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**D E T E R M I N A N T A S S E S S M E N T O F
V I R A L D I G I T A L C O N T E N T**

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da Prof. Doutora Maria Teresa Borges Tiago



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A quem nunca deixou de acreditar.

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RESUMO

O facto de que as actividades de *eWOM* e as novas utilizações da Internet têm surtido mudanças na forma como os indivíduos comunicam tem sido alvo de debate frequente na comunidade académica. Tratam-se de fenómenos aos quais lhes foi reconhecida a capacidade de afectar a reputação de uma empresa e até, em casos extremos, sobrevivência, pois foi verificado que acabariam por alterar profundamente a forma como os indivíduos recolhem a informação de que necessitam para levar a cabo as suas decisões de compra, assim como as suas atitudes e expectativas em geral. Para além disso, atendendo a um uso intensificado das redes sociais digitais, fenómenos virais digitais começaram a emergir, atraindo também a atenção de académicos e negócios enquanto formas potencialmente adequadas e acessíveis de aumentar a notoriedade de uma dada empresa. Assim sendo, também começaram a aparecer estudos que tentam desmistificar que aspectos do conteúdo e que estruturas sociais digitais poderão potenciar a viralidade. Com efeito, o presente estudo pretende aferir se certos pressupostos anteriormente validados como sendo potenciadores da viralidade poderiam ser identificados no caso da página de “Retrospectiva” do Facebook. Tal página foi alvo de uma difusão em massa aquando do seu lançamento, ressaltando assim o interesse em perceber que aspectos relacionados com diferentes perfis de utilizador de Internet e de emoções provocadas pelo conteúdo teriam condicionado as acções tomadas pelos indivíduos. Tal foi testado por via de um inquérito aberto a todos os indivíduos que pretendessem participar, sob condição de terem uma conta no Facebook. As conclusões obtidas acabariam por ressaltar aspectos já anteriormente associados à viralidade, sobretudo contemplando os contributos de Berger e Milkman, mas também sobre a existência de diferentes grupos de indivíduos, com diferentes acções e comportamentos online, o que estará em concordância com contributos já feitos por Brandtzæg. Para além disto, considerações gerais e relativas à utilização da Internet e das redes sociais também foram possíveis à luz dos resultados obtidos, consolidando assim outros aspectos mencionados no decurso da revisão bibliográfica.

Palavras-chave: evolução da Internet, *eWOM*, marketing viral digital, redes sociais, perfis de utilizador de Internet, transmissão social, emoções provocadas pelo conteúdo

ABSTRACT

The fact that eWoM activity and overall Internet use have shaped the way individuals communicate has been subject to a rather intense and frequent debate in the academic community. These phenomena are said to have an impact on companies' reputations and, at the extreme, survival, as they have been found to be deeply affecting the way individuals gather the information necessary for their purchase decisions, and overall attitudes and expectations. Moreover, in light of an intensified use of social media applications, viral digital phenomena have started to emerge, and have also caught the attention of academics and businesses as potentially good and rather inexpensive ways to enhance a company's awareness. As such, studies that try to unveil what aspects of content and social structures may help enhance virality, have also started to appear. Thus, the following study aims to test whether previously validated aspects that have been found to make content more eager to virality can be identified, concerning Facebook's "A look back" page. Accordingly, this feature has experienced widespread diffusion upon its release, making it interesting to see if aspects related to Internet user profiles and content-evoked emotions had conditioned the action that individuals took. This has been tested through the use of a survey open to all willing respondents who held a Facebook account. The obtained results will therefore shed light on some of the previously validated drivers of diffusion, mainly set out by Berger and Milkman, but also on the fact that, indeed, there are different sets of individuals, with different online actions and behavior predispositions, as already noted by Brandtzæg. Nevertheless, further considerations regarding Internet and social media use may also be found in light of the obtained results, thus reinforcing some of the aspects mentioned in the course of the literature review.

Keywords: Internet evolution, eWoM, viral digital marketing, social networks, Internet user profiles, social transmission, content-evoked emotions

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WoM	Word of Mouth
eWoM	Electronic Word of Mouth
UGC	User Generated Content
RSS	Really Simple Syndication
AJAX	Asynchronous Java Script
OWL	Ontology Web Language
XML	Extensible Markup Language
RDF	Resource Description Framework
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SEM	Search Engine Marketing
IT	Information Technology
PC	Personal Computer
MUT	Media-User Typology
MCA	Multiple Correspondence Analysis
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
GU	Gender Unknown
IU	Internet Use
SK	Search Skill
CM	Convenience Motivation
EM	Entertainment Motivation
IM	Information Motivation
SM	Social Motivation
NFE	Need for Emotion
NFC	Need for Cognition

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

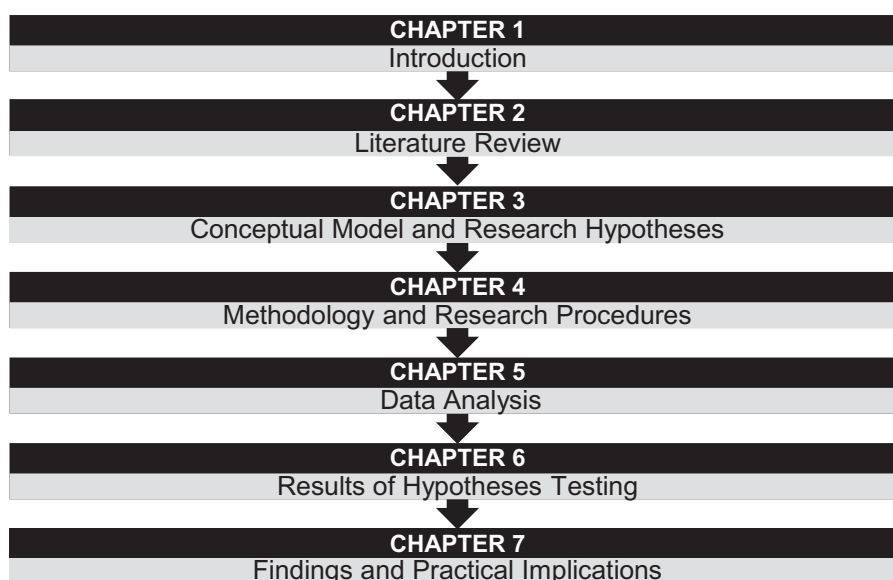
Viral digital content and eWoM phenomena have become frequently debated subjects for businesses and academics. As such, studies that aim to discuss what makes consumers share a given message, and the implications of this new form of WoM communication, have been emerging (Cheung & Thadani, 2010a, 2010b). As will be futurely discussed, some approaches are rather concerned with the social structures of digital social networks, while others seem to be rather concerned with aspects related to the content *per se* and the online behaviors of individuals.

Overall, regarding the first stream, it has been found that certain aspects of the social structure will benefit the spread of viral messages (Bampo, Ewing, Mather, Stewart, & Wallace, 2008). This is said to bring implications for managers who wish to aim for viral marketing maneuvers, meaning that some aspects should be taken into consideration prior to the launch of this sort of campaigns. The second aforementioned stream, on the other hand, has also revealed that virality can benefit from aspects such as the positivity of the message and the ability it has to inflict arousing emotions on the receivers (Berger & Milkman, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). However, other aspects have also been found to be beneficial, such as the practical value of information, and the fact that brands and firms are able to associate these messages to triggers that frequently appear on their targets' environments (Berger, 2013). Moreover, it has also been stated that people may share for self-enhancement reasons and to consider content as important as other aspects of outer appearance (Berger & Milkman, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

As follows, the aforementioned aspects will be relevant to this study. Additionally, it will also be of interest to understand how and why the evolution of the Internet and the intensified adoption of social media applications has been said to deeply shape both collective and individual behaviors of consumers. Thus, the hypotheses set out in this study relate to the assumptions that, in light of a new form of the Internet, there are different types of people. Consequently, these diverse groups would be expected to have distinct behavior predispositions and different emotional responses to the content they

come across. Hence, as virality is said to live on through the act of individuals sharing the same messages at very high rates, it would be expected for it to derive from a mix of certain actions and emotions that different sets of Internet users experience. Validating these hypotheses, in light of a Facebook feature that was subject to elevated levels of diffusion, will therefore be the main goal of the present study. Thus, the present approach won't be as focused on the structure of social digital networks, but rather behavioral aspects of individuals and aspects related to the messages and the emotions they were able to evoke. Hence, the present study is divided into seven chapters, which are as follows in Figure 1:

Figure 1 – Work Structure



As such, the remainder of the study is organized as follows. Chapter two presents the literature review conducted to provide theoretical support for the evaluation of the desired phenomena. Chapter three presents the proposed conceptual model and the contemplated research hypotheses, along with additional theoretical background to support them. Chapter four presents the applied methodology and research procedures. Chapter five consists in the performed data analysis, while chapter six contemplates the results of the performed data analysis. Lastly, chapter seven presents the main conclusions, implications, limitations and suggestions regarding directions for future research.