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Influencers and luxury fashion brands on Instagram. Effects of mediated actions in the relationship with the user

Influencers y marcas de moda de lujo en Instagram. Efectos de las acciones mediadas por prescriptores en la relación con el usuario

Influenciadores e marcas de moda de lujo no Instagram. Efeitos das ações mediadas pelos prescritores na relação com o usuário

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Abstract

Influencers act on Instagram as images of brands that transcend their personal one. However, there is a lack of research focused on the link that is generated between the brand and the user as a result of collaborations between these firms and certain prescribers. Does an influencer's participation change that relationship? To answer this research question, this study aims to analyze the relationship between the most followed luxury fashion brands on Instagram and their followers around collaborations with influencers on their corporate profiles, through action in itself and the prescriber's participation in the content. To do this, a comparative content analysis of both quantitative and qualitative nature is carried out, in order to evaluate the engagement and the message of each action. The sample is made up of the 387 posts published by Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Dolce & Gabbana and Dior from February 10 to March 7, 2023, when the main fashion weeks are held. The results show that the engagement percentage of an action is higher if an influencer participates in it. As a main conclusion, two other elements have been detected that influence the commitment generated by the publication: the content of the post, focused on the professional context of the influencer; and the profile of the prescriber, with a predominance of the macro-influencer over the micro-influencer.

Keywords: Influencer; Brand; User; Instagram; Engagement; Interaction

Resumen

Los *influencers* ejercen en Instagram como imágenes de marcas que trascienden la suya personal. No obstante, se registra una escasez de investigaciones centradas en el vínculo que se genera entre la marca y el usuario como resultado de colaboraciones entre estas firmas y determinados prescriptores. ¿Influye en esa relación que en el contenido participe un *influencer*? Para responder a esta pregunta de investigación, este estudio parte del objetivo general de analizar la relación entre las marcas de moda lujo más seguidas en Instagram y sus seguidores en torno a las colaboraciones con *influencers* en los perfiles corporativos, a través de la acción en sí misma y de la interacción del usuario con el post. Para ello, se realiza un análisis de contenido comparado de naturaleza tanto cuantitativa como cualitativa, con el fin de realizar un estudio de *engagement* y del mensaje de cada acción. La muestra se compone de los 387 posts publicados por Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Dolce & Gabbana y Dior del 10 de febrero al 7 de marzo de 2023, cuando se celebran las principales semanas de la moda. Los resultados evidencian que el porcentaje de *engagement* de una acción es más alto si participa un *influencer* en ella. Como conclusión principal, se destacan dos elementos que influyen en el compromiso generado por la publicación: el contenido del post, centrado en el contexto profesional del *influencer*; y el perfil del prescriptor, con predominancia del *macroinfluencer* sobre el *microinfluencer*.

Palabras clave: Influencer; Marca; Usuario; Instagram; Engagement; Interacción

Resumo

Os influenciadores atuam no Instagram como imagens de marcas que transcendem o seu pessoal. No entanto, faltam pesquisas focadas no vínculo que se gera entre a marca e o usuário a partir da colaboração entre essas empresas e determinados prescritores. ¿Influencia esse relacionamento se um influenciador participar do conteúdo? Para responder a esta questão de investigação, propõe-se um estudo com o objetivo geral de analisar a relação entre as marcas de luxo mais seguidas no Instagram e os seus seguidores em torno de colaborações com influenciadores em perfis corporativos, através da ação em si e da participação do prescritor no conteúdo. Para isso, é realizada uma análise comparativa de conteúdo de natureza quantitativa e qualitativa, a fim de realizar um estudo de engajamento e da mensagem de cada ação. A amostra é composta pelos 387 posts publicados por Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Dolce & Gabbana e Dior de 10 de fevereiro a 7 de março de 2023, quando acontecem as principais semanas de moda. Os resultados mostram que o percentual de engajamento de uma ação é maior se um influenciador participar dela. Da mesma forma, foram detectados outros dois elementos que influenciam o comprometimento gerado pela publicação: o conteúdo da postagem, focado no contexto profissional do influenciador; e o perfil do prescritor, com predomínio do macroinfluenciador sobre o microinfluenciador.

Palavras-chave: Influenciador; Marca; Seguidor; Instagram; Noivado; Interação

1. Introduction

Luxury brands have striven for years to reach broader market segments by designing products that, while not universally appealing, are becoming more accessible (Shukla et al., 2022). At the same time, the consumer base for these brands is growing increasingly diverse in terms of characteristics, needs, and desires (Pangarkar et al., 2021). These developments have led to a shift in paradigm: sales are no longer exclusive, and purchases are driven not only by social recognition but also by self-gratification (Roux et al., 2017).

This new context, characterized by luxury brands expanding their reach to a more diverse audience, necessitates a shift in communication strategy. Social media, offline communication experiences, and, notably, influencer marketing emerge as the most utilized resources for enhancing the brands' universality (Lou & Yuan, 2018) by fostering a new brand awareness (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

The significance of influencer marketing as a communication tool for luxury brands is evident in the research interest it has garnered (Jin et al., 2019; Jin & Ryu, 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021; Creevey et al., 2021; Qian & Park, 2021; Li et al., 2023). It is defined as a collaboration between a brand and a prominent individual, where the latter promotes the former on a social network through experiential content and non-intrusive formats (Hawlk, 2018). Moreover, this collaboration may involve various social media profiles, resulting in posts on both the brand's and the influencer's accounts (Chakraborty & Kumar, 2023).

However, there is a predominant focus on studies examining the personal profiles of these collaborators (Schouten et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021) compared to those analyzing the strategies employed by firms with influencers on their corporate profiles (Pérez-Curiel & Sanz-Marcos, 2019).

1.1. Influencers as Promotional Tools

The IAB (2022) classification system divides influencers into two categories: natives and non-natives. Natives are individuals whose popularity arises from professionally managing their accounts as personal brands (Erz & Christensen, 2018). On the other hand, non-natives are recognized for professions outside of social media that attract followers to their personal profiles. In both cases, as they gain followers and interactions, they turn content creation into a livelihood through collaborations with brands that pay them to promote their products.

Thus, the common user becomes a Social Media Influencer (SMI) (McQuarrie et al., 2013), capable of registering a sufficiently high number of interactions per post for a brand to capitalize on the collaboration. Academically, this transformation has garnered attention for two main purposes: understanding the process by which users become SMIs (Veirman et al., 2017; Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021), and assessing the effectiveness of their influence in commercial contexts (Cowan & Hunt, 2019). Studies suggest that SMIs wield greater influence over the public compared to traditional celebrities (Ahmadi & Leamsom, 2022).

Influencers provide brands with a unique opportunity to engage with their target audience organically, using narratives and formats that reflect everyday life. This natural interaction sets influencers apart from personal or traditional branding approaches (Larsson, 2018; Jun & Yi, 2020), and brands capitalize on the authentic relationship between the SMI and their followers to drive engagement (Delbaere et al., 2021) and influence purchasing decisions (Ge & Gretzel, 2018).

The examination of social media influencers, crucial for fostering engagement between users and brands, particularly for those with limited financial resources (Kay et al., 2020), has led to the identification of three distinct categories based on their follower count: the micro-influencer (1,000 to 100,000 followers), the macro-influencer (100,000 to one million followers), and the mega-influencer, boasting over one million followers. Despite differences in their audience size, existing literature highlights the capacity of all three categories to influence consumer behaviors towards a brand (Watkins & Lee, 2016).

It is important to note that brands engage influencers not only as commercial assets but also to cultivate brand communities, wherein social media influencers serve as catalysts for emotional connections between users and the brand (Zhao & Chen, 2022). This fosters

not only consumer commitment to the company's products but also to its identity (Hsieh et al., 2022).

1.2. Brand-User Interaction Through Influencers

Previous studies have primarily explored audience interactions with Social Media Influencers (SMIs), addressing content objectives related to both commerce and the promotion of social change (Mundt et al., 2018; Pain, 2021; Aboelenien et al., 2023). Specifically, research has centered on the content shared by both micro-influencers and macro-influencers on their social profiles during collaborations with brands (Voorveld et al., 2018; Letto & Pascucci, 2023). While systematic reviews have examined the relationship between SMIs and the engagement they generate on their personal accounts (Pradhan et al., 2023), there has been a notable lack of academic focus on actions undertaken by influencers on firms' corporate profiles. Despite these profiles actively seeking commercial profitability through influencer collaborations, the study of their content provides a valuable means for evaluating the effectiveness of such actions. This study aims to address this gap in research, focusing on the corporate perspective and contributing results that facilitate comparisons in terms of engagement.

Regarding social media, Instagram is considered the most important for carrying out influencer marketing campaigns (Veresiu & Parmentier, 2020; Smith & Fischer, 2021) due to the possibilities it offers SMIs to interact with the audience, establish emotional connections with them (Drenten et al., 2020), and generate commercial outcomes (Ríos et al., 2020). However, YouTube takes the spotlight as the most analyzed social network when the object of study is influencers and the brand content they share (Sharma, 2023; Pradhan et al., 2023).

The described scenario, marked by the scarcity of research on the brand-user link mediated by collaborations between luxury brands and SMIs on corporate profiles, highlights the need to focus on the content generated by the brands themselves and published on their social networks as a result of commercial agreements with opinion leaders (Alalwan et al., 2017). A primary research question is posed: Are there differences in the virtual brand-user relationship depending on whether the action involves an influencer or not? From this question, two more specific questions arise: Are there more interactions with the content if the action involves an influencer? Is there a trend in the sector regarding the chosen influencer profile?

This study aims to analyze the relationship between the most followed luxury brands on Instagram and their followers concerning collaborations with influencers on corporate profiles, examining both the action itself and the influencer's involvement in the content. Specific objectives include observing the narrative and production elements of the brand's action, analyzing the role of the SMI as an ambassador on the corporate Instagram

profile, and evaluating follower perceptions based on the number of interactions and the sentiment generated.

2. Methodology

The methodology is based on a comparative content analysis (Piñuel, 2002; Pérez-Curiel & Sanz-Marcos, 2019) of both quantitative and qualitative nature, aiming to conduct a study of the engagement and message of each action (Stemler, 2000). This tool, besides being widely validated (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Pangarkar & Rathee, 2022) in the advertising field, has seen increased usage in the post-pandemic communication scenario (Sharma & Meena, 2022), making its application suitable for the present study.

Furthermore, this is a dual-focus study (brand-user) that aims to evaluate the impact of influencers on the user's relationship with the luxury brand through content in which they participate and which is published on the corporate Instagram profiles.

To narrow down the scope of the study, a classification of the top five luxury brands with the most followers on Instagram is chosen (Table 1). Regarding the period to be analyzed, the timeframe from February 10th to March 7th, 2023, is selected, coinciding with the four major fashion weeks in which the brands in question participate: New York Fashion Week, from February 10th to 15th; London Fashion Week, from February 17th to 21st; Milan Fashion Week, from February 21st to 27th; and Paris Fashion Week, from February 27th to March 7th. During these weeks, the Fall-Winter 2023/2024 collections were presented, making it an ideal time to evaluate the brand-user relationship on Instagram and analyze the mediation of influencers.

A checklist of indicators is applied to a sample of 387 posts from Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Dolce & Gabbana, and Dior, with dependent and independent variables structured into two blocks; impact and content of the action.

Table 1. Luxury fashion brands with the most followers on Instagram. June 2023

Luxury brand	Number of followers
Chanel @chanelofficial	58.1 million
Louis Vuitton @louisvuitton	54.4 million
Gucci @gucci	52.2 million
Dior @dior	45.0 million
Dolce & Gabbana @dolcegabbana	30.5 million

Source: Instagram (2023).

The first block, the impact block, is quantitative in nature and includes variables derived from Instagram's functionalities: likes, comments, and views (Pradhan et al., 2023; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Gathering all these figures using the social media tool Keyhole allows for the calculation of the engagement rate by applying the following formula: $[(\text{number of likes} + \text{number of comments}) / \text{number of followers}] \times 1000$.

On the other hand, the second block is dedicated to the analysis of the action's content from a qualitative approach. It includes nine categories (Table 2) previously validated by other authors who have studied the role of the influencer figure in advertising processes (Chung & Cho, 2017; Dunkley, 2017; Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Hudders et al., 2021; Kim, 2022; Pangarkar & Rathee, 2022): format, visual content, shot, capture production, scene, aesthetics, brand inclusion, textual content, and action intention.

Table 2. Indicator sheet for action analysis

Categories	Variables and items
Composition of post	Visual format of post Image, carousel, reel, video, live, other
	Shot Wide shot, American shot, medium shot, close-up, detail shot, other
	Capture Production Spontaneous, staged, other
Audiovisual content	Visual Content Person (influencer - macro or micro -/non-Influencer), object, landscape, combination, other
	Scene Personal life, professional life, mood, other
	Aesthetics Contemporary, classic, transgressive, other
Brand content	Brand Inclusion Product, label, and brand symbolism
	Textual Content Language, emojis, and mentions
	Action Intention Emotional, commercial, and other

Source: Authors' own work based on Chung & Cho, 2017; Dunkley, 2017; Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Hudders et al., 2021; Kim, 2022; and Pangarkar & Rathee, 2022.

3. Results

3.1. Impact Analysis

The selected brands published a total of 387 posts between February 10th and March 7th (Table 3). Dior accounts for 32.56% of the posts (N=123), while Dolce & Gabbana only published 11.11% of them (N=43). Therefore, there is a disparate posting frequency not directly related to sociocultural factors, as the classification is led by a French firm, Dior, and an Italian one, Gucci, with 20.41% of the analyzed posts (N=79).

Table 3. Interactions and engagement generated by posts

Brand	N° Posts	N° #	Likes	Commentaries	Engagement
Dior	123	153	4375954	54355	2.29%
Gucci	79	198	6033633	48702	1.47%
Louis Vuitton	74	197	25425125	198421	6.36%
Chanel	65	195	3626966	24257	0.96%
Dolce & Gabbana	43	255	13818240	94439	2.45%

Source: Authors' own work.

There is also no directly proportional relationship between the number of posts from each brand and the generated engagement. Publishing more does not necessarily increase the audience's commitment to the content, as evidenced by the results for Dior, which accumulates the most posts but ranks third in engagement (2.29%), and Louis Vuitton, which ranks third in posts (N=74) but first in generated commitment (6.36%).

Following this finding, the existence of associative patterns between engagement percentages and the participation of an influencer, whether macro or micro, in the publications of each firm is evaluated. There is a predominance of posts featuring influencers in all the Instagram profiles studied (Table 4), with a higher presence of major influencers. Similarly, among four of the firms, with the exception of Louis Vuitton, there is a trend, although not excessively marked, towards simultaneous collaboration with several influencers. In this regard, two different strategies are recorded. The first positions influencers as the main figure in the feed, as is the case with Chanel (89.23%) and Dolce & Gabbana (88.37%); and the second focuses on achieving a balance between these types of collaborations and other types of actions, centered on corporate identity or the firm's products, as seen in the accounts of Louis Vuitton (58.11%-41.89%) and Gucci (56.94%-43.04%).

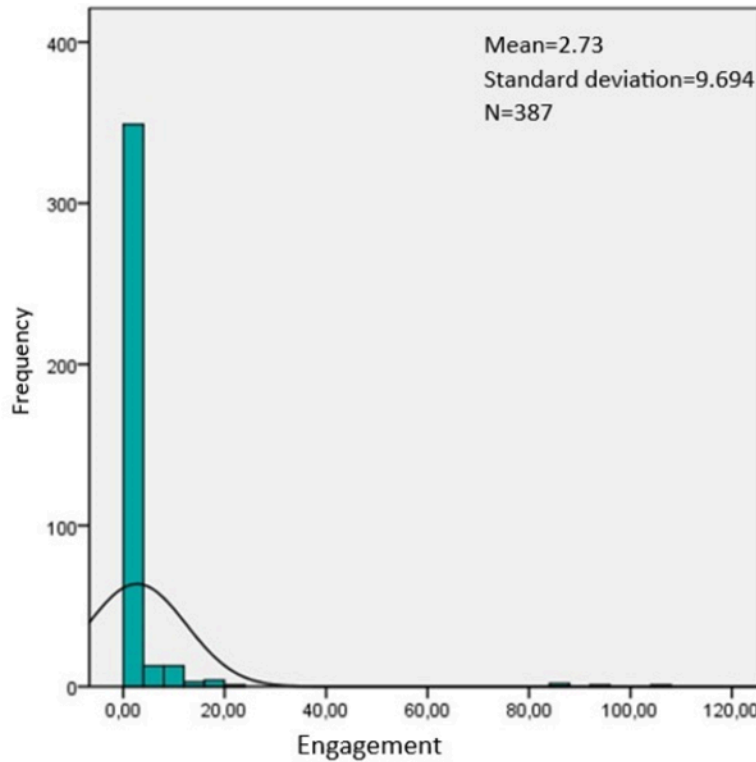
Table 4. Engagement generated by firms according to collaboration with influencers

Brand	Macro-influencer	Micro-influencer	Both	Another figure	Engagement
Louis Vuitton	56.76%	1.35%	0.00%	41.89%	6.36%
Dolce & Gabbana	76.74%	0.00%	11.63%	11.63%	2.45%
Dior	58.54%	0.81%	6.50%	34.15%	2.29%
Gucci	55.69%	0.00%	1.27%	43.04%	1.45%
Chanel	60.00%	15.38%	13.85%	10.77%	0.96%

Source: Authors' own work.

The results indicate a proportional relationship between the participation of influencers in the posts and the obtained engagement (Graph 1). Thus, the average commitment percentage is 3.38% per post featuring an influencer, and 1.64% in cases where they are not present, with the overall average percentage of all posts being 2.73%.

Graph 1. Histogram of engagement linked to the influencer figure



Source: Authors' own work.

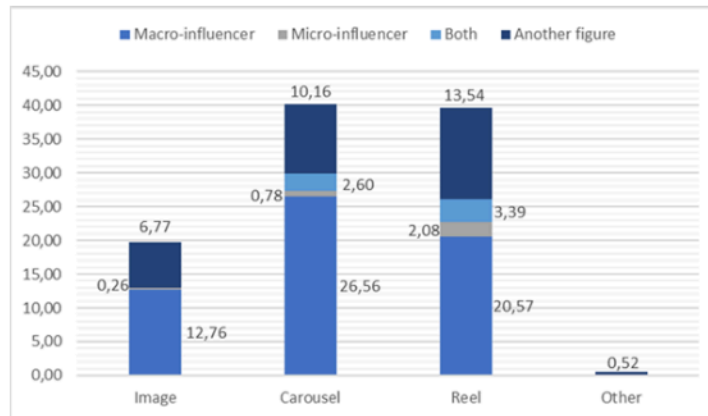
Regarding significant differences between the presence of an influencer and the interactions recorded in the publications, the ANOVA test reflects them in the variable comments (sig.=0.004) when a macro-influencer appears in the post, but not in the variables likes (sig.=0.313) and engagement (sig.=0.280). Additionally, it is observed that the appearance of certain macro-influencers can increase the average impact of an account, with posts achieving engagement percentages of 104.89% in the case of Louis Vuitton featuring South Korean singer Jhope; and 87.23% in Dior featuring South Korean actress Jisoo.

3.2. Action Analysis

Contingency tables have been developed to relate the presence of an influencer, macro or micro, or their absence, with the categories of action analysis: visual format, visual content, shot, capture production, scene, aesthetics, brand inclusion, textual content, and action intention.

Regarding the format (Graph 2), the carousel (26.56%; N=102) and the reel (20.57%; N=79) are the most used in posts featuring macro-influencers. For luxury brand posts without influencers, the reel also emerges as the predominant format, accounting for 13.54% (N=52) of the total. Meanwhile, the image is the least used format, appearing in 19.79% (N=76) of the posts, regardless of the presence or absence of an influencer in the action.

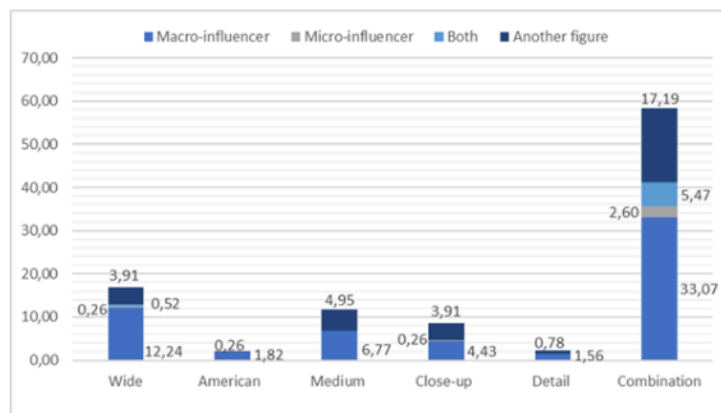
Graph 2. Relationship between the post format and the presence or absence of an influencer



Source: Authors' own work.

Considering the shots used (Graph 3), there is a trend towards combination shots (55.22%) whether a macro-influencer is present in the action (33.07%) or not (17.19%), due to the predominant use of formats that enable it, such as the carousel and the reel. However, this option is more prevalent in reels than in carousels, with 12.24% of the reels analyzed featuring only wide shots showcasing the ambassador's entire outfit. In this regard, significant differences (sig.=0.008) have been detected between the influencer figure, whether macro or micro, and the publication format (image, carousel, or reel).

Graph 3. Shot Typology According to the Image Included in the Action

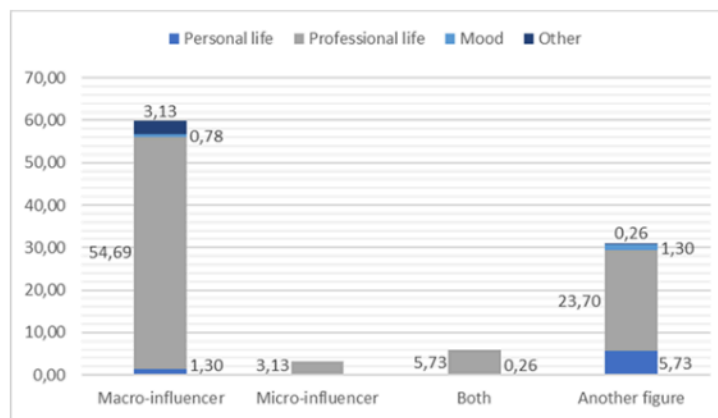


Source: Author's own work.

The close-up shot is the least recorded (1.56%), followed very closely by the American shot (1.82%); while the medium shot (6.77%) and the close-up shot (4.43%) tend to be used when the action is led by an influencer and there is a desire to give special visibility to a specific product of the brand. In this regard, the ANOVA test did not reflect a significant difference (sig.=0.039) between the inclusion of an influencer in the action and the type of shot used.

Regarding the captured production, 98.44% of the analyzed posts are not spontaneous. It is a predominant trend, whether the post is led by an influencer (58.33%) or not (30.99%). In this case, the variance test does not reflect significant differences (sig.=0.426) between the presence or absence of an influencer in the action and the scene preparation. Concerning the scene (Graph 4), there is a trend towards showing professional contexts (87.24%) of the person featured in the post, regardless of whether they are influencers or not. Additionally, it is worth noting that when no influencer appears in the post, there is a higher probability that the content focuses on personal life (5.73%) or the mood of the protagonist (1.30%). In this regard, the ANOVA test has shown significant differences (sig.=0.001) between the absence of an influencer and the type of scene used.

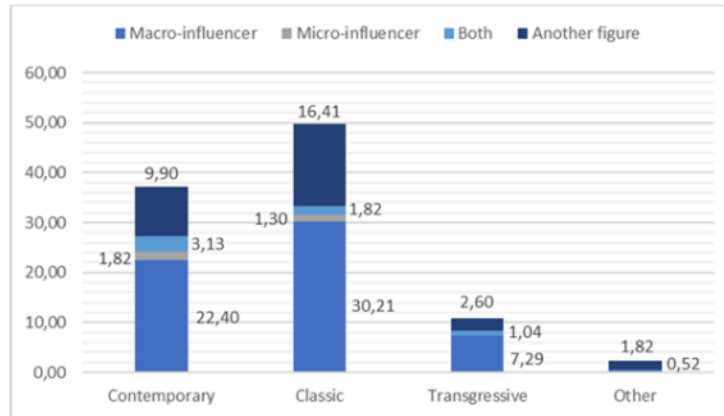
Graph 4. Relationship between the scene and the protagonist of the action



Source: Author's own work.

After studying the scene, we proceeded to observe the aesthetics of the image (Graph 5), which tend to be classic (30.21%) or contemporary (22.40%) regardless of collaboration with an influencer. On this occasion, the variance test did not reflect significant differences between the influencer figures and the aesthetics of the post (sig.=0.300). Therefore, it has been observed that the presence of an influencer does not alter the aesthetics of the scene, which is more related to conveying the identity symbolism of the luxury brand in question.

Graph 5. Aesthetics in relation to the presence or absence of an influencer



Source: Authors' own work.

Regarding the visual content (Table 5), a combination of elements in the publication predominates once again, this time consisting of objects and landscapes (79.95%). In this sense, it has been observed that, in all the luxury brands analyzed, the percentage of included objects is higher when the action is not led by an influencer but by a product.

Table 5. Relationship between the elements in the scene and collaboration with influencers

	Macro-influencer	Micro-influencer	Both Figures	No influencers
Object	0.25	0.00	0.00	12.76
Landscape	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.26
Combination	52.86	3.13	5.99	17.97

Source: Authors' own work.

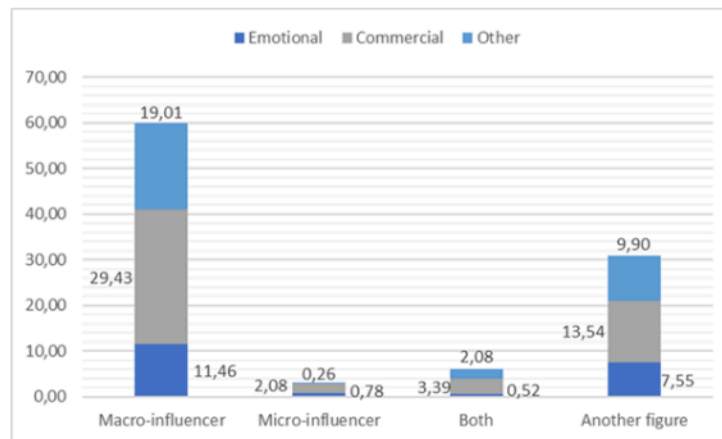
Likewise, focusing on the profile of the influencer appearing in the publication, there is a predominance of the combination of objects and landscapes when a macro-influencer is involved in the action. In these cases, the most common post model is based on showcasing an environment directly related to the influencer, such as an awards ceremony or a festival, where they are seen with a product from the brand in question. This trend aligns with the results of the variance test, which, in this case, showed significant differences ($\text{sig.}=0.097$) between the presence of an influencer in the action and the chosen visual content, whether objects, landscapes, or a combination of both.

Regarding corporate identity, it has been found that all brands are present in each publication, either in the visual element through items like labels or in the text through mentions or hashtags. However, this inclusion occurs in most cases organically and implicitly, as the brand logo is displayed in only 13.8% of the posts involving influencers. On the other hand, the ANOVA test shows significant differences ($\text{sig.}=0.001$) between the inclusion of organizational symbolism in content and the collaboration of influencers in actions, especially macro-influencers.

This visibility of the identity elements of luxury brands on Instagram aligns with the visibility of the profiles of collaborating micro-influencers, mentioned and tagged in 100% of

the posts they participate in. However, this trend only partially holds true when considering actions led by macro-influencers, as although they are mentioned in 100% of the posts, they are only tagged in 77.39%. This aligns with the results of the variance test, which reflect significant differences ($\text{sig.}=0.003$) between mentions and the presence of influencers, especially micro-influencers.

Graph 6. Discursive intention of the publication by protagonist



Source: Authors' own work

Regarding the text accompanying the visual element in the posts, a preference for English to convey messages has been detected, but with some nods to the language of the brands' places of origin. Additionally, linguistic diversity is present in profiles through reels featuring macro-influencers, with 2.86% including speech in a third language, such as Japanese, Korean, or Spanish, albeit subtitled in English. This standardization of language may relate to the predominantly commercial purpose of 48.44% of the analyzed posts (Graph 6), regardless of the presence or absence of an influencer in them; approximately 20.31% of the posts aim to evoke an emotional response.

Regarding the textual element, the limited inclusion of complementary elements offered by the social network is also noteworthy. The case of stickers is particularly significant, found in only 0.52% of the posts.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The results obtained confirm that the engagement a luxury brand generates on Instagram is not directly related to the frequency of posting or the number of collaborating influencers. However, the engagement percentage does vary depending on their presence, being higher when influencers participate in the action (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Additionally, two other elements that also influence the engagement generated by the publication have been identified: the content of the post, focusing on the professional context of the influencer; and the profile of the endorser, with a predominance of macro-influencers over micro-influencers. In this regard, major influencers generate

interactions, contrasting with the previous notion that micro-influencers generate more likes and comments on posts (Ríos et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the predominance of brand collaborations with macro-influencers does not confirm the previous theory which argues that micro-influencers build more intimate relationships with followers based on the authenticity of the content (Park et al., 2021). According to the results obtained, the relationship between the influencer and the follower is equally professionalized in both cases, lacking intimacy and predominantly based on commercial discourse. These findings contradict conclusions from previous studies that view influencers as tools for emotional communication (Gross et al., 2023).

However, the analyzed brands do not follow a uniform strategy in this regard. While Gucci and Louis Vuitton use Instagram more frequently but rely less on influencers as brand images, Chanel and Dolce & Gabbana publish less frequently but have turned their profiles into showcases of their identity that are mediated to a greater extent by influencers. Regarding which strategy works better, the analyzed data shows that both strategies yield positive results in terms of engagement, according to the parameters established by Hootsuite to determine what constitutes an acceptable engagement rate (between 1% and 5%).

It has also been found that not all macro-influencers generate the same level of engagement from the audience, although it is always higher than when brands opt for a micro-influencer. Additionally, in some cases, posts in which the brand positions itself as the protagonist through one of its products, without the mediation of an influencer, generate a higher number of interactions. This occurs with posts about fashion shows in the case of Chanel, Gucci, and Louis Vuitton, although not in the case of Dolce & Gabbana. Instead, Dolce & Gabbana receives more interactions if it includes in the scene a product related to the cultural identity of the brand given its origin, such as a coffee maker or local chocolate.

Regarding the posts in which an influencer participates, it is noteworthy that there is a scarcity of spontaneity. In any case, the images and videos are as professionalized as in those posts not mediated by influencers. There is an absence of closeness, which is present in the profiles of the influencers themselves, even concerning the framing, with the absence of selfies and a predominance of posts where the combination of object and landscape takes center stage. The influencer is not the main focus of the action but rather the transmitter of the brand's message through a direct relationship with its products. This finding coincides with the fact that both the visual element and the text always convey a message based on the influencer's professional context, showing and explaining how the brand is integrated into the work routine of the influencer, who chooses their products to attend work-related events such as award ceremonies, galas, music festivals, and even private events. Special mention goes to the actions organized by the brand itself, such as product launches or anniversaries. In these cases, influencers play a dual role: they are both guests at the event and the face of the brand on social media.

In this regard, there has been a certain influence of cultural factors on the content published about fashion shows. Dior, Chanel, and Louis Vuitton emphasize the presence of the brand in the Paris fall -winter fashion shows, its place of origin, while Dolce & Gabbana and Gucci do the same with Milan, where they have their main headquarters. Furthermore, these collaborations go beyond commercial purposes to also showcase social responsibility actions; they are often associated with local causes, such as charity events at the Paris Opera House in the case of Chanel. In this way, the five brands highlight their origin, establishing a connection between who they are, what they offer, and through whom they present it. Especially in the case of micro-influencers, there is a tendency to collaborate with influencers who share the brand's origin.

However, this display of belongingness is one of the few emotions conveyed by luxury brands through their collaborations with influencers on Instagram, as the analyzed content exhibits a marked commercial intent. Influencers are portrayed merely as non-exclusive sales tools, accentuating the lack of relational depth between the brand, the ambassador, and the followers. For instance, during the study period, both Chanel and Dolce & Gabbana collaborated with the same macro-influencer, Penélope Cruz, which exemplifies this trend.

It has been observed that influencers, to serve as the image of luxury brands on their profiles, must adapt to the brand's aesthetics, which are based on identity elements that differentiate them from the competition. In terms of aesthetics, there is no uniform trend, and the participation of an influencer does not necessarily influence it. When the influencer appears on the luxury brand's feed, they become a tool to achieve the impact of a corporate message in which the brand itself makes identity elements visible with a primarily commercial purpose.

As a limitation of the study, we acknowledge the need to expand the sample to other luxury sectors, enabling comparison between influencer-driven strategies on Instagram that, in turn, allow the detection of posting patterns. This potential future research direction aims to obtain a comprehensive perspective of the brand-influencer relationship. Additionally, comparing the actions measured by these figures on brand profiles with those posted by influencers on their own profiles as a result of the same commercial collaboration could provide valuable insights.

Authors' contribution

Tania Blanco Sánchez: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology.
Belén Moreno Albarracín: Conceptualization, Data curation, Project administration, Visualization, Writing - review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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