

Artigos temáticos

Digital Citizenship and Consumption

Brands and consumers on social media

Cidadania Digital e Consumo: marcas e consumidores nas redes sociais

Letícia Torres

leticia.torres@ufjf.br

Faculdade de Comunicação, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora

Juiz de Fora, Brasil

ORCID iD 0000-0001-7373-4978

Gabriela Borges

gaborges@ualg.pt

CIAC – Centro de Investigação em Artes e Comunicação, Universidade do Algarve

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora

Faro, Portugal

ORCID iD 0000-0002-0612-9732

Mirian Tavares

mtavares@ualg.pt

CIAC – Centro de Investigação em Artes e Comunicação, Universidade do Algarve

Faro, Portugal

ORCID iD 0000-0002-9622-6527

Artigo recebido em 2023-01-03

Artigo aceite em 2023-07-30

Artigo publicado em 2023-07-30

Abstract

Consumer Awareness is pointed out by the European Council as a basic competence for digital citizenship. Thus, understanding the new relationships established between consumers and brands in a digital environment is fundamental to critical and creative education in the face of a new social communication setting. The possibilities of interaction, collaboration and engagement offered by the virtual environment reveals a challenging context for both marketers and the development of literacy focused on marketing communication, in which the public is increasingly invited to participate in the construction of advertising messages. This relationship acquires even more complex contours in the alcoholic beverages sector, since it promotes a product that directly affects public health and, for this reason, its persuasive communication is subject to specific restrictions in several countries. This article explores the interaction on internet social media between the public and two Brazilian brands – *Cachaça 51* and *Catuaba Selvagem* – in the period between August 2017 and February 2018. Through the analysis of interaction mechanisms, we seek to discuss: the collaboration of internet users to promote products and how they react to brand messages on responsible consumption. Thus, it is understood that this work also addresses the dimension health and wellness, another key concept for digital citizenship according to the European Council.

A “consciência para o consumo” é apontada pelo Conselho Europeu como uma competência básica

para a cidadania digital. Desse modo, compreender os novos relacionamentos estabelecidos entre consumidores e marcas no ambiente digital é fundamental para uma educação crítica e criativa diante do novo cenário da comunicação social. As possibilidades de interação, colaboração e engajamento oferecidas pelo ambiente virtual revela um contexto desafiador tanto para os profissionais de marketing quanto para o desenvolvimento de uma literacia voltada à comunicação mercadológica, em que o público cada vez mais é convidado a participar da construção das mensagens publicitárias. Essa relação adquire contornos ainda mais complexos no setor de bebidas alcóolicas, uma vez que promove um produto que afeta diretamente a saúde pública e, por esse motivo, sua comunicação persuasiva é submetida a restrições específicas nos mais diversos países. Este artigo explora a interação nas redes sociais da internet entre público e duas marcas brasileiras do setor – *Cachaça 51* e *Catuaba Selvagem* – no período de agosto de 2017 e fevereiro de 2018. Através da análise dos mecanismos de interação, busca-se discutir: a colaboração dos internautas para à promoção dos produtos e como reagem às mensagens das marcas sobre o consumo responsável da categoria. Desse modo, entende-se que este trabalho também toca a dimensão “saúde e bem-estar”, outro conceito-chave para a cidadania digital de acordo com o Conselho Europeu.

Keywords

Digital citizenship • Consumption • Digital marketing • Brand • Interaction analysis

Cidadania digital • Consumo • Marketing digital • Marca • Interação

1. Introduction

21st century. Screens are natural and intense presences in daily life, both in public and private spaces. In different sizes, they are everywhere, from large billboards to small, sophisticated individual devices. Connected to the internet, they physically mediate more and more our relationship with the world and with others. The mobile digital revolution has allowed, at least in hypothesis, every human being to be constantly connected to their individual means of communication (Krum, 2010), source of information, entertainment, relationship, persuasion, and knowledge. In this sense, the challenges of media and information literacy are deeply linked to the promotion of citizenship in a media environment evidently marked by the consolidation of digital capitalism. (Schiller, 2000). The expectation that the internet would lead to a civilizing advance through the complete democratization of communication, open content and unlimited possibility of expression has given way to a malaise in relation to the paths of a digital and hyperconnected society, increasingly inserted in the logics of market capitalism and politically polarized (Buckingham, 2007). The revitalization of democracy through network communication, which allowed the organization of social movements on connective platforms (Castells, 2013), did not, on the other hand, prevent the advance of authoritarianism and undemocratic ideals. Digitisation of means of production and dissemination, lower prices of computer products and commercial opening of the internet have strongly impacted the production, dissemination, distribution, sharing and reception of information, cultural goods, and commercial messages. “The greater accessibility (even economic) and portability of the media has provided new opportunities to create, produce and disseminate messages and content”, contributing to enable new pedagogical possibilities that align creative production and critical analysis. (Pereira; Pêsoa & Costa, 2012, p. 113). Traditional areas of social communication, such as advertising and journalism, seek to adapt to this new era, creating formats and strategies that stimulate the production of the public integrated into their communication objectives. “Under the guise of freedom and empower-

ment, the cultural and media market finds a solution for its renewal and adaptation to the new technological framework” (Aparici & Garcia-Marín, 2018, p. 74). With the advent of social media, the transformations of the relationship between consumers and brands became radicalized, collaborating to set out the new context of marketing communication at the beginning of the millennium. For Kotler *et al.* (2012), “the rise of social media” is one of the main technological advances that have fostered the “era of participation and collaborative marketing.” (p. 23). The consumer is now seen as an active subject in the construction of the message and image of the brand and the way to mobilize its participation becomes a new issue in marketing communication planning. “Collaborative dynamics of the network consolidates significant changes in consumer behaviour and habits, strengthening a generation willing to create and change information and culture through fun and participatory effort.” (Saad & Raposo, 2017, p. 126). However, this relationship, even with the expansion of the possibilities of participation brought by new technologies and consumer empowerment discourses in digital culture (Kotler *et al.*, 2017), remains quite unbalanced, as it has been shaped according to strategic planning developed by companies. To such extent that it is fair to talk about industries of persuasion, central and structuring activities of Western democracies and market economies. (Fidalgo, 2010). In any case, policies to promote digital citizenship, of which consumer relations are part, necessarily involve media and information literacy. Several studies have been carried out during the last ten years by different organizations aiming to call attention to these issues (DTI, EAVI, 2011; Ferrari, 2013; UNESCO, 2013, 2014; Torrent, 2014; First European MIL Forum, 2014; eTwinning, 2016; DigComp 2.0, 2016; Carretero, Vuorikari & Punie, 2017; Camilli-Trujillo & Römer-Pieretti, 2017; European Commission, 2019). Research conducted by the Digital Citizenship Education (DCE) Expert Group of the European Council emphasizes that stakeholders consider it to be the most important domain in educational projects development in this new social and technological context. Given that the media environment touches on nearly every societal challenge

– violent online radicalization, fake news, post-truth issues, online populism – it is perhaps unsurprising that policy makers and educationalists identify MIL as the most important issue and therefore plan their activity to emphasize this topic (Costa, C. *et al.*, 2017). In total, the European Council expert group identified ten key training areas for digital citizenship. If, on the one hand, the survey identifies “Media and Information Literacy” as the most relevant aspect regarding digital citizenship-oriented education, on the other hand, it points out that “Consumer Awareness” and “Health and Wellness” are topics that receive less attention, “yet are perceived by young people [...] to be areas about which they think they need to learn more.” (Richardson & Milovidou, 2017, p. 29). We believe that, when investigating interaction between internet users and alcoholic beverages brands in social networks, this work reinforces its importance with greater emphasis on the issue of consumption. In a consumer driven economy, the very act of consuming goods and services is a form of democratic participation, a form of vote. Buying a certain product or service is not only a selfish, individual decision, but a formal support for a company, its business model, business practices, production strategy, etc. Given the growing role of the private sector in our economic and political lives, democracy cannot only be exercised via the ballot box (Council of Europe, 2017). The European Council highlights consumer awareness and activism as ways to tackle corporate bad practices, whether by organising boycotts, through social media demonstrations or by supporting new sustainable economy businesses. But beyond this stance, this public body points out that it is necessary that the consumer also understands:[...] the limits of consumer power and recognize attempts at misleading or manipulating them (for example, via greenwashing, targeted advertising), be aware of the emergence of monopolies or dominant market players locking consumers into certain consumption patterns by restricting consumer choices. (Council of Europe, 2017). In our studies, we seek to address issues related to consumption from the trademark dimension (Torres, 2019; Torres & Tavares, 2020). We understand that it is the main point of contact between company and consumers

and how qualities, values and attributes are perceived, and connections are generated, in particular emotional ones. “We have learned that brands are meaningful to consumers not just because they are strategically managed by companies, but because consumers incorporate them into their lives and add their own idiosyncratic stories to them.” (Bengtsson & Firat, 2006, p. 375). With this in mind, we seek to understand how the interaction between alcohol companies and members of social networks contribute to the promotion of habits related to a sector that is subject to increased advertising communication limitations and regulations in various countries. After all, the product causes a direct impact on people’s health and social implications. Marketing, through its various modes of communication [...], is one of the privileged discursive operators in contemporary society. With its promises and stratagems of seduction, it produces and distributes meaning on an industrial scale, promoting, and replicating a collective range of enunciation characteristic of capitalism and favouring the production of corresponding subjectivity. (Burrowes & Rett, 2016, pp. 346-347). The debate on how best to control and curb abuses in the marketing of alcoholic beverages – whether through self-regulation or government legislation – with antagonistic positions mainly among the market, civil society and academia linked to public health (Noel *et al.*, 2016, p. 57) has gained even more challenging contours with the advent of a new communication environment. “Marketers are moving increasingly to digital and social media, where efforts at regulation have fallen far behind industry innovations in producing engagement and brand ambassadorship.” (Monteiro, 2017, p. 3). Lobstein *et al.* (2016) point out that the promotion of brands in social media takes on two aspects, which result in specific concerns about alcohol marketing: the content generated and shared by users often without the participation of companies, albeit occasionally stimulated by them; and professionally elaborated marketing communications, which, nonetheless, depend on the participation of internet users to be successful. The study developed by Lobstein *et al.* (2016) focuses on the latter. After extensive review of both scientific articles, published at international level, and material pro-

duced by government agencies and bodies, since the year 2000, which brought alcohol, marketing and social media together, the main conclusions are: 1) There is evidence to support that exposure to messages of alcoholic beverage brands in a digital environment is associated with increased consumption of this type of product, as well as its abuse, although most papers “cannot show the direction of causality or fully eliminate other factors that could influence both digital marketing engagement and alcohol consumption.” (Lobstein *et al.*, 2016, p. 25). Thus, more investigations are needed in this field. 2) Violations of marketing codes established for the sector are identified. When investigating the relationship between alcoholic beverage companies and their audiences, the theme “responsible consumption” is a relevant issue. The purpose of this work is, from the study of specific cases, to discuss if and how this discussion emerges in the brand/consumer dialogue on social media.

2. Material and methods

Based on the analysis of the use of social media by two Brazilian alcoholic beverage companies, we intend to analyse indicators of interaction between brands and the public. Does more direct communication between companies and consumers effectively generate collaborative content? How are media and digital competences of individuals triggered in this process, both in the context of critical analysis and creative appropriation? (Férres & Piscitelli, 2015). Does the consumer, in fact, take an active role in promoting alcohol consumption, reinforcing, expanding or contracting the discourse of brands? In order to seek answers to the questions raised, three dimensions of analysis and their indicators were defined: Interaction and Engagement Processes; Market Communication Message; Ideology, Ethics and Citizenship (Torres, 2019)¹.

In this article, we shall address the third dimension, which includes critical awareness in the face of collaborative communication, in gen-

1. This analysis is part of a PhD thesis (Torres, 2019).

eral, and the alcohol sector, in particular; and the emergence of social, moral and political issues in interaction contexts. Specifically, we shall focus on the indicator “Consumer and best practices of marketing communication”, which seeks to “observe both ethical and social behaviours of internet users when interacting with advertising messages, and critical competences” when interacting with the persuasive messages of the analysed sector (Torres & Tavares, 2020).

The Brazilian brands object of this study, *Cachaça 51* and *Catuaba Selvagem*, were selected based on their importance in the market, their presence on social media and their affective connections with the public (Torres, 2019). Both products contain a high volume of alcohol, 39%, the former, and 16%, the latter, which restricts their advertising activities under Brazilian legislation². The environments of our research are domains of the brands under study, “whose objective is to officially and publicly disseminate information to people who have chosen to connect [to them]” (Seller & Laurindo, 2018, p. 193) and induce the construction of communities around them, but shaped by their marketing professionals, who develop strategies in search of engagement.

To achieve our goals, we recognize as crucial a deep and constant immersion in the selected environments, systematically and rigorously monitoring their fluencies and dynamics. Thus, we evaluate that netnography, as proposed by Robert Kozinets, offers methodological tools that are appropriate and adaptable to our research. “What we are studying are not online texts, but people’s interactions through the use of various technology-mediated means.” (Kozinets, 2014, p. 109).

Netnography results from studies that pointed to the need to conform ethnographic research to the specificities of the communities that have emerged in the digital world. It is a qualitative and interpretive method of research (Kozinets, 2015). In

most cases, the author encourages the researcher to take a participatory attitude in the activities of the communities under study. However, in relation to social media, Kozinets (2014) points out that “The dissemination of identity as a researcher is critical [...]. This information can appear in other people’s profiles and probably elsewhere, and this may moderate or change” (Kozinets, 2014, p. 167) the results. Having considered all aspects, we opt to observe but refrain from any manifestation in relation to the content of the pages.

The period established for immersion in the field of study was from 1st August 2017 to 14th February 2018, which included holiday seasons especially relevant to the marketing efforts of the analysed set: such as Christmas, New Year’s Eve, the Brazilian summer and Carnival.

After the definition of the method, we proceeded to observe consumers’ interventions on the pages of brands to perceive their motivations, the expression of their feelings and thoughts and how they act to contribute, transform or challenge the messages. In this way, we are responsible for collecting the data manually, without the aid of any software. All interactions that occurred on the pages of the brands on Facebook and Instagram during the stipulated period were captured, the texts read in their entirety (both posts and comments) and the links inserted – by the brand or followers – were visited. At the end of the data collection, the *corpus* of our study consisted of 174 Facebook posts and 114 Instagram posts, along with their interactions with the public.

Before proceeding to the analysis, we believe it is relevant to present a brief contextualization of the brands studied. Among the numerous labels of sugarcane brandy produced in Brazil, *Cachaça 51*, from the Muller Beverage Company, is the leading brand of industrial product both in foreign and domestic markets. Owner of one of the most celebrated slogans in Brazilian advertising “a good idea”, *51* has been produced in the State of São Paulo since the 1950s and seeks to stand as the legitimate representative of a category of alcoholic beverage deeply rooted in national culture. For the last twenty years, the brand has sought to expand its audience to younger segments with greater purchasing power. Since 2015, its investment in

2. Brazilian legislation holds a *sui generis* interpretation of the sector, which states that “Alcoholic beverages, for the purposes of this Law, are considered to be drinkable beverages with an alcohol content above thirteen degrees Gay Lussac” (Law 9.294/1996).

digital communication has jumped from 2% to 24% of total advertising resources.

Known by the first inhabitants of Brazilian lands, named after a set of plants typical of the country, *catuaba* is the element that provides the identity of *Catuaba Selvagem* [Wild Catuaba] and that differentiates it in the alcoholic beverages market, enabling associations that are peculiar to it. The drink is based on red wine, fermented apple, and extracts of guarana, *catuaba* and *marapuama* (a root of the Amazon region). The mixture originated a sweet product, with an image initially linked to energy and increased sexual potency. *Catuaba Selvagem* was created in 1992 and its name was inspired by the film *Basic Instinct* [Translated as *Wild Instinct* in Brazilian Portuguese], associating an erotic sense to the product. But it was only from 2015, with the reformulation of its communication, that the brand gained projection, moving from marginal recognition to the headlines of newspapers and object of desire at parties and events, especially those linked to younger audiences and popular parties. The drink became “fashionable” in Brazil and established a strong connection with Carnival and consumption by university students.

3. Analysis and results: The consumer and best practices of alcoholic beverages marketing communication on social media

After thorough and constant observation of analysis environments, we can affirm that, for consumers of *Cachaça 51* and *Catuaba Selvagem*, one of the main perceived values of brands is the cost-benefit of the product. That is, you pay a low price, and the effect is fast, due to the alcohol content. Comments exalting drunkenness and the sharing of stories, almost always amusing, about the consequences of alcohol abuse are common on the pages of brands on social media. Thus, at the end of the data compilation, our attention was drawn to the good performance achieved by posts with messages that appealed to the conscious consumption of the product. We name these publications as “educational” in order to differentiate them from other typologies. Taking notice that the interaction on alcohol consumption

practices occurred in the most diverse content available, we focus our analysis on “educational” posts. In all, there were only eleven advertising pieces with this characteristic, four of which were from *Cachaça 51* and seven from *Catuaba Selvagem*. The first one published the same posts on all its social media, while the other only on Facebook, and did not post any “educational” messages on Instagram. Despite representing only 0.5% of the collected universe, six (55%) of these posts stood out in terms of engagement in the months in which they were published, holding the top three positions in at least one of the following Facebook interaction mechanisms: reaction, comment and sharing. We emphasize that the average of both brands was fifteen monthly posts in the period evaluated. The calls proposed by the brands on alcohol awareness were divided into two main types: guidelines on the need to moderate actual consumption to avoid undesirable situations (6 posts) and the recommendation to intersperse the drink with water intake to minimize the effects of alcohol (5 posts). We emphasize that three out of the four *Cachaça 51* publications, presented the latter characteristic, as shown below. The posts “Commandment 3” and “Between one and the other” (Figure 1)³, from October and December 2017, were in third place among the publications that generate most reactions in their respective months.

3. All posts collected from Facebook were named with the purpose of facilitating data presentation.



Figure 1. Posts “Commandment 3” and “Between one and the other”

However, what at first suggested support for the brand’s calls for a responsible relationship with alcohol was not confirmed after examining the interactions. In general, among the almost 300 comments collected from the publications cited, people responded with humour, without attributing seriousness to the statements, even considering the messages funny and, almost always implicitly, revealed a perception of hypocrisy in relation to the attitude of the companies. The posts were received as an opportunity to “joke” about the issue. Within this context, the recommendation of *Cachaça 51*, to “put an effort” on hydration (Figure 2) during Carnival 2018 generated most interactions in its fanpage during the festive period.



Figure 2. Post “Put water on the revelry”

The ironic attitude of the public in relation to the content is evident. In nearly two hundred comments, there were many “laughs” and puns with the nicknames by which cachaça is also known, especially firewater, in addition to many references to “water that a little bird doesn’t drink” – a way of quoting the drink in a “disguised” way – in contrast with the message presented. On a different note, there were only five comments citing the slogan of “a good idea” and three consumers who stated that 51 is their favourite to make caipirinha. However, we believe that the reaction needs to be related to the broader context of brand communication on social media during that period. The main motto of 51 for Carnival 2018 was the promotion of Wi-Fi “the summer drink” because,

according to the brand, the “summer is too short for connections and long drinks”, announced the campaign launching video on Facebook, on 20th January (Figure 3)⁴. From that moment on, but with intensified actions during the popular festivity, calls were insistent that the mix was “a good idea”, both on the platform and on Instagram. The argument was: it’s easy, fast and cheap to make, just add to 51 ice and lemon soda. The evident focus on stimulating the increase in consumption of the product at the time when Brazil is experiencing the atmosphere of revelry – which covers an interval longer than the four days of Carnival, starting on New Year’s Eve and extending until Ash Wednesday – was counterbalanced by educational messages. However, the public demonstrated that they did not believe much in the seriousness of the latter, usually mocking the initiatives. Wi-Fi advertising was met with euphoria and expressions of desire to experience the recipe.



Figure 3. Post “Wi-Fi Drink”

This post was the most liked in the fanpage of the brand in January 2018 (7,100) and also the

most commented (1,100). If, in terms of reactions, the month was weak when compared with others – Cachaça 51 reached 40,000 likes with its publications with greater repercussion – it reached a record number of comments for the entire analysis period. This interaction mechanism requires more effort and skills from internet users and, therefore, greater motivation to participate in the communication process. In addition to demonstrating that they had considered the publication relevant, most comments included tagging other profiles of the followers’ own relationship network, who talked about the drink, making arrangement to make the recipe together or humorously anticipating its effects on Carnival. In this way, consumers collaborated to broaden the reach of the message by attracting others into their space. The two publications of *Catuaba Selvagem* on the importance of interspersing water with the drink, “Catu with Water”⁵ and “Don’t burnout on the starting line” (Figure 4) also achieved good engagement in the months they were published. The first was the most commented (453) and the second received most reactions (8,800) and shares (218) in August 2017. In addition, “Don’t burnout on the starting line” presented a slightly better performance in September of the same year, because it was also the most shared by the public (593 shares), in addition to 10,000 likes and 754 comments. The reactions of *Catuaba Selvagem* followers to educational posts, despite taking the issue on the humorous side, were less ironic about the brand than the comments from *Cachaça 51* consumers. They used the space to “joke” with friends, indicating that they would follow the advice of “Catu”, to laugh at themselves and interact with the Selvagem [Wild One], often congratulating the brand for trying to “look after” their fans, although considering it an effort in vain. The humour associated with the brand communications was also present in these messages, as well as the cultural references peculiar to its audience, which contributed to the climate of “fun”. In any case, the association of excessive drinking, a com-

4. The video available at <https://bit.ly/2ZXVjft> was added as a cover of the brand’s fanpage until the end of Carnival.

5. The post was inspired by the song “Água Mineral” [Mineral Water] by Bahian composer Carlinhos Brown, a hit of the Brazilian Carnival.

mon feature to the followers of the brand, was also reinforced in the comments.



Figure 4. Posts “Catu with Water” and “Don’t burnout on the starting line”

Among the brands studied, *Catuaba Selvagem* followers were the most exposed in relation to their product consumption habits. They were not just limited to sharing their own stories or those of others, but also images in which people were easily identifiable drinking directly from the bottle, one of the main rituals of the brand. “Ritual and traditions represent vital social processes by which the meaning of the Community is reproduced and transmitted within and beyond the Community.” (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 421). For the audience, *Catuaba* seems to be a great joke, the harmonization of a lifestyle where “everything is a party” – even with little money. It also appears that some of them are not concerned with this visibility in a public environment, where any individual can have access to the material made available. This feature, which in general provided fun for the brand’s followers on social media, can also result in problems and disapproval, as can be seen in another educational post from October 2017, “Foot in the Jackfruit” (figure 5). Unlike other posts cited, this one did not obtain such significant indexes of engagement, standing in tenth position in terms of reactions, ninth in comments and eighth in shares in the month. Despite its poor performance in quantitative interactions, all 14 post comments contained pictures exposing

young people drinking or already clearly under the influence of alcohol. Hence the reason why we do not reproduce them here.



Figure 5. Post “Foot in the Jackfruit”

Making use of the fact that it was a Friday 13th, the superstitions related to this day were used to advise: “Think thirteen times before sticking your foot on the jackfruit. Not just today but every day.” “Sticking your foot in the jackfruit” is a popular Brazilian expression, which means doing something in excess, commonly associated with excessive alcohol consumption. In the comments, an internet user tagged a friend and said the publication was inspired by him. He clearly disliked the quote and “took revenge” by sharing a picture of a visibly intoxicated young woman holding a bottle of *Selvagem*. She, in turn, was outraged and using capital letters “shouted” that the use of her image

had not been authorized. However, no action was taken and this dialogue with double exposure of individuals was still online a week later. It is true that such reactions were rare. In most cases, people found the references made by friends very funny.

Finally, we highlight the post “Reputation” (Figure 6), another piece in the educational category that achieved good interaction indexes, being the most shared (276 times) and the second most commented (410) in August 2017, although it occupied only the seventh position in terms of reactions (2,900). All other publications cited by *Catuaba Selvagem* in one way or another have referred to elements of popular culture, and this one appeals to fans culture by taking advantage of the release a new album by American singer Taylor Swift, an international pop scene celebrity.



Figure 6. Post “Reputation”

In the graphic art, bottles of Catuaba replaced the artist on the cover of her newly released album, taking the opportunity to “play” with the name of the production – Reputation – with the message “drink in moderation”. The action generated intense participation from fans of the artist, who made enthusiastic comments such as: “Catu is also a fan” and “the Selvagem is also advertising Taylor”. But, as usual in everything that involves the superstar which, in a way, reinforces her success, haters also appeared, in a dichotomy “emblematic of today” (Sá, 2016, p. 52). These, in turn, were amused by the “boldness” of the brand that, in their view, “mocked” the artist. Each chain, therefore, appropriated the post in their own way. It is a fact that much of the dynamics of the post revolved around the cult of the artist, with most of the 410 comments of the publication of fans – more pronounced to be fair – and haters. However, a significant portion of the participations, with nearly one hundred comments, addressed *Catuaba Selvagem* itself, discussing the issue of its own reputation, sometimes pointed out as incompatible with the consumption of the product. In the first response to the post an internet user stated, “Either we have a reputation or drink Catuaba, I’ve never seen the two together”. The brand refuted with a popular saying “Without knowing it was impossible, went there and did it”, in which the interlocutor reacted with sarcasm “Go on lol”. This example reflects the emphasis of brand consumers’ interaction with the publication in relation to the call for responsible consumption. In a certain way, the position is resignation, they claim “to love Catuaba”, despite everything that “she forces them to do”, blaming the brand, as persona, for their conducts under the effect of drinking. In general, these comments are accompanied by stories mostly permeated by good humour, for not taking the issue of excesses seriously, which are stimulated by the public itself on *Catuaba Selvagem* social media.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The brands analysed, despite being beverages with high alcohol content, reserve, as above mentioned, very little space for content dedicated to responsible consumption of the product in their social media. Nevertheless, through interaction processes, the initial proposal of the analysed educational publications was subverted in the dynamics of the consumer/brand relationship. Thus, messages of moderation ended up becoming spaces of appeal to consumption, to excess, a place to laugh at oneself and others in relation to drunkenness and may represent a risk to the health and wellness of page readers. With regards to *Catuaba Selvagem*, another issue was the public exposure of people and their relationship with drinking. Each of the brands reacts differently to the comments, while *Cachaça 51* avoids participating in these interactions, *Catuaba* behaves like a “friend” of its followers, giving advice, but always in a fun, and even debauched way. The humanization of the brand is an important element for its followers, who vibrate with their responses full of humour and ironies.

The involvement or not with the strategies of the brands is a personal option, and the attitude cannot be judged as emancipated or alienated. This, of course, is not the issue, but rather to understand the phenomenon in a more holistic way, to collaborate in the development of conscious individuals about the processes in which they decide to participate. Brands are strong presences in daily life and their influences are not restricted to commercial transactions. People have feelings for them, identify them with social groups, philosophies, and they provide a sense of belonging and representation. As a result, it is only natural that these bonds may also be extended to online life.

By immersing ourselves in brands environments, carefully reading all the comments, it is noticeable that internet users who circulate on their social networks are aware that these constitute spaces dedicated to advertising, to commercially promote products, and are able to critically analyse market messages. However, they do not seem to have the same ability to understand their role in the communication process in which they decided to participate, being also responsible for the

collaborative construction of persuasive appeals. In this way, we see an ambiguity in the degree of literacy of consumers: they are creative and active, or interactive, but to what extent do they use this capacity as full “citizens” in the virtual space? To what extent is awareness of the consumer relationship clear?

The technological and social evolution that also enabled marketing to integrate the “collaborative culture” of networks (Jenkins, Green & Ford, 2015), points, in our view, to the growing importance of promoting media literacy focused on market communication. Reflections on the phenomenon should not only perceive the consumer as the target of appeals, but also as a collaborator and even, in certain cases, as a producer of marketing content, in addition to amplifying corporate messages. Critical awareness about this participation and its consequences is one of the challenges for media education and citizenship promotion in the current communication setting. By allowing “everyone” to express themselves, social media presupposes users’ responsibility for their manifestations and understanding of the part they take when analysing and interacting with brands.

In the case of alcoholic beverages, due to the very nature of the sector, the situation is even more complex since online interactions can serve to circumvent the restrictions of promotion of products in this category. Although the regulation of advertising on social media in Brazil is in a consolidation phase, when examining the posts of brands, they comply with the rules already defined for their communication in other media. Therefore, it is through the participation of the lay public that sometimes the limits are broken, and, in the cases analysed, with a glamourization of the drink and a cult of excess.

In this work, we focus on the category of posts that we call “educational”. However, we emphasize once again that the relationship with alcohol consumption habits is explored in the dynamics of the pages in the most different types of content. Often the apology to consumption is identified in the complicity between consumer and brand in the sharing of “happy moments” or in the mediation of the relationship with friends. In other instances, the drink is identified as a companion of all moments,

in joy and sadness, at a party and in solitude. Thus, we believe, advertising literacy and the promotion of skills for critical interaction with companies in online environments are essential tools for the protection of consumers, in particular, and society, in general, in the context of digital citizenship.

References

- [1] Aparici, R. & Garcia-Marin, D. (2018). Prosumers and emirecs: Analysis of two confronted theories. [Prosumidores y emirecs: Analisis de los teorías enfrentadas]. *Comunicar*, 55, 71-79. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C55-2018-07>
- [2] Bengtsson, A., & Firat, F. (2006). Brand Literacy: Consumers' Sense-Making of Brand Management. In C. Pechmann, & L. Price (Eds.), *Advances in consumer research* 33 (pp. 375-380). Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3b3RNqt>.
- [3] Buckingham, D. (june 2017). Waking up from the digital dream: media education and media reform. *David Buckingham*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2O3ml2p>.
- [4] Burrowes, P., & Rett, L. (2016). Obs. – Observatório de Publicidade Expandida: Uma proposta de leitura crítica da publicidade. *Comum*, Facha, 17 (39), 342-355. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3dSAIBB>.
- [5] Camilli-Trujillo, C. & Römer-Pieretti, M. (2017). Meta-synthesis of literacy for the empowerment of vulnerable groups. [Metasíntesis en alfabetización para el empoderamiento de grupos vulnerables]. *Comunicar*, 53, 9-18. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C53-2017-01>
- [6] Carretero S., Vuorikari R. & Punie Y. (2017). *DigComp 2.1: The digital competence framework for citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2760/38842>.
- [7] Castells, M. (2013). *Redes de Indignação e Esperança: Movimentos sociais na era da internet*. Zahar.
- [8] Council of Europe. (2017). Consumer awareness. <https://bit.ly/3q28d6M>.
- [9] Costa, C., Car, V. & Papadimitriou, S. (2017). Good practices and emerging trends in media and information literacy. In Frau-Meigs, D., Velez, I. & Flores, J. (eds), *European public policies on media and information literacies in comparative perspective*. Routledge.
- [10] DigComp 2.0 (2016). *The European digital competence framework for citizens*. Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3sxSez4>.
- [11] DTI and EAVI. (2011). *Testing and refining criteria to assess media literacy levels in Europe Final Report*. Comissão Europeia. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/36NSvEw>
- [12] eTwinning (2016). *Focus on digital citizenship*. European Commission. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3018IU2>.
- [13] European Commission (2019). *Key competences for lifelong learning*. Publications Office for the European Union. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2N6DOah>
- [14] Ferrari A. (2013). *DigComp: a framework for developing and understanding digital competence in Europe*. Publications

- Office of the European Union. European Commission Joint Research Centre Institute for Prospective Technological Studies. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3b2JtY4>.
- [15] Ferrés, J. & Piscitelli, A. (2015) Competência midiática: Proposta articulada de dimensões e indicadores. *Lumina*, 9(1), 1-16. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3bLtkoL>.
- [16] Fidalgo, A. (2010). Da retórica às indústrias de persuasão. In I. Ferreira, & G. Gonçalves (Eds). *As Indústrias de Persuasão* (pp. 5-25). LabCom Books. http://dx.doi.org/10.14195/978-989-26-0498-5_14
- [17] First European MIL Forum (2014). *European media and information literacy policies in Europe: The national reports*. UNESCO Session 6 presentation. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2Pb7SSu>.
- [18] FRA. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016), Fundamental Rights Forum – Chair’s statement, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3019d0m>.
- [19] Frau-Meigs, D. *et al.* (2017). Digital Citizenship Education: overview and new perspectives, v. 1. Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3kI1GNP>.
- [20] Jenkins, H., Green, J., & Ford, S. (2015). *Cultura da conexão: Criando valor e significado por meio da mídia propagável*. Aleph.
- [21] Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2012). *Marketing 3.0: As forças que estão definindo o novo marketing centrado no ser humano*. Elsevier.
- [22] Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2017). *Marketing 4.0: Do tradicional ao digital*. Sextante.
- [23] Kozinets, R. (2014). *Netnografia: Realizando pesquisa etnográfica on-line*. Penso.
- [24] Kozinets, R. (2015). Netnography. In R. Mansell, R., & Ang, P. (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Digital Communication and Society*, vol. II. Wiley-Blackwell.
- [25] Krum, C. (2010). *Mobile Marketing: Finding your consumer no matter where there are*. Pearson Education Inc.
- [26] Lobstein, T., Landon, J., Thornton, N., & Jernigan, D. (2017). The commercial use of digital media to market alcohol products: a narrative review. *Addiction (Abingdon, England)*, 112 Suppl 1, 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13493>
- [27] Monteiro, M. G., Babor, T. F., Jernigan, D., & Brookes, C. (2017). Alcohol marketing regulation: from research to public policy. *Addiction (Abingdon, England)*, 112 Suppl 1, 3–6. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13660>
- [28] Muniz, A., & O’Guinn, T. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432. <https://doi.org/10.1086/319618>
- [29] Noel, J., Lazzarini, Z., Robaina, K., & Vendrame, A. (2017). Alcohol industry self-regulation: who is it really protecting?. *Addiction (Abingdon, England)*, 112 Suppl 1, 57–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13433>
- [30] Pereira, S., Pêssoa, C., & Costa, P. (2012). Literacia Digital e Tecnologias Criativas: Um estudo qualitativo com crianças dos 10 aos 13 anos a partir do “Ateliê de Formas para a Animação”. *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 22, 110-130. [http://dx.doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.22\(2012\).1277](http://dx.doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.22(2012).1277)
- [31] Richardson, J. & Milovidou, E. (2017). *Digital Citizenship: Multi-stakeholder consultation report*, 2. Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3dUJgb5>.
- [32] Roberts, K. (2004). *Lovemarks: O futuro além das marcas*. M. Books do Brasil.
- [33] Sá, S. (2016). Somos todos fãs ou haters? Cultura Pop, afetos e performance de gosto nos sites de redes sociais. *Revista Eco Pós*, 19 (3), 50-57. <https://doi.org/10.29146/eco-pos.v19i3.5421>
- [34] Saad, E. & Raposo, J. (2017). Prosumers: Colabores, cocriadores e influenciadores. *Revista Comunicare*, Faculdade Cásper Líbero, 17, Edição Especial, 114-130. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3r3IA73>.
- [35] Schiller, D. (2000). *Digital Capitalism: Networking the global market system*. MIT Press.
- [36] Seller, M., & Laurindo, F. (2018). Comunidade de marca ou boca a boca eletrônico: Qual o objetivo da presença de empresas em mídias sociais? *Gestão & Produção*, 25(1), 191-203. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0104-530x2244-16>.
- [37] Torrent J. (2014). MIL and the Web 3.0. In Culver S. H. and Kerr P. (eds), *Global citizenship in a digital world – MILID Yearbook 2014* (pp. 26-30). International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media – NORDICOM. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3q6rqUW>.
- [38] Torres, L., & Tavares, M. (2020). . In I. Agudaded, I. & A. Verdú. (Ed.), *Redes sociales y ciudadanía: hacia un mundo ciberconectado y empoderado* (pp. 629-636). Grupo Comunicar Ediciones. Retrieved from <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/libro?codigo=823289>.
- [39] Torres, L. (2019). A Construção Colaborativa da Comunicação das Marcas nas Redes Sociais: engajamento, interação e literacia dos media. [Doctoral Tesis], Universidade do Algarve.
- [40] UNESCO (2013). *Global media and information literacy assessment framework: country readiness and competencies*. UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3dUHMak>.
- [41] UNESCO (2015). *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*. UNESCO Paris. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/300iRR8>.

Bio

Letícia Torres is a professor at the Faculty of Social Communication at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), where she develops teaching, research, extension and professional training projects in the area of advertising and media literacy. She holds a PhD in Communication, Culture and Art from the University of Algarve, Master in Communication and Culture from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and Graduated in Journalism from the UFJF. She co-coordinates the “Observatório da Qualidade no Audiovisual” (Audiovisual Quality Observatory), is a member of Alfamed, an associate researcher at the Graduate Program in Communication at UFJF and professor of MBAs in Strategic Sales Management and Business Management at UFJF. She is currently head of the Department of Professional Practices and Strategic Content at UFJF.

Gabriela Borges is Graduated in Advertising from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Master and PhD in Communication and Semiotics from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. She carried out research internships at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and at the University of Dublin Trinity College. Postdoctoral fellow at CIAC of the University of Algarve funded by FCT in 2005-08 and in 2019-20. She is a lecturer at the University of Algarve, Portugal, where she works in the Degree in Communication Sciences and Communication Design, in the Master’s in communication and Digital Media and PhD in Digital Media-Art. She teaches at the Graduate Program in Communication at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), which she coordinated (2016-2019) and at the Interuniversity Doctorate in Communication at the University of Huelva. She coordinates the Brazilian team of the Euro-American Interinstitutional Research Network on Media Competence for Citizenship (ALFAMED), She coordinates the “Observatory of Audiovisual Quality”, a platform of scientific dissemination (www.observatoriodoaudiovisual.com.br). She also coordinates the UFJF team of Rede Obitel Brasil (Brazilian Network of Television Fiction Researchers), where she participates as a member of the research team of the project Brazilian television fiction as a resource to promote citizenship. She is the editor of the sci-

entific journal Lumina, of the Graduate Program in Communication at UFJF.

Mirian Nogueira Tavares is Associate Professor at the University of Algarve. With academic studies in Communication Sciences, Semiotics and Cultural Studies (Ph.D. in Communication and Contemporary Culture, from the Federal University of Bahia), she has developed research work and theoretical production in fields related to Cinema, Arts and Technology, as well as artistic and aesthetic film studies. As a lecturer at the University of Algarve, she has participated in the development of the Visual Arts degree, the Master’s programmes in Communication, Culture and Arts and Cultural Management and the PhD programmes in Communication, Culture and Arts and Digital Media Arts. She is the current Coordinator of CIAC (Arts and communication Research Centre), funded by FCT. She is currently the Director of the PHD in Digital Media Arts, promoted by Universidade Aberta and Universidade do Algarve.

Como citar e licença

Torres, P.; Borges, G. & Tavares, M. (2023). Digital citizenship and Consumption: Brands and consumers on social media. *ROTURA – Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Artes*, Número Especial Alfamed, 16-29. <https://doi.org/10.34623/r8m7-ss91>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.