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THE EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FASHION BRANDS AND SPANISH INFLUENCERS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE PANDEMIC

LA EVOLUCIÓN DE LA RELACIÓN ENTRE MARCAS E INFLUENCERS ESPAÑOLAS DE MODA TRAS LA PANDEMIA

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ABSTRACT

In March 2020, the new SARS-CoV-2 virus arrived to stay amongst us, bringing the most important global pandemic known up to now. The entire world was affected by a health crisis that spread to all sectors of society, leading to company closures, rises in unemployment rates, and many changes in ordinary lifestyles. This pandemic has also had an impact on changes in society's consumption habits and a relevant increase in the use of social networks due to the months of lockdown, which has led to important changes in various areas and, specifically, in the fashion and influencers sector. In addition to the pandemic problem, there is the trouble of adapting to the new Spanish regulation, code of conduct on social networks, from January 2021. This research aims to analyze, using a mixed methodology, the changes produced in fashion influencers' jobs before, during, and after the pandemic, the evolution of fashion brands in digital media, and new trends in influencer marketing that have been caused by this new situation. To do so, we have performed a content analysis and interviews with professionals from the fashion sector. Conclusions show a greater control of content, an increase in the number of followers, and a closer link with brands. Comparisons with the dynamic in other international markets, as well as

the future adaptation of the professional activity to current regulations, are the most relevant questions to be addressed to be able to expand the study in the future.

Keywords: Social influence; Fashion; Social networks; Brand; Advertising; Sponsoring; World problems.

RESUMEN

La llegada del virus SARS-CoV-2 provocó una pandemia mundial y una crisis sanitaria que se extendió a todos los ámbitos de la sociedad, causando cierre de empresas, pérdidas de millones de empleos y numerosas alteraciones en el estilo de vida de los individuos, además de provocar cambios de consumo y un aumento del uso de las redes sociales debido al tiempo de confinamiento, lo que supuso un punto de inflexión en diversos ámbitos y, concretamente, en el sector de la moda y de las *influencers*. Al problema surgido por la pandemia, se suma el de la adaptación a la nueva regulación española del código de conducta en las redes sociales desde 2021 en España. Con la presente investigación se pretende analizar, mediante metodología mixta, los cambios producidos antes, durante y después de la pandemia en el trabajo de las *influencers* de moda, la evolución de las marcas de este sector en los medios digitales y las nuevas tendencias en el marketing de influencia que se han generado a raíz de esta nueva situación. Para ello, se ha realizado un análisis de contenido y una entrevista a profesionales del sector. Las conclusiones muestran superior control de los contenidos, aumento de seguidores y vínculo más estrecho con las marcas. Su comparativa con la dinámica existente en otros mercados internacionales, así como la adaptación en el futuro de la actividad profesional a las normativas vigentes, son las cuestiones más relevantes para poder ampliar el estudio en el futuro.

Palabras clave: Influencia social; Marca; Moda; Redes Sociales; Publicidad; Patrocinio; Problema mundial.

A EVOLUÇÃO DO RELACIONAMENTO ENTRE MARCAS DE MODA ESPANHOLAS E INFLUENCIADORES APÓS A PANDEMIA

RESUMO

A chegada do vírus SARS-CoV-2 provocou uma pandemia global e uma crise sanitária que se alastrou a todas as áreas da sociedade, causando o fechamento de empresas, a perda de milhões de empregos e inúmeras alterações no estilo de vida dos indivíduos, além de provocar alterações no consumo e um aumento da utilização das redes sociais devido ao tempo de confinamento, que foi um ponto de viragem em vários aspectos e, especificamente, no setor da moda e dos influenciadores. Soma-se ao problema decorrente da pandemia a adaptação ao novo regulamento espanhol do código de conduta nas redes sociais a partir de 2021 na Espanha. Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar, por meio de uma metodologia mista, as mudanças produzidas antes, durante e após a pandemia no trabalho dos influenciadores da moda, a evolução das marcas desse setor nos meios digitais e as novas tendências no mundo, geradas como resultado desta nova situação. Para isso, foi realizada uma análise de conteúdo e uma entrevista com profissionais do setor. As conclusões

mostram um controle superior dos conteúdos, aumento de seguidores e uma ligação mais próxima com as marcas. A sua comparação com a dinâmica existente em outros mercados internacionais, bem como a futura adaptação da atividade profissional às normas vigentes, são as questões mais relevantes para poder alargar o estudo no futuro.

Palavras chave: Influência social; Marca; Moda; Redes sociais; Publicidade; Patrocínio; Problema mundial.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a social transformation linked to digitization, which has also been reflected in communication. Already in 2009, Castells warned of the influence on individuals and societies of the coined "digital revolution" in various vital aspects, such as in the relationships between human beings, which "are presenting important changes in different routines and daily contexts, that is, in the ways of: establishing contact, creating friendships, planning trips, performing self-validation, and managing learning processes, among others" (Barón et al., 2021).

Following this line, it is evident that "the synergistic nature of new technologies marks the production and communication processes of our era worldwide" (Jódar, 2010), granting organizations and individuals a wide range of communication opportunities.

In this new digital era, the media have turned towards digitization, which has led them to the present day, in which online portals are diversifying, with numerous channels through which to access specialized information. Furthermore, conventional media outlets have joined the online world through their own spaces and their presence on discussion platforms, which allow them to converse with their audiences in a two-way communication process that creates a relationship and a bond. These platforms are called social networks.

Social networks correspond to the term that began to be used by English anthropologists and sociologists in the mid-1950s, to characterize and study the set of human relationships that have a lasting impact on the life of an individual and offer contingent patterns and collaborations to orchestrate solutions in everyday life. (Wolfe, 2011).

The influence of social networks and their use on individuals is evident. According to figures from the Statista portal (2021), there are more than 3,600 million people in the world who currently use social networks. In Spain, according to the Annual Study of Social Networks 2021, 25.9 million Spaniards between the ages of 16 and 65 use them. All of them find in social networks a means through which to communicate, establish relationships with people related to them, and share thoughts, interests, part of their lives, answers to questions or expectations, and even work (Arenas, 2010).

Once the media and brands have become aware of the opportunities offered by social networks, "a new economic, productive, and social model is created that involves the appearance of industries, professional profiles, and economic models" (Jódar, 2010) unknown until that moment. Likewise, the advertising models evolve compared to the classics, with the so-called *branded content* taking a leading role "inspired by the theories of transmedia narrative." (Ruiz, 2017).

Following the data offered by the INFOADEX Study (2021) of Advertising Investment in Spain from this last year, it is verified that branded content is still on the rise since it is positioned in fifth place in the ranking for its volume over total investment.

1.1. Instagram as a disseminator of fashion and beauty content

The Instagram app, created in 2010, had the main purpose of sharing images and videos. In 2012, it was acquired by Facebook, reaching 700 million active monthly users in 2017 (Guerrero, 2017). Since then, the app has undergone many changes that have been adapted to the needs and wishes of users. As Rose warned in 2017, and as confirmed by the data offered by the Annual Study of Social Networks 2021 in Spain carried out by IAB, "Instagram is one of the most important social networks in the current digital landscape." Furthermore, it currently ranks alongside WhatsApp as the most frequently used social network among users. Its audience is mainly between 16 and 45 years old, being mostly female (65%).

Continuing with the data obtained by this study, she warns that, globally, 97% of users use them to follow profiles of their relatives and closest environment, followed by 56% who affirm that they follow influencers, and 52% that follow brand profiles. This percentage has decreased compared to the results obtained in 2019.

However, 59% of users research through social networks before purchasing some products, placing Instagram as the third preferred social network for this, being the one chosen by 36% of users, a percentage that continues growing compared to previous years.

According to Mention (2021), 83% of people registered on Instagram had discovered new products or services through this platform and 80% have decided to buy a product or hire services after consulting the information on this app (Casaló, et al., 2018).

All this makes Instagram a social network suitable for entertainment and interaction, which favors consumption and contact with brands and their dissemination and their products among users through "word of mouth" (Khan, 2018). To this is added the existence of various communication strategies through which the search for specific information is facilitated, such as the content disseminated by influencers from a specific sector, an attractive profile with useful content for the user that also helps to market the products and services through a good image in accordance with the brand (Rose, 2017) and retain followers and customers.

Through it, users have created a network that includes brands, influencers, insiders, media, agencies, and clients who relate to each other, creating a perfect showcase

for the social moment in which we live. Fashion brands have the challenge of transferring their universe to the online medium (Velar et al., 2019), and Instagram makes it easier for them to bring it closer to their audiences. For Cristófol et al. (2018) "any company or brand can make use of advertising on Instagram" but it is the fashion influencers who have received the best reception.

Among the new channels, we believe that Instagram is the one that best responds to these new needs. As Alonso (2020) states, it is the most powerful visual network that exists and a perfect communication tool for the fashion industry. (...) Its rate increases above those of Twitter and Facebook (Velar et al. 2020; L2 Fashion Team, 2017; Silva, 2014). Therefore, these data confirm that Instagram is an effective way to disseminate, promote, and sell products, brands, and services.

1.2. Influencers: definition, types, and function in the world of fashion and beauty

Today, users can connect with brands whenever they want, thus breaking with the unidirectional model of traditional media. In this sense, Costa (2015, p.8) states that:

(...) every brand has a real substratum and is inserted in its specific social, economic, cultural, and technological context. Every brand is rooted in the reality of people and their daily lives, their dates, their aspirations, and their dreams. The brand is visualized and synthesized in a symbol that is positioned in the memory of each person.

Following these words, brands seek to encourage these points of connection with their customers, also making sure to offer useful information and content for the target audience. In this context and thanks to the internet, the figure of what we know today as influencers emerges.

As De Castro (2019) maintains, influencers "are individuals with their own brand, often known as self-branding, who develop a distinctive public image to obtain commercial gains and/or cultural capital". Although the figure of opinion leaders dates back to the beginning of civilizations, the well-known influencers, as we understand their figure today, have their origin in the bloggers who published, in an amateur way, their knowledge and experiences through the Blogger.com website.

In the case of the fashion world, the first blog dedicated to the sector was born in 2003, under the name "*No good for me*", edited by a young American who posted about her style and her own reflections about various topics. Over time, the "blogosphere" underwent a massive expansion, with the number of blogs in July 2010 numbering over 3 million. (Luque, 2019).

Once this leap in media was made, "thanks to the impact they enjoy on social networks, their followers connect with them in such a way that they not only see them as a form of entertainment but also follow their lifestyle and value their experiences and opinions" (de Castro, 2019). However, this new job, which arises as a need to immediately unite customers with brands, is not a new technique.

This classic terminology is linked to what we previously knew as "opinion leader", a term that arises as a result of the mass media. In this sense, as Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) and Katz (1955) state in their "two-step flow of communication" theory, many ideas reach the masses through opinion leaders thanks to the personal influence that certain personalities had according to their behaviors and attitudes and not only through the media.

Regarding this, according to Regadera (2020), it is clear that consumers are looking for people or companies to trust. This has led to brands also having to strengthen ties with influencers. That is why the need arises to provide a quick response and an image that achieves customer loyalty, thus arising "bidirectional communication based on a dialogue and a relationship of identification and trust between brands, influencers, and followers, which is more necessary than ever" Alonso (2020).

The figure of the influencer has communication skills that make them capable of creating trends and currents of influence through their content (Merodio, 2013).

The influencers of the new online platforms, especially Instagram, act not only as intermediaries for the brands or their ambassadors but also become an advertising medium with the capacity for segmentation, feedback, credibility, and influence among their follower audience, which are characteristics that favor the success of their activity (Aubin Cardoso Pereira, 2018)

Furthermore, when taking into account the three traits that define an influencer, Díaz (2017) groups them into: familiarity, communication skills, and experience.

However, this figure does not follow a single pattern, thus coming to exist a classification according to their typology. Continuing with Díaz (2017) and Barón's classification of influencers in (2015) in his Pyramid of Influencer Engagement, and despite using different terms, both defend three types of influencers:

Celebrities: people who make the leap from the offline to the online world (Díaz, 2017). They are easily recognized, as they appear constantly on television, in the press, and ads. In this case, consumers perceive these prescribers as advertising and, in this way, as a new path that is presented to brands to reach them. It usually responds to objectives that are related to traditional marketing and not to influencer marketing, in this case, we refer to an improvement in the brand image and an increase in notoriety (Baron, 2015).

Opinion leaders: bloggers, journalists, and experts on a specific topic. They share specialized content with their community of fans. Those individuals who are not famous but who have become known on social networks and created their community and their content could be included here. Furthermore, this type of influencer has the loyalty of their followers, being higher than that of celebrities (Díaz, 2017).

Micro-Influencers: current consumers who show certain activity in social networks and are committed to a specific brand. Barón (2015) states that, although the community of this group is smaller than that of the other types of influencers, the

power of repercussion on their followers and the relationship with them is greater. "Their community is characterized by being very participatory" Díaz (2017).

The objective of this group is to promote purchase decisions, mainly due to the closeness and trust that this influential type receives from its followers.

1.3. COVID in the fashion and beauty sector

In recent months in which COVID-19 has affected the fashion and beauty sector, Instagram has allowed hundreds of companies to subsist through communication strategies developed on the platform.

According to the marketing agency Comunicare (2021), "in 2019, before the COVID-19 hit, the global size of the fashion industry stood at 1,409,618 million dollars, so that, in two years, fashion will have lost 9% of its volume". Moreover, "sales of fashion garments and accessories plummeted 39.8% in 2020 due to the impact that the coronavirus health crisis has had on the sector" (Comunicare, 2021).

For this reason, this sector has seen the need to reinvent and redesign itself and look for other business alternatives. It is in this sense that online commerce appears, an alternative that, according to Salesupply (2021), "represented 15.4% of the fashion sector in Spain, compared to 8.8% in 2019".

Additionally, with the arrival and consequences of the pandemic, there has been an increase in the consumption of social networks and the internet by users: "the average engagement rate of influencers was 43 times higher per publication of influencers than by advertisers in April and May" (Chiorboli, 2020). This alternative has turned out to be practically the only option that brands had to be able to show, present, or advertise their products and services to their audiences during the months of confinement. According to ComScore (2020), "during the first month of the lockdown, social network consumption increased by 55%".

The pandemic has reinforced digitization and has made it an ally, favoring the growth of the various digital tools that society has today and increasing the technological network of users as potential future consumers for different businesses.

For San Cornelio (2020), research on communication on social networks in the pandemic has five essential premises: fast times, slow research; what happens on one network does not happen on another; the importance of images; the biggest challenge is, probably, the methodological one; ethical issues.

1.4 Fashion communication in social networks

Since the beginning of advertising as a profession, numerous communication experts have researched to determine the best channels for brands and advertisers to efficiently impact their target audiences. Users and consumers are increasingly informed due to the continuous use of the Internet and the important role it plays in the life of any citizen. In this line, the large amount of content that people face every

day creates insecurity about the veracity of the information that is provided (Coleman, 2012; Laato et al., 2020).

Currently, through digital communication, young people can obtain new information about the textile industry thanks to social networks and influencers. Likewise, different communication actions in fashion such as promoting a brand, service, product, or even campaigns and different events can be reinforced and promoted favorably thanks to the impact of the influencer, this being the strategy, since it is also an opinion leader and already has an audience that is going to pay attention, thus giving greater strength, support, and force to the advertising campaign" (Peréz et al., 2020).

2. OBJECTIVES

This research aims to conclude what have been the main changes experienced by the work and content of influencers specialized in the fashion and beauty sector. To do this, it is based on various qualitative techniques that allow us to know what are the new trends that have come to stay in communication with influencers in the sector, which ones have disappeared, and how is the new working method to be followed between prescribers, brands, and users. Regarding this, two fundamental objectives are established, which are the following:

1. Know the evolution experienced in the work of influencers for brands and companies in the fashion sector during and after the pandemic.
2. Identify the new trends and actions present in the work of fashion influencers.

To find an objective and conclusive answer that allows us to meet the aforementioned objectives, we start from various hypotheses:

1. Influencers specializing in fashion and beauty have changed the way they work due to the pandemic.
2. They have been forced to modify the type of content they share on their Instagram profiles due to the pandemic.
3. Their relationship with fashion and beauty brands has been affected or modified by and because of the pandemic.
4. They have not complied with the new regulations on self-control and code of conduct during the months of the pandemic.

The aim is to analyze how the work of influencers in the fashion and beauty sector has evolved as a result of the arrival of the pandemic. Furthermore, it seeks to determine what are the new trends in the marketing of fashion and beauty influencers as a result of adaptation. To do this, mixed research techniques will be used, that is, qualitative techniques, such as in-depth interviews with professionals in the sector; and of a quantitative nature, such as content analysis.

For the latter, different publications made in certain periods will be studied and the variables determined by the current number of followers of each influencer, the number of likes and comments, the types of publication, the brands that appear in the posts, and how they are included in the content, the location of the image or

video, and how the influencer appears in it (with a mask, alone, accompanied, etc.) will be taken into account.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research, of an exploratory nature, is pertinent since it provides an analytical vision of the current panorama in marketing with influencers in the fashion and beauty sector. Among the current uncertainty, it is convenient to know how the market is and what paths it is focused on, besides exposing how influencers and brands have adapted.

Moreover, the case study concerns a situation that remains over time, which has not yet been concluded, so it not only provides information on a little-studied fact but also leaves the option open for future research to continue analyzing how the sector of fashion and beauty influencers evolves in the various stages of the pandemic.

To meet the stated objectives, it is convenient to apply research techniques that allow data to be obtained with which to confirm or refute the proposed hypotheses since, as López and Sandoval (2016) state, "the research methodology was defined as the description, explanation, and justification of the different methods used in conducting the research".

To do this, this research is based on quantitative and qualitative methods that, as these authors maintain, "both types of research methodologies consist of a set of techniques to collect data, where qualitative methods have been as refined and standardized as other research approaches" (Lopez and Sandoval, 2016). For Figueroa et. al (2021) studies on influencers on Instagram "present a wide variety of methodological approaches to respond to their research objectives, going through quantitative, mixed, and qualitative designs".

In the first place, a qualitative technique will be used because, according to Lee and Lings, "qualitative methodology not only serves to explore and describe but also facilitates the development of research work towards obtaining significant explanations for a phenomenon" (Ugalde, Balbastre, 2013). Piza et. al (2019) state "The methodology of qualitative research has great relevance in scientific research, although its methods and techniques are used more frequently in the sciences of social and human behavior."

In this case, the main qualitative technique that will be applied will be the in-depth interview with professionals from the marketing sector with fashion and beauty influencers.

For Blasco and Otero (2008) "The interview is one of the most used qualitative techniques, which serves to build the social meaning of individual behavior or of the reference group to which the interviewed individual belongs, based on a set of private knowledge". According to Baquedano (2021), "the in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that seeks to understand the opinions, perspectives, experiences, and motivations of the people interviewed regarding the topics that we

have defined in our study." Furthermore, with the qualitative analysis, scripts with unstructured questions are used so that the interviewee has complete freedom to answer and is not restricted by closed questions. Thanks to this, participation and debate are encouraged without any kind of conditioning (León, 2020; Taylor and Bogdan, 2008).

For this reason, and attending to the needs of the research, content analysis will be carried out as a quantitative technique, understood by Krippendorff (1990) as a research technique aimed at formulating reproducible and valid inferences from certain coded data. It is a set of interpretive procedures for messages, texts, or speeches based on quantitative or qualitative measurement techniques, which aim to prepare and process relevant data on the conditions of production or subsequent use of said messages, texts, or speeches (Piñuel, 2002).

In this case, one of the AC analysis models proposed by Krippendorff and reflected by Colle (2011) will be used: the estimation design, which allows accessing a phenomenon and "observing estimates of certain parameters or verifying certain hypotheses".

Despite this, Lozares Colina (2005) states that

Social network analysis is part of a large constellation of theories whose denomination or general framework is intuited but of which much remains to be found and baptized, especially for the social sciences (...). They simply form another galaxy still little explored by sociologists, in general.

In this way, it will be analyzed how the work of influencers has evolved since the pandemic and new content trends that have arisen from this situation will be considered.

To carry out an effective data collection, two non-probabilistic representative samples have been chosen to reveal the reality of the marketing sector with fashion and beauty influencers.

Thus, in the case of the interview, starting from the population made up of all the influencers, and after checking the accessibility of the main influencers, according to the number of followers, and taking into account the most outstanding profiles of the sector through the impact in specialized media and other profiles on the Instagram social network, the profiles of three influencers from the Spanish scene have been chosen, located in different ranges in terms of the number of followers, with different stylistic and digital characters, which bring them closer to different types of audiences being, equally, professionals more or less relevant in the world of online fashion. In this way, the final sample would be described in the following table:

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Table 1.
Profile of the interviewed influencers.

Name	Instagram Profile	Number of Followers (December 2021)	Brands with which they collaborate
Beatriz Prados Fernández	@beapfernandez	44,2K	Antik Batik, Loewe, Sèzane, Ron Brugal, Pull and Bear, Batiste, etc.
María Calvet Anguela	@maria.calvet	54,1K	Duas Swimwear (owner), Brownie, Nakd, Studio Fantastique, Angel Schlessler, Estee Lauder, etc.
Patricia Sañes Iborra	@patriciasanes_	166K	Jesús Peiró, Grupo Lamadrid, Louis Vuitton, Agua Bendita, Castañer, Andrés Sardá, Anthropology, Nespresso, etc.

Source: Own elaboration

On the other hand, to carry out the content analysis, an analysis unit has been chosen made up of six macro-influencers, whose content and trajectories are quite relevant in Spain. The sample is once again representative and not probabilistic since it has been carefully chosen under the aforementioned parameters. The influencers whose profile has been analyzed are:

Table 2.
Profile of the analyzed influencers.

Name	Instagram Profile	Number of Followers IG (dic '21)	Brands with which they collaborate
Alexandra Pereira	@alexandra pereira	2,145 MM	Lovely Pepa (owner), Cartier, Yves Saint Laurent, APM Monaco, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, etc.
Aida Domenech (Dulceida)	@dulceida	2,969 MM	Dulceida Shop (owner), Dior, Coca Cola o Versace, Calzados Krack, Sephora, etc.
Sara Baceiredo	@sarabace	432K	It´s Lava (owner), Loewe, Clinique, Pull and Bear, Laagam, Marieth, etc.
Lucía Bárcena	@luciabarcena	397K	Petra Swimwear (owner), Barey (partner), Polin et Moi, Brownie, Michonet, Antik Batik, Louis Vuitton, Isdin, Claudie Pierlot, etc.
María Fdez. Rubies	@mariafrubies	740K	Intimissimi, Pertegaz, Bulgari, Esteé Lauder, etc.
Mery Turiel	@meryturiel	889K	Mute Wine (owner), Calzedonia, Kiko Milano, Mango, Inditex, Rosa Pedroche, Ze García, etc.

Source: Own elaboration

Once the research techniques have been determined and the samples have been chosen for each of them, the data will be collected between July 22nd and 27th, to extract results and conclusions favorable to the research.

In the first place, for the extraction of data from the content analysis, a period has been established that covers the first and last week of January and February 2020, covering the activity of the prescribers' exercise before the pandemic; the first and last week of April and May of the same year, to reflect the adaptation of the influencers' work during the months of confinement; and, finally, the first and last week of January and February 2021, to have a vision of what the reality of fashion and beauty influencer marketing is like in the current period of the pandemic and to be able to compare to the time before it.

To reflect the data and information obtained in the analysis, a table has been prepared for each time stage, which allows the information obtained to be grouped. It reflects the number of current followers of each influencer, the number of likes and comments that each publication has obtained in this period, an unequivocal and defining sign of the engagement generated by each one; the format of each publication, the type of content displayed in it: whether or not trademarks appear in the publication, whether it is advertising work or publications of a personal nature; whether or not the advertising activity they carry out is signaled through the hashtags: #ad, #supplied, in collaboration with, etc.; if the content is made in an external or internal environment; if they appear with masks or without them (especially in the publications made during confinement and after it), and if they appear alone or, on the contrary, accompanied.

Once all the data have been entered into the tables, they will be quantitatively translated into graphs where the results of the analysis can be seen clearly and summarized regarding each of the factors analyzed.

Finally, to obtain enlightening results about the relationship between influencers and brands, some questions have been sent to the influencers mentioned on previous pages via email that address certain issues related to it and the evolution of influencers' work during and after the pandemic.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Content analysis results

After analyzing the content published by the influencers that make up the sample chosen for the research, different results have been obtained depending on the factors studied.

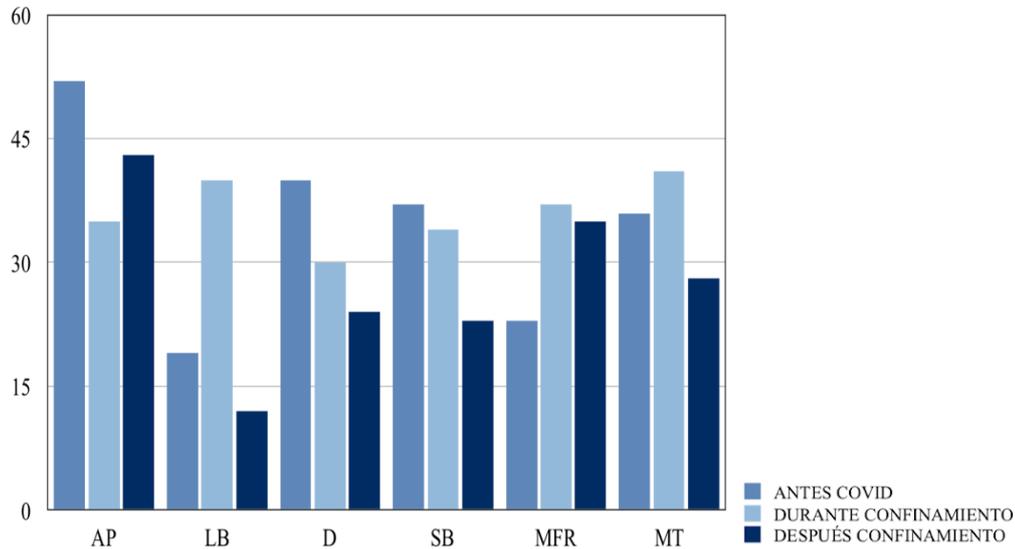
The first factor in the research has been the number of followers of each influencer. Although it is an interesting and remarkable fact to be able to understand the rest of the results of this research, it should be noted that it is the current number of each of the profiles.

In the first place, the total number of publications made by the members of the sample during the studied period has been analyzed, and the likes and comments

that they have obtained in each of their publications have been analyzed to consider how the evolution of the engagement of each one has been.

Chart 1.

Total posts.



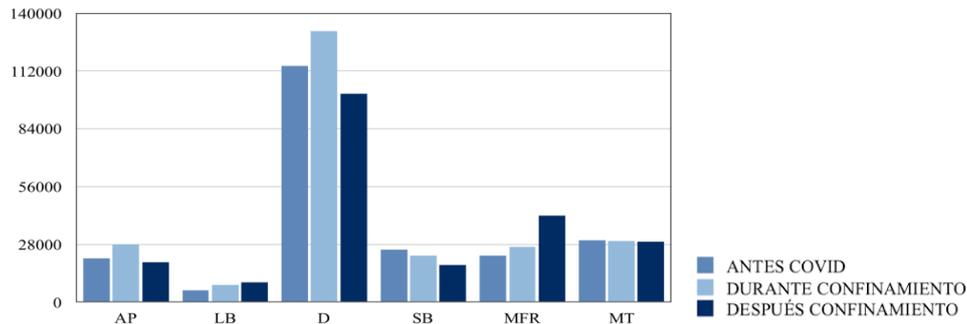
Source: Own elaboration

Considering the total number of publications made in the studied periods, it can be seen how the influencers with the highest number of publications before COVID coincide with the most international profiles, in this case, Alexandra Pereira and Dulceida. A high percentage of their content is produced abroad, on different work and leisure trips.

Both are the ones that experience a greater reduction in publications during the months of confinement, while the rest of the influencers, except for Sara Baceiredo, who also registers a decrease in her production, increase the amount of published content, the abrupt changes in Lucía Bárcena's data standing out, which goes from 19 posts in the first study period, corresponding to January and February 2020, to 40 posts in the weeks of analysis that take place during confinement, and this number is reduced to 12 posts published in the days analyzed between January and February 2021.

Next, we proceed to the study and analysis of the number of likes and comments obtained in the publications of each profile.

Chart 2.
Average likes post



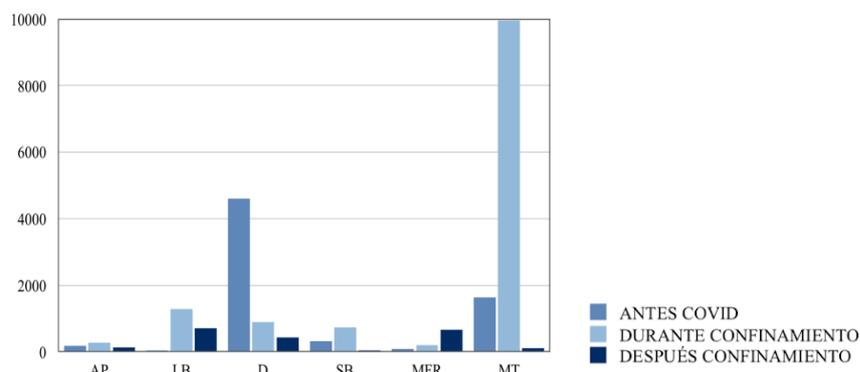
Source: Own elaboration

The number of likes that Dulceida obtains is remarkable, compared to the rest of her colleagues, since she obtains an average of 114,630 likes in the period before the arrival of the pandemic, a figure that increases to 131,406 during the months of confinement. On the other hand, it should be noted how the international influencer Alexandra Pereira obtains a lower average number of likes than her colleagues, with a difference of more than 1 million followers between them.

While Alexandra obtains an average of 21,094 likes before confinement, 28,053 during it, and 19,198 in the months after it, Sara Baceiredo accumulates an average of 22,404 during January and February 2020, Mery Turiel 29,657 in the months of quarantine, and María Fernández-Rubías 41,927 in January and February of 2021; a remarkable data and that may be closely related to the birth of her first child, a fact that had a lot of impact on social networks. In general, it can be seen how the number of likes decreases after confinement.

To continue the observation and analysis of engagement, the study of the average number of comments per post has also been taken into account.

Chart 3.
Average comments per post.



Source: Own elaboration

In this case, it can be seen how the general figures are low compared to the likes. Even so, different values should be highlighted: firstly, the average number of comments by Mery Turiel during the months of confinement, equivalent to 9,952

comments; Dulceida's figure in the pre-pandemic months, with an average of 4,608 comments, or the amount that Lucía Bárcena accumulates in this same period.

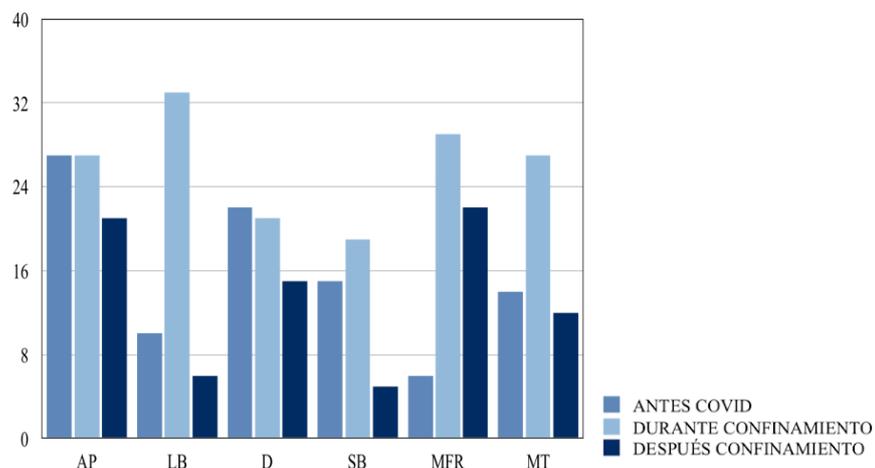
All these figures have a phenomenon in common: the holding of giveaways in some posts of the profile. This causes the average number of comments to considerably increase. Also noteworthy is the break in comments that Sara Baceiredo obtains in her publications in January and February 2021, with her average standing at 35 comments, when the figure for the previous period amounted to an average of 733 comments.

In general, the decrease in engagement is observed after the months of confinement, despite having experienced an increase in general terms during the quarantine period. The reduced engagement that Alexandra Pereira accumulates, despite being the second influencer with the largest number of followers; the loyalty of the community of Mery Turiel, quite constant in general figures; and the high figures of Dulceida, generator of the highest engagement among fashion influencers in Spain, stand out.

Returning to the number of posts published by each influencer, the number of these in which the content was produced outside or, on the contrary, from inside somewhere, has been analyzed to appreciate another of the considerable changes that content generators must have experienced in these months of the pandemic.

Chart 4.

Total posts indoors.



Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the content generated in indoor spaces, considerable growth can be seen during the months of confinement, the most abrupt being the case of María Fernández-Rubíes, who, accustomed to showing her followers her looks from the streets of Madrid, went from 6 indoor publications in the period before the arrival of COVID-19, to 29.

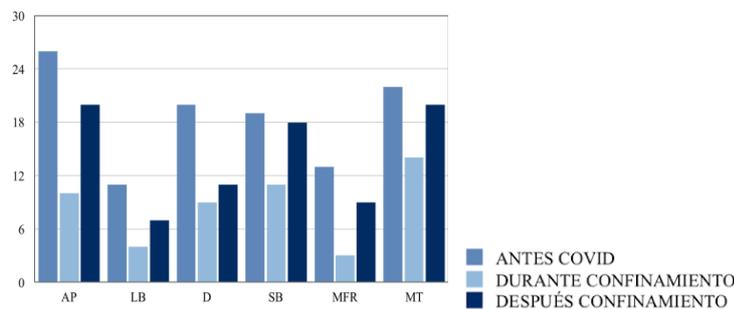
In the case of Dulceida, despite the decrease in the number of posts indoors, other factors must be taken into account, such as the publication of content made in

months before the pandemic and posted during the weeks of confinement or the publications made indoors of public spaces or belonging to restaurant chains, hotels, companies, shops, etc. carried out in January and February 2020.

On the other hand, the increase in indoor publications experienced by Lucía Bárcena's profile also corresponds to an increase in the number of publications in these weeks, whose content is generated daily. Finally, the sharp reduction in the amount of indoor content that influencers make once the confinement period has passed is notable, with the number of posts made indoors in the period between January and February 2021 being lower in all cases, especially among the youngest influencers in the sample: Sara Baceiredo and Lucía Bárcena.

Chart 5.

Total posts outdoors.



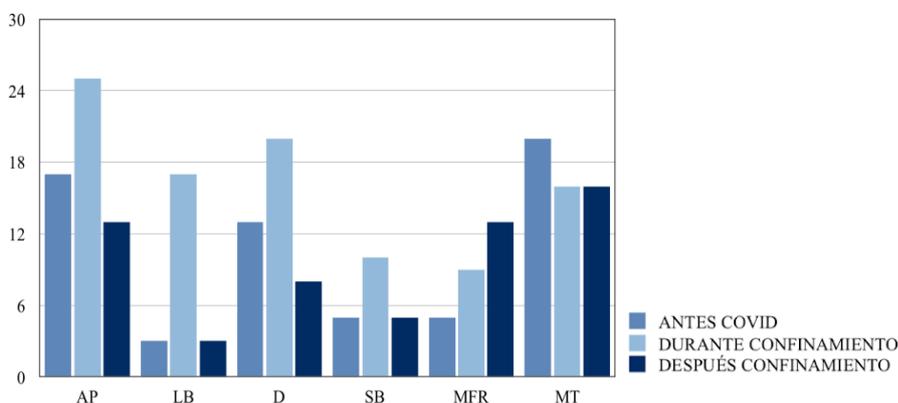
Source: Own elaboration

On the contrary, it can be seen how the number of publications outdoors is considerably reduced in all cases during the study period corresponding to the weeks of confinement, while, after it, they increase exponentially again, the most notable case being that of Alexandra Pereira.

Next, the evolution of the appearance of brands in the publications of the selected influencers, with or without a brand, is analyzed.

Chart 6.

Total posts without a brand



Source: Own elaboration

This analysis shows the increase in publications without any mention of brands during the months of confinement, and it is that, in this period, the content published

is generally more personal or made previously, so that at the time of publication they have no commitment to the brand, which exempts them from mentioning it.

Initially, all this was intended to maintain the audience, however, probably, after experiencing the good reception they obtained in data with this type of publication, they have maintained, to a lesser extent, a more personal line in some of the posts after the stage of confinement, as reflected in the chart above, a true reflection of the content analysis carried out.

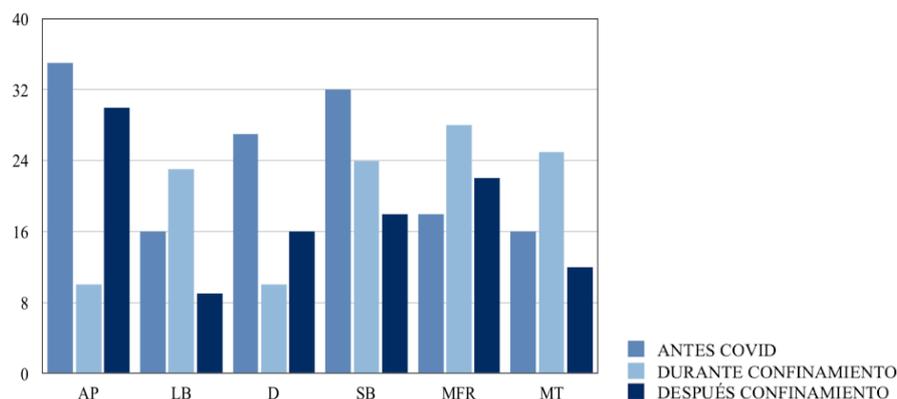
In this case, Alexandra Pereira, Lucía Bárcena, and Dulceida are the influencers whose content has moved the furthest from brands in these weeks, being, along with Sara Baceiredo, the ones that have maintained the least amount of this type of content in January and February 2021.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that, from January 1st, 2021, the Code of Conduct on the Use of Influencers in Advertising, (Autocontrol, 2020) carried out by the Spanish Association of Advertisers and Self-control together with the Ministries of Economic Affairs and Digital and Consumer Transformation, came into force to control that the advertising mentions of the influencers can be recognized and identified as advertising, thus eliminating covert advertising.

For this reason, other studied factors have been the publications in which the influencers warned of the advertising nature of the post, and, on the contrary, those publications in which brands appeared explicitly through mentions, products, or tags but in which it was not referenced if they belonged to an advertising commission of the brand.

Chart 7.

Total posts with a brand



Source: Own elaboration

In this case, it can be seen how the influencers who work mainly with luxury and international brands, such as Alexandra Pereira and Dulceida, are the ones that reduce the publications in which they appear to a greater extent, which may be another symptom that, during the months of confinement, luxury brands decided to stop and reduce their advertising activity, while smaller brands opted for advertising with influencers to continue having the necessary visibility for their businesses.

The decrease in brands in the publications made in the post-confinement period, corresponding on this occasion to January and February 2021, may be influenced by the entry into force of the Law on self-control in advertising with influencers since, as can be seen in the case of Sara Baceiredo or Lucía Bárcena, it is usual to tag clothing and product brands that appear in the content they publish despite not being advertising content simply because it globally responds to the interest of users who follow them and for providing visibility to their profile through the appearance in the brands' feed.

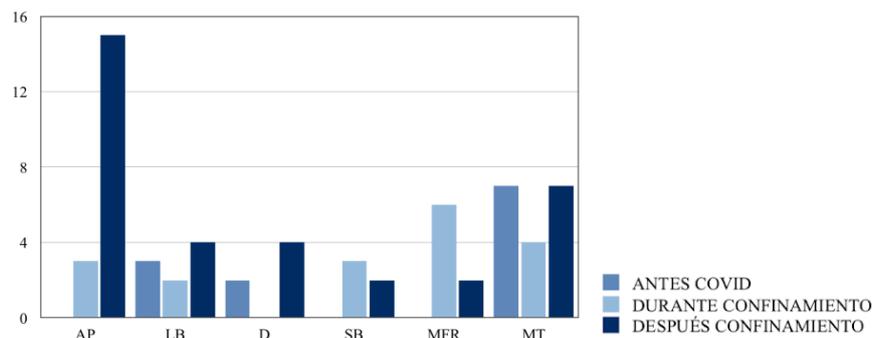
This fact changes with the new Law because as advertising labeling is mandatory, they are obliged to justify those appearances in which they carry out collaboration or advertising actions for brands, which leads them to avoid labeling unless they truly are an advertising collaboration.

In the case of María Fernández-Rubías, the increase in publications with brands is clearly influenced by the report with *Hola!* magazine of her new house, where she shows the rooms and its furniture.

Within all the publications with brands that have been found in the content analysis, they have been divided into two different types of publications: those in which the advertising is clearly marked and those in which it is not determined whether it is advertising or not.

Chart 8.

Total signposted advertising publications



Source: Own elaboration

Although the Self-Control Law came into force on January 1st, 2021, it was at the beginning of 2020 when the question of signaling all those posts with advertising content began to be raised, which is why numerous influencers chose to start indicating when it was a paid collaboration, a gift from the brand, or an advertising action through the hashtag #Ad or #Supplied, if it was a gift from the brand or tagged from the Instagram app itself as "Paid collaboration" with the corresponding brand.

This is clearly reflected in Figure 15 since cases such as Alexandra Pereira, Sara

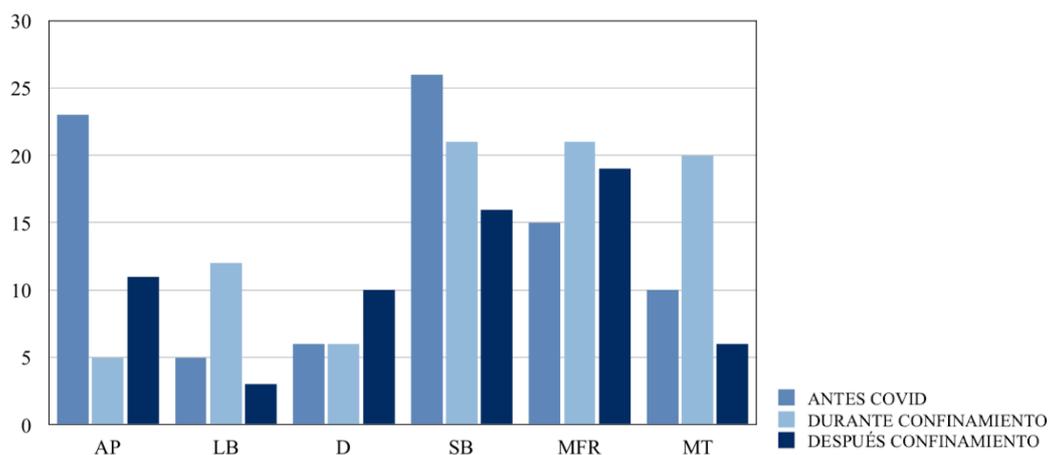
Baceiredo, or María Fernández-Rubíes, in which they had not signaled any of the advertising posts between January and February 2020, began to do so during the months of confinement. Particularly noteworthy is the activity of Alexandra Pereira, who went from signaling three posts during the period that covers April and May 2020 to fifteen signaled publications during the weeks analyzed in January and February 2021.

In general, the number of publications distinguished as advertising content increases. However, cases such as that of Sara or María Fernández-Rubíes decrease this figure in the third studied period compared to the weeks of confinement, which is curious since, in the case of María, the appearance of brands in her publications increased exponentially during this period.

As mentioned above, besides those posts in which their advertising content is indicated, there are many other posts in which it is practically impossible to recognize if it is an advertising action, a gift from the brand, or a purchase made by the influencer who has decided to tag the brand. In this case, they have been categorized as undetermined posts.

Chart 9.

Total undetermined posts with brands.



Source: Own elaboration

Also immersed in this type of publication are those in which the influencers show and tag products of their own brands, such as the case of It's Lava, by Sara Baceiredo, or the different capsule collections that they launch with brands already on the market, like Dulceida's collection for Sephora.

As has already been mentioned in the analysis of the publications in which brands appear, Sara Baceiredo and Alexandra Pereira used to tag the vast majority of products and establishments that appeared in their posts in the months before the pandemic, contrary to what happened with Mery Turiel, Dulceida, or Lucía Bárcena.

In the case of Alexandra Pereira, the decrease in posts without brands is clearly offset by the increase in posts with properly tagged advertising and the increase, in turn, in posts of a personal nature that do not include brands. It also stands out that, being the most influential profile, Dulceida is one of the influencers with the fewest brands mentioned without specifying the origin of the products because, crossing the data with the chart in figure 15, in which the number of publications in which advertising is correctly tagged is analyzed, it can be seen that, without the need to tag all the products used, Dulceida's fashion and lifestyle continue to be influential by themselves.

It should also be noted that there is involvement on the part of the influencer with her audiences in which she generates responses to comments with doubts about brands and products that appear in the different posts. On the other hand, the increase in publications with brands without determining whether or not they are advertising that Mery Turiel's profile experiences during the period studied in April and May 2020, is mainly due to the initiative she launched to show products of different Spanish fashion brands during the weeks of confinement. These publications had products from various Spanish firms but did not mention what type of collaboration existed between them.

In the analysis of this factor, there are also cases of advertising placement since Méndiz already warned in (2007) and has been so over the years, "advertisers will progressively reduce their budgets in the traditional advertising account. And as a consequence, agencies are going to direct their creativity and communication strategies towards other fields."

In this way, especially in January and February 2020, publications were made in which brands that appeared in the post were "casually" tagged or mentioned, without specifying in most cases that it was an advertising action. Although product placement is still present in marketing with influencers, the cases in which advertising with the brand is not signaled have been considerably reduced since the entry into force on January 1st, 2021, of the new Law of Self-control in marketing with influencers.

Besides the aforementioned, during this analysis, different occasions have been detected in which the collaborations of the influencers with certain brands coincided in the type of content, the information attached and offered in the post and the time in which the collaboration was published.

This fact is because numerous brands launch advertising campaigns through different influencers, which generate quite similar publications in the profiles of different prescribers in the same period. In the periods of analysis of this research, it is worth highlighting the cases of campaigns for:

Guerrero-Navarro, D., Cristófol-Rodríguez, C., & Gutiérrez-Ortega, P.
The evolution of relationship between fashion brands and spanish influencers in the
aftermath of the pandemic

Table 3.
Summary of brands' campaigns

Brand	Influencers	Date	Image	Action
Isdin	María Fdez. Rubies; Sara Baceiredo	May 2020	Look with the product, detailed image of products and more accessories (D/MFR)	Brand tagged, brand mentioned in the text, hashtag #ad, #GANASdesol (D/MFR)
Louis Vuitton (Louissette)	Dulceida (D); María Fdez. Rubies (MFR); Lucía Bárcena	January and February 2021	Close-up carrying product (D/MFR), Still Life (LB)	Brand tagged, brand and product mentioned in text (D/MFR/LB) #ad (MFR), #SuppliedbyLouisVuitton (LB) #supplied (D)
Bicis Clásicas	Sara Baceiredo (SB); Mery Turiel (MT)	May 2020	Look with the product (SB/MT)	Giveaway (SB/MT), brand tagged (MT), mention in the photo caption, following of brand for the giveaway (SB/MT).
Pull & Bear	Sara Baceiredo (SB); Mery Turiel (MT)	February 2020	Look with the product (SB/MT)	Brand tagged, mentioned in text (SB/MT), #ad #pullandbearcommunity (MT).
Perfect Moment Sport / Baqueira	Alexandra Pereira (AP), María Fdez Rubies (MFR), Lucía Bárcena (LB)	January 2020	Look with the product (AP/MFR/LB) and location (MFR/LB)	Brand tagged, location (AP/MFR/LB); place tag and place mentioned in text (MFR/LB), #espirtubaqueira (MFR).
Estée Lauder	Alexandra Pereira (AP), María Fdez Rubies (MFR)	February 2021	Look with the product (AP/MFR), Still Life (MFR), product close-up (AP)	Brand tagged in image, brand mentioned in text, #advancednightrepair #esteepartner #GenerationANR #AD (AP/MFR)

Source: Own elaboration

Besides those mentioned above, there are other collaborations of the influencers analyzed in this research that coincide in advertising campaigns of the same fashion and beauty brands. However, the publications made for these brands or the type of content that exists in them do not always coincide in time.

4.2. Results of the in-depth interviews

After obtaining the answer from the influencers to the questions that were previously raised to find out the relationship that prescribers establish with fashion and beauty brands and how this relationship has evolved since the arrival of the pandemic, it can be specified that, although the number of contracts has decreased, just as the time for campaigns and collaboration agreements has been reduced in all these previous months, a slight increase in these aspects is currently beginning to take place. On the other hand, it is confirmed that the relationship between influencers and brands is stronger and closer.

The influencers agree that their work has been affected by the arrival of the pandemic since fashion and beauty brands were forced to reduce expenses and budgets, so agency work was quite affected and the type of content changed towards a more useful one influenced by the new format trends offered by social networks, such as Instagram reels or Tik Tok videos. However, they affirm that the pandemic, especially during the weeks of confinement, has allowed many of them to be able to create more content and, by increasing the general audience on social networks, they have experienced an increase in followers, so they could make a positive balance of the situation.

On the other hand, the relationship they establish with brands has also undergone some changes: they no longer arise as quickly or as easily as in the pre-pandemic period but rather they usually start with giftings (gifts from brands) that become specific actions or short campaigns due to the current situation of uncertainty.

At this point, it is striking how there are two absolutely contrary versions among the influencers themselves, as some tell how long-term contracts have drastically decreased, and others, on the contrary, narrate from their experience how brands seek a more extensive working relationship than before the pandemic. What they all agree on is that brands prefer emotional content, more inspiring and human.

The relationship between both agents has become closer due to the difficulties of the situation: both influencers and brands are rowing in the same direction and this has made them unite even more according to the testimonies of the insiders.

As for the strategies and trends that have changed with the arrival of the pandemic, they speak of fewer face-to-face events being held, the figure reducing by almost 90% according to the testimonies collected, and those that are exceptionally held have a much smaller capacity that is limited to the influencers closest to the brand and are usually not paid, something that also happens with brand trips. The same happens with campaign strategies: the prescribers tell how they have noticed a preference on the part of the brands for influencers with whom they had previously worked and with whom they maintain a stable relationship.

However, there is one fact that they all agree on, and it is in the new trend of online events and presentations because besides being well received by influencers and their audiences, they are useful, entertaining, fast, and, in general, require a lower investment than face-to-face events.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Once the results obtained from the research techniques have been exposed and analyzed, various conclusions can be found.

The arrival of the pandemic has affected the work of fashion and beauty influencers because, during confinement, they experienced an increase in their audiences, the generated engagement, and works with brands but they have also experienced a reduction in the number of work proposals by the brands and there have been changes in the requirements and duration of the campaigns.

Currently, both agents face situations of uncertainty that cause brands to reduce their advertising budgets and investments, which leads them to opt for more specific actions with a smaller number of profiles by choosing influencers with whom they already have a stable working relationship.

On the contrary, on the dates after the months of confinement, specifically in January and February 2021, the period covered by the study of this research, the data that had generally increased during the weeks of quarantine also decreased.

All this confirms our first objective, that the influencers specialized in fashion and beauty have changed their way of working due to the pandemic.

About the content published in the most influential profiles in the sector, it can be seen how there is an increase in publications of a personal nature during the weeks of confinement, despite also experiencing growth in those publications in which content generated for brands appears. In general, the number of publications increases, and the new formats offered by the platforms are experimented with.

Furthermore, the contents are adapted to a single indoor scenario in the weeks of quarantine. This union of data confirms our second objective: Fashion and beauty influencers have been forced to modify the type of content they share on their Instagram profiles due to the pandemic.

Regarding fashion and beauty brands, the prescribers agree on an increase in the quality of the content required by the campaigns since they demand more emotional, organic, and useful publications for the viewer, which connect better with the public.

Despite this, the relationships between influencers and brands are reinforced since they have developed an empathetic relationship in a bidirectional way that allows them to go in the same direction despite the changes. Bearing all this in mind, despite changes in working conditions between influencers and brands, the relationship remains generally stable and in continuity, as confirmed by the testimonies of the interviewees.

Finally, following the new self-control regulations and code of conduct for influencers, its entry into force on January 1st, 2021, must be taken into account, so it is understood that during confinement they were not legally obliged to indicate those brands' appearances that were specifically advertising.

Despite this, and in general, with a few exceptions, there has been an increase in publications marked as advertising, during the weeks of confinement and in the post-confinement period studied, although the greatest growth taking into account this factor has been in those posts in which tagged or mentioned brands appear but is not determined if it is advertising content, therefore, the fourth proposed objective is neither confirmed nor refuted, the influencers have not complied with the new regulations of self-control and code of conduct during the months of confinement during the pandemic.

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