I've had with Public Relations was them believing that only journalists are content producers. So journalists are always updating themselves, always recycling in order to adapt to the market, adapt to new realities. So the first step is to recognize just that, of this importance. The same way lots of people read newspapers and magazines, many people access social media, access blogs, access blop posts… they are all influencers. So it's a really strong production of content and it has really big results. It reaches a large number of people. For example, I reached 4 million impressions on my Instagram. You reach a lot of people. Support is really important… the influencer having support is important. You think you can throw him there and that he'll figure it out by himself, but the person

needs to have support. Be it with a release or with information that can help him produce content in a more secure and efective way.

SMI 4: So the approach… usually, the influence always leaves a method of contact. So choose exactly one method to contact with that influencer made available, to approach them in a more personalized way possible…. So, I get a million releases a day, about a million things, I'm just going to talk about that product if it's speaking to me. So if it was a message that was sent to a million people and it had nothing to do with me, I did not gain anything with the product, there's nothing in it for me to test it… I wouldn't talk about it. Now, if the company cared enough to make a message just for me, if they sent the product to me for me to understand a little more about that product, I'll see that it really was for me—so it's content that I can talk about.

SMI 5: The interesting thing about influencers and journalists is that they go hand-in-hand, right? Both are there to report something so the relation is a good one. Unfortunately, sensationalism becomes a problem. It happens with the journalists as they interact with influencers. They take something silly and transform it into the worst thing on earth. So, I believe that this relationship can exist… but it would need to be something without sensationalism. It would need to be something real.

SMI 6: The market in my city has been opening a lot. The companies here, other than the big ones that have a marketing budget and have a specific team for it, end up sending unprepared people to get in touch with us. Not that I want to offend them, but they are people who do not really understand what the SMI does, when it's work and when it's not. Public relations practitioner can then bring this understanding of professionalism to a digital influencer because it's so annoying people thinking it's just a post on Instagram - why can't you do it? It's my job! I think that, in order for it to be done in a more systematic and effective way, the Public Relations professional should be representing the company and understand that what I do is a job, and they contacting me because they value what I do.

SMI 7: I believe that the digital influencers can reach out to a certain type of public in a way that the public relation professional can't. So if there's a good communication among these professionals, thing will work out just fine.

SMI 8: I believe the person should be straightforward with me from the start, introducing himself and the company she or he represents. They should explain why they are interested in my work and ask me if I would be interested in working with them, what my terms would be for a partnership. They should show their concern on finding out how I work and how much I charge. They should be professional from the start.

In your opinion, what do you think is currently lacking among practitioners (skills, experiences, resources etc.) when trying to cultivate strong social media relations? How can this be improved?

SMI 1: It lacks understanding, seeing blogging as a job and that we are working professionals.
Even though it is fun to be a blogger, it is still a job. Just getting a free product doesn't cover the cost of producing a post and the time I take preparing it.

SMI 2: I think they lack approaching skills and they're not quite clear while explaining what they want. For example, they're not able convince the influencers that the subjects they suggest will be good ones to write about on social media. And they are not quite honest about the conditions of a negotiation, for example.

SMI 3: I think the first step is to get to know these influencers because I've seen many communications market professionals that judged the influencer but doesn't even follow him on social media and has never seen his content. So I believe the first step is getting to know the work of these people. The same way that a journalist doesn't just show up in the market and everybody already knows who he is, without others even know that person's content. It's the same thing with influencers. You have to read the content, get to know the influencer in order to be able to say that it won't worthwhile for you to work with him. I think we're missing something basic in this interaction and that's communication, it's you going after that person and communicating with them, getting to know them and then from that point you can define how cool working with that influencer might be, determine whether you'll want to give credibility to that influencer or not. That interaction can be improved upon… getting in contact, seeking to do better research about the influencer, with the influencer, with experiences.

SMI 4: This market is a market that is still developing. The digital market came about very quickly. I believe that professionals are still learning how to deal with influencers, since it is a very new thing, right? I do not know how it works there in the United States, in Brazil, in Sao Paulo, but it's a little more ahead of the curve, but in Goiânia, it's still very complicated. Companies often do not know how to talk to us. They think it's just another form of media, they don't realize it's a person, understand? So I believe that it can improve—especially by having the public relations professional to do that. I believe that you have to have a professional for this, for example a company often come to me with a commercial representative, he has more contact with me, has no preparation to talk about influencers, but the companies that I, for example, as a professional, get in contact with the influencers… I understand it well. I think every professional has to know how the universe of influencers works, has to know how to approach us, how to speak with us…. I believe that you have to have a greater knowledge. But even then, the routine is

often not a knowledge that you gain only in a university, in post graduate studies, I have already done a million courses, post-grad studies, MBA in marketing, in digital communication and in none of those did I learn what I learned in the day to day of being an influencer. I think it is necessary to truly talk more to understand it all.

SMI 5: The thing that is really missing is for them to see what their niche is, to research about that digital influencer because the contracts that they offer are really attractive. You end up wanting that contract. They put pressure and try to shove that anybody. So you'll see, for example, people who aren't even mothers and who don't even have children advertising children's clothing. If I owned a business related to children, I would want an influencer that is also a mother. It's much more authentic to people. That other person isn't even a mother and doesn't even use the product. That's something you have to really consider. Sometimes I open my inbox and my agents are telling me that some irrelevant company wants to hire me but it's so irrelevant to who I am. It's annoying and that company loses all credibility with me. It just shows a sense of desperation and it shows that they're simply trying all avenues now. The companies need to truly make a target for themselves and then get the influencers relevant to that target. They need to stop being so desperate and stop asking just any influencer. It almost comes across as if the company was prostituting itself. You see a thousand influencers talking about that and you know that it's 100% paid for and it'll be relevant to maybe 20% of that influencer's niche. I found myself in this world of digital influencers. Simply put, it's the perfect union of all the things I like the most: communicating with other people, I've always been somebody with a more laid-back life. Ever since I was little my parents would dabble in this and in that and so I've always had a blog and I really liked the interaction, being able to comment and to make virtual friends. One of the things I like the most about being an influencer is all the love and kindness you receive from so many parts of the world. You're going to some part of the world and your audience will say "that's where so-and-so is." I really care about this profession. I fell in love with it because I get to do what I most love: photography, videos, and simplicity. Sometimes the simplest video can make a difference. It can be a video about photography that they didn't really like or a video about the hurricane and its devastation to help my audience open their eyes and have more empathy. I love being able to smile at the end of the day and you receive messages and emails from people saying, "I really needed to hear that today" or "you made my day." There is nothing more worthwhile than that. The partnerships don't matter, the free products don't matter. To me, what matters a lot is what I do. That might sound cheesy but the many hours of work you put in need to be accompanied with satisfaction and love for what you're doing. Otherwise, you'll give up quickly because of the haters and all the mean comments on the Internet. People are braver behind a keyboard and say things they normally wouldn't say. But I'm happy that I was able to share this with you.

SMI 6: Unfortunately, there are still unkind people who demand things in a very unkind way. The company is paying, I understand that it has to receive what it would like to receive. But sometimes there are communication professionals who have been in the market for a long time who don't treat us as professionals. Unfortunately, some professionals have a biased view on who is working with the internet nowadays, who think that my work is ephemeral and that they are hiring me just because the client is asking for it. But fortunately, it is rare to go through such situations. So, they need to understand that it is a new profession that has to be valued as all other professions. I usually talk about a product, service without being paid because I really like it. For example, this week I bought a suitcase at the mall, I found it wonderful and I posted it. It was at an incredible price. Now, if the luggage company had sent me a release about the same suitcase I would most likely neither read nor post anything about it, because it is something very institutional and generic. On the other hand, if a company contacts me to tell me that they want me to post it something for them, that's another story. I need to know if what the company does has to do with me, with what I believe, and if, it does, we continue to work together. And that requires an investment from the company. Do you want to send me a product, so I can test it? Of course, you can. But you cannot demand anything without paying anything. If this is the company's attitude, they won't probably get anything from me. But if the company wants me to really get to know their work and I like it, there's a great chance I'll post because they did not demand anything. They understand that's my job. They decided to give it try. If I end up posting, good for them.

SMI 7: It depends on the type of public they are trying to reach. I communicate with my public in a certain way, other people might do it differently. It's kind of hard to explain it. It's too broad to define it. But definitively depends on the type of public you're trying to reach.

What about the communication between you and the public relations professionals?

What's important to have when you are negotiating a contract and talking to them?
I'm not sure. I don't usually have to deal with public relationship professionals. It would be more with people that are making events or have stores and companies.

Do they hire you to do more TV commercials then?
Yes, lots of commercial.

Do people usually invite you to events - like, opening parties, fairs – and expect you to post and advertise about them?
No, as I told you before. It depends if I get paid to do it or not. If I don't get paid, I do it because I want to be associated with the company – like I said to you earlier about the Coca-Cola event. So it's basically it. Even if I don't get paid to go to an event, I will talk about it if I like it. But if I don't like it, I won't do any advertise about it.

SMI 8: I think it lacks the ability to negotiate. While they know it is important to post about their company, they are not willing to pay for it. It is a job, right? I get so frustrated sometimes, because people want me to post content for them for free. They seem not to recognize me. How do you recognize someone's work? It is paying for it, of course. We should be practical, people want to feel they are recognized by their work and the way to do that is paying them for what they have to offer.