

Influencer marketing, visual attention and engagement on Instagram: The Westwing Italia case

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Abstract

Westwing Group is a home and living company operating exclusively online. The Italian branch has recently collaborated with three Italian influencers to promote its private label furniture on Instagram. Nevertheless, unlike clothes or jewellery, furniture is not “for personal use”. Thus, a three-steps experiment has been envisaged in order to verify whether digital influencer marketing is an effective promotional tool for Westwing Italia, able to engage the users and to direct their attention to the promoted products without generating confusion in the users. To do so, a sample has been exposed to twelve images selected from Westwing Italia’s Instagram account, each of which belonging to one of the following categories: inspirational images, ‘shoppable’ inspirational images, ‘shoppable’ images and images featuring influencers.

In the first step, the participants were asked to scroll through the images, simulating the usage of Instagram, to investigate if the images featuring influencers registered a higher engagement rate than the other categories. In the second step, the participants were exposed to the images while being monitored with an eye-tracking system, to investigate which element captured their visual attention. Moreover, the sample was also asked to rate the likeableness of each image. In the third step, participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire asking them to rate the likeableness of each image and if they believed it had promotional purposes.

Overall, images featuring influencers performed poorly compared to the other images; they registered the lowest engagement rate, as well as the lowest likeableness rate. The influencers catalysed the participants’ visual attention, who then did not look at the products promoted. Again, the participants could not tell what was being advertised in the images, even though the presence of influencers made clear they were advertisement.

Thus, digital influencer marketing has proven to be unsuitable for Westwing Italia, which should instead leverage ‘shoppable’ inspirational images – appreciated by the users – to lead the users further in the purchasing process, generating sales through its Instagram profile.

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1. Introduction

The advent of social media has disrupted the advertising industry, introducing a brand-new array of channels and tools marketers can use in order to directly promote products and services to the target audience. Such digital environments are characterised by a positive engagement rate significantly higher than that of traditional advertising channels, thus facilitating the trust-building process at the basis of any loyal relationship between a customer and a brand (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

A practice more and more used by digital marketers in an array of fields is that of digital influencer marketing, which leverages the strong relationship between influencers – i.e. those people with a large number of engaged followers on social media – and their audience in order to promote products and services, bypassing the consumers' developed resistance to traditional advertisement thanks to the involvement of such digital personalities (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Backaler, 2018). However, given the novelty and the fast, ongoing changes that characterise both social media and the digital influencer marketing phenomenon, little research on the aforementioned topics – especially on digital influencer marketing – has been made so far, let alone empirical research (Glucksman, 2017; Backaler, 2018).

This master thesis addresses the issue of influencer marketing on Instagram, in an attempt to test whether influencer marketing campaigns are effective promotional tools even for those brands which do not produce products strictly related to an individual's use, such as clothes or fashion accessories. In particular, it will be taken into analysis Westwing Italia's Instagram profile. In fact, the interior design and home décor company, a 100% digital platform selling both items from partner brands and private label products, has recently collaborated with Italian digital influencers to promote items from the brand's own collection. However, given the nature of the products advertised, doubts on the actual promotional purposes might arise in the users. Furthermore, researches have proved that posts on social media picturing faces and/or human figures attract more the users' attention and record a higher level of engagement and likeableness with respect to other

kinds of images (Bakhshi, Shamma & Gilbert, 2014; Bakar, Desa & Mustafa, 2015); however, no study has addressed the particular case of influencer marketing Instagram posts so far.

Therefore, this thesis makes use of different tools and techniques to empirically investigate the aforementioned issues. To do so, a three-steps experiment has been conceived, in which the sample will be exposed to twelve pictures selected from Westwing Italia's Instagram feed. First, the participants will be asked to engage with the pictures in an environment simulating Instagram to investigate the engagement level of the different stimuli. Then, their visual attention will be analysed by means of an eye-tracking system; information on the stimuli's likeableness will also be collected. To conclude, the sample will be asked to answer to a questionnaire; the results will offer insights on the participants' advertisement perception, as well as information on the pictures' likeableness.

After outlining the problem definition, the research questions, the purpose and the motivation underneath this master thesis, its theoretical background is set. First of all, the main features of social media marketing are introduced. Then, a literature review on the milestones of influencer marketing and on its evolution from social to digital phenomenon is presented, as well as underlining the differences between influencer marketing and traditional marketing and characterising the digital influencers. Thereafter, key facts and figures on Instagram are introduced. Subsequently, the theoretical background investigates the relationship between visual attention and eye movements, and the use of eye-tracking systems to detect visual attention. Next, a company overview on Westwing and on its Instagram strategy is provided. After that, the methodology of the empirical part of the thesis is provided, offering as well further details on the stimuli selection, on the sample composition and on the structure of the experiment. Subsequently, the results of the three stages of the experiment are presented and commented. Moreover, possible relations between the different steps and managerial implications are discussed. To conclude, a summary of the findings as well as suggestions for further research are provided.

2. Problem definition

When it comes to digital marketing, Instagram is one of the most important tools which can be used in order to convert users into customers. When it was first launched in 2010, the visual social media did not envisage marketing features that companies could use in order to better reach their customers. However, with the introduction of a series of new business tools in 2016, which allowed company profiles to sponsor posts, create advertising campaigns and track the activities of their followers among the other things (Perez, 2016), Instagram has become a fundamental part of the digital marketing strategy of brands worldwide. Nowadays, Instagram counts over 25 million business profiles, including the accounts of 90% of the top 100 worldwide brands, with over 200 million users visiting at least one business profile per day (Clarke, 2018).

A growing niche within Instagram marketing is represented by influencer marketing. In order to promote their products and services, brands have started to include in their digital marketing strategy digital influencers, i.e. those individuals counting a wide number of followers on social media, that allow to effectively advertise products by leveraging the electronic word-of-mouth and the relationship of trust between the influencer and her followers. In short, the influencer is asked upon payment to include a certain product in her content, explaining its benefits to her audience and addressing her followers to the sales channels, often supplying ad hoc discount codes the brand has created specifically for the influencer herself to boost sales. Depending on the number of followers of the influencer and on the number of posts or Instagram stories containing the advertised product published, the pay of the influencer will change (Backaler, 2018). The Instagram influencer market is a billion-dollar business whose figures are expected to more than double in 2019 (Mediakix, n.d.), making it a relevant and interesting market both for marketers and for scholars. Nevertheless, given the novelty of the channel, the fast changes that characterise the digital environment and the specific niche taken into consideration, little research has been carried out on influencer marketing (Glucksman, 2017; Backaler, 2018), and there are no records of academic papers addressing Instagram and influencer marketing together. Thus, companies are spending over 5.5 billion US\$ in

Instagram influencer marketing each year (InfluencerDB, n.d.) without having theoretical-based proofs of the effectiveness of Instagram influencer marketing campaigns.

Nevertheless, nowadays numerous companies include influencer marketing campaigns in their digital marketing strategy. Founded in 2011, Westwing is one of the biggest home and living e-commerce platforms, operating in 11 different countries in Europe. Each of the 11 branches owns its own Instagram account, where it shares original content and inspirational pictures to positively engage with the customers of the brand. Recently, Westwing Italia (@westwing.it) has collaborated with famous Italian influencers in order to promote the brand, sharing on its profile pictures of the influencers posing in their newly-furnished Westwing rooms. Instagram is an essential channel within the brand's digital marketing strategy; however, given the nature of the products promoted, the main question is whether the presence of a human figure in the promotional picture confuses the user, or if instead the purpose of the advertisement is clear despite the products advertised not being for personal use.

2.1 Research questions

Starting from the problem definition previously outlined, this master thesis aims at answering the following research questions:

RQ1: Is influencer marketing on Instagram actually an effective promotional tool for Westwing Italia, capable of engaging the users and of directing their visual attention to the promoted products without generating confusion on the purpose of the promotional image?

RQ2: Do pictures including influencers register a higher level of engagement than those not including human figures?

RQ3: Are pictures including influencers considered more likeable than those not including human figures by users?

2.2 Purpose and delimitation

The purpose of this research is to test whether Instagram influencer marketing is an effective tool when it comes to promote interior design and decor items – products not directly related to a person –, or whether instead the presence of human figures – specifically of influencers – confuses the user on the actual purpose of the advertised post, as influencers usually promote products “for personal use” such as clothes or beauty products, to make a few examples. In particular, to answer the research questions the empirical research will use content collected on the Instagram page of Westwing Italia, a branch of Westwing Group, a giant of the digital home and decor industry. Such choice has been taken because, being Westwing an online-based business, its natural channel of communication with its target is the digital environment, particularly social media and specifically Instagram, as visual communication is a fundamental asset for interior design companies, which through images can communicate feelings and concepts more easily than with words (Lee, Harada & Stappers, 2002). To conduct the experiment different tools will be used, namely an eye-tracking system, a simulated Instagram feed and a questionnaire.

Since the research will be conducted on a single company dealing with specific goods, i.e. interior design and decor items, the results might not conceivably be relevant to companies operating in different industries; nevertheless, this master thesis aims at testing the effectiveness of an influencer marketing strategy for a company producing items not strictly “for personal use”, in the aforementioned meaning of the expression, thus the results might be of interest for companies acting in similar contexts. Moreover, given the narrow scope of this master thesis, both when defining the theoretical background and when carrying out the experimental part of the study, the research has been limited to influencer marketing on Instagram, without considering influencer marketing on different channels such as Facebook or YouTube. This is because, as stated before, for a home and decor company visual communication is an essential part of its strategy, and Instagram is the social media that best fit with such purpose.

2.3 Motivation

The motivation behind this master thesis lies in a strong interest towards influencer marketing, an approach which is disrupting the traditional forms of advertising by leveraging electronic word-of-mouth to reach the target audience and nudge it to purchase a product. That of influencers is a Millennials' phenomenon older generations struggle to understand. Nevertheless, the rise and establishment of social media gurus have led to the generation of a multibillion-dollar market expected to grow even more in the next years, in spite of the lack of understanding surrounding this world.

Again, the motivation behind this thesis equally originates from a strong passion towards the interior design industry, a field which has rewarded those companies who have embraced the digital revolution, evolving and adapting to the new digital environment. Specifically, Westwing Group is of particular interest within this framework, as the home and living company is digital in nature and would not exist otherwise. Westwing is a giant in the online home and decor industry; the mostly-female team brings to its target audience high-quality products at competitive prices, disrupting an industry characterized by a high expenditure for design items, allowing everyone to turn a house into a home with a fair investment of money, democratising interior design pieces otherwise pertaining to the élites.

A common ground between the aforementioned topics has been individuated in Westwing Italia's digital marketing strategy, specifically its Instagram influencer marketing campaign featuring prominent Italian influencers and actresses such as Chiara Ferragni, Veronica Ferraro and Queralt Badalamenti. In 2018, the company has collaborated with the aforementioned influencers in order to promote some of its private label products, re-furnishing the influencers' houses and sharing pictures of them enjoying the new design of their rooms. However, such influencers have no connection whatsoever with the home and decor industry, since they are part of the fashion and acting industries. The motivation at the basis of this research is therefore fruit of the observed dissonance between the featured influencers' background and the promoted products.

Since the final targets of any marketing strategy are the customers themselves, it has been decided to design an empirical research in order to investigate whether the aforementioned gap between influencers' background and advertised products might generate in the users confusion on what is actually being promoted. Hence, by verifying by means of different tools which elements of a promotional image attract a user's visual attention, it will be possible to offer interesting insights for further developments of Instagram influencer marketing strategies.

3. Theoretical background

Given the novelty of the digital influencer marketing practice, very little academic research has addressed the issue so far, conversely widely debated by media, especially online. The following chapter is an attempt to delineate the theoretical framework surrounding the topic, first briefly introducing the comprehensive discipline of social media marketing and then covering the evolution of the concept of influencer marketing over time, the definition of influencer and of influencer marketing, the main differences between influencer marketing and traditional marketing, the success factors at the basis of an influencer's rise to fame and the identification of different influencer categories, addressing briefly also the concept of eWOM, i.e. digital word-of-mouth.

Since this master thesis focuses on social media influencers - particularly Instagram influencers -, the main facts and figures related to Instagram are then discussed. However, even in this case the scholarly research is lacking. Nevertheless, relevant studies for the purposes of this master thesis are presented. To conclude, a brief excursus on eye-tracking is presented.

3.1 Setting the framework: social media marketing

Social media are “activities, practices, and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media” (Safko & Brake, 2009, p.6) presenting all the attributes of Web 2.0, namely participation, sharing of knowledge, fostering of user-generated content and collaboration (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Web 2.0 is the user-centred World Wide Web, the outcome of a series of technological innovations which have lowered the cost of content creation and interaction between users worldwide (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro, 2012). Such innovations have changed online communication, shifting it from a one-to-many approach – typically, from an institution to the mass – to a many-to-many approach, establishing a social media dialogue (Berthon *et al.*, 2012).

Of course, such democratization of communication has had an impact on corporate communication as well, since users online will keep on speaking about their experiences with different brands; thus, it is essential for a company to join the online discourse in order to create a relationship with (potential) customers (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). In fact, the high level of engagement and involvement of the users make social media a strategic channel for the increasement of brand awareness, brand loyalty and brand recognition, as it has been proved that users are more likely to purchase or recommend a company's products or services if they have engaged with the company on social media (Gunelius, 2011; Jackson, 2011). Moreover, social media have two strategic characteristics which make them powerful marketing tools, i.e. they "are highly accessible (easy to get to) and scalable (can be used to reach large numbers)" (Berthon *et al.*, 2012, p. 263).

Since social media marketing differs from traditional marketing, ad hoc strategies and tools need to be implemented in order to build an effective social media strategy. Different studies have highlighted the importance for companies to maintain a dynamic social presence online by posting frequent updates and by including incentives and activities which engage the users and keep them involved with the brand in order to increase brand loyalty (Ling, Beenen, Ludford, Wang, Chang, Cosley, Frankowski, Terveen, Rashid, Resnick & Kraut, 2005; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Other than picking the right social media depending on the goal and target audience, the online social presence of a company needs to fit the already existing corporate image, ensuring an alignment of the activities run on the different channels in order to communicate an univocal, unambiguous message (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

To help companies build their presence online, Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) have individuated a framework of seven social media functions companies need to master in order to use social media at their best, namely 'identity', 'presence', 'relationships', 'reputation', 'groups', 'conversations' and 'sharing' (fig. 3.1, p. 16).

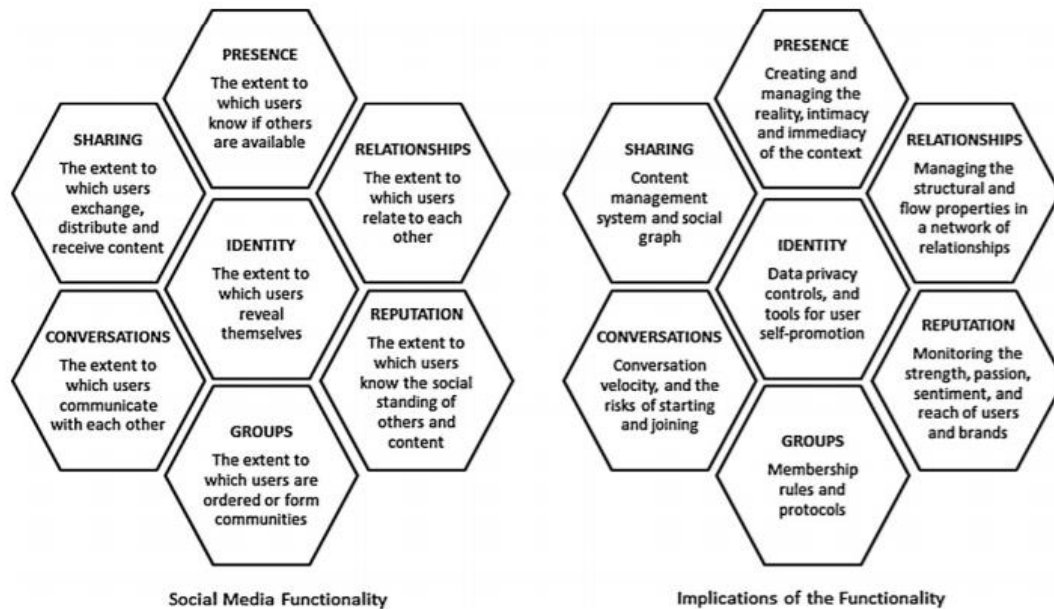


Fig. 3.1: The honeycomb of social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 243)

By acknowledging the seven building blocks of social media, companies can then build effective strategies to reach, monitor and understand the behaviour of their online target audiences (Kietzmann et al., 2011). One of the strategies a company can implement in order to reach its audience and increase its sales is to develop a social media influencer marketing campaign.

3.2 Introducing influencer marketing

In the last years, the advent of social media has disrupted the marketing industry. Traditional marketing campaigns have been flanked – if not replaced – by digital marketing campaigns, which aim at reaching marketing objectives by using digital technologies and media (Chaffrey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). In this framework, the figure of the social media influencer has gained more and more importance, becoming a key element of any successful digital marketing campaign. Companies have started to leverage the relationship of trust between influencers and their followers in order to promote their products, profiting from the digital word-of-mouth, proven to be an effective tool for customer acquisition (Kumar, Petersen & Leone, 2007). However, digital influencer marketing is a discipline still in its early stages; despite being widely addressed by contemporary media, due to

its fast-paced evolution the participant lacks best practices and a thorough academic background (Glucksman, 2017; Backaler, 2018).

3.2.1 The social roots of influencer marketing

As of now, few researchers have tackled the digital influencer marketing issue. Nevertheless, even though influencer marketing is nowadays associated mainly with online mavens, i.e. individuals who are recognized as experts in a specific field and who have gained a large number of followers thanks to this expertise, such phenomenon is not as new as one could believe. In fact, influence and the power mechanisms underneath it have always fascinated the academic environment. Already in 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld elaborated the two-step flow of communication model, according to which audiences do not react to media messages directly. Rather, their response is mediated by interpersonal communication with members of their social environment – the influencers –, proven to have more influence on a person's decision-making process than the actual information communicated by media.

In his research on patterns of influence, instead, Merton (1968) found out that a person's social status was not enough to secure her influence over others; furthermore, the scholar distinguished between 'local influentials' and 'cosmopolitan influentials'. The first were those people who built their reputation within precise geographical boundaries – in the case of Merton's research, the small town of Rovere –, whereas the latter group was composed by people coming from the outside, thus establishing their name within the town thanks to their knowledge of the outside and larger vision of the world. 'Locals' gained their influence leveraging on their network of acquaintances and had an exhaustive knowledge of Rovere's issues, whereas 'cosmopolitans' built their influential status somewhere else and simply brought it to Rovere. Translating Merton's findings to influencer marketing, depending on their goal companies should decide whether to collaborate with local or global influencers.

Bandura and Walters (1977) developed instead the social learning theory by starting from the axiom that men learn from observation and behave according to the examples they witness, thus avoiding the trial and error process they would incur in if there were no models they could look up to. “Most of the behaviours that people display are learned [...] through the influence of example” (Bandura & Walters, 1977, p. 5); thus, shifting the fundamentals of the social learning theory to purchase behaviour and influencer marketing, it is clear how such marketing approach aims at influencing the target audience’s behaviour by offering ready-made examples of what it should consume, relieving it from the time-consuming trial and error process it should otherwise undergo before purchasing a certain type of product.

3.2.2 Before digital influencers: market mavens and opinion leaders

In their 1987 study, Feick and Price individuated the so-called ‘market mavens’, i.e. “individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information” (Feick & Price, 1987, p. 85), thus shaping and influencing the average customers’ buying decisions. Furthermore, the scholars highlighted the importance for managers to involve market mavens in the promotional communication of new products to improve initial sales by selling to a wider number of early adopters thanks to the information spread by market mavens (Feick & Price, 1987).

In 1990, Chan and Misra individuated the characteristics of the opinion leaders, i.e. those people who help in promote to the general public new products and ideas. In particular, the scholars found a reasonable relationship between opinion leadership and the concept of ‘public individuation’ by Maslach, Stapp and Santee (1985), namely the feeling of being different from others that leads one to act differently and, ultimately, to influence the people around her by spreading information through word-of-mouth (Chan & Misra, 1990). The scholars individuated as well other features exhibited by opinion leaders, such as extensive knowledge of a certain product category and confident, open-minded personality; for these reasons, opinion leaders are of great importance for

advertisers, who could leverage on them to market their products (Chan & Misra, 1990). Today's influencers can therefore be considered the digital transposition of opinion leaders, defined by Midgley and Dowling (1978) as those individuals familiar and favourably predisposed towards a product and willing to share such favourable information with others, just like digital influencers share with their followers opinions on the products they review.

Bringing the research on opinion leadership further, Weimann (1991) developed the 'strength of personality scale' to identify opinion leaders. Starting from Katz's (1957) original definition of opinion leader, i.e. an individual embodying certain values, competent and strategically located within her social network, Weimann (1991) suggested there are some differences between opinion leaders and influentials, the most important being the ratio underneath: while the concept of 'opinion leader' is built on a leader-follower dichotomous relationship, the concept of 'influential' is instead based on a continuum. Thus, recommendations from modern influencers are effective because no disparity is felt between sender and receiver, who find themselves on the same level.

3.2.3 Defining digital influencer marketing

In 2008, Brown and Hayes compiled a vademecum illustrating the benefits of influencer marketing for companies. At that time, social networks were still in an embryonic stage. Despite acknowledging the potential of such channels for influencer marketing, the main focus of the scholars was not digital influencer marketing. Rather, Brown and Hayes (2008) individuated the steps a company needed to follow to implement a successful influencer marketing strategy, defining an influencer as "a third-party who significantly shapes the customer's purchasing decision, but may ever be accountable for it" (p. 50), regardless of the environment she operates in.

More recently, instead, Backaler (2018) aims at giving a thorough overview of digital influencer marketing, a participant yet lacking established working mechanisms and industry best practices given its novelty. Nonetheless, the scholar deliberately decides not to outline a thoroughly definition of 'influencer marketing' due to the lack of a shared terminology within the industry, confining

himself to define influencers as those individuals “(i) known for something among a target community and (ii) able to influence the actions of target-community members” (Backaler, 2018, p. 33). Such interpretation is in line with the definition adopted by the World of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA), according to which an influencer is “a person who has a greater than average reach or impact through word-of-mouth in a relevant marketplace” (2017, p. 2). Unlike Backaler, who decides not to deal with the issue, Brown and Hayes (2008) state that the aim of influencer marketing is to influence the decision-making process in order to overcome the traditional sales obstacles, making it easier to close a deal thanks to the intermediation of the influencer. The WOMMA defines instead influencer marketing as “... when a marketer identifies, seeks out, and engages with influencers in support of a business objective.” (2017, p. 2).

3.2.4 Differences between influencer marketing and traditional marketing

Given its characteristics, influencer marketing adopts different strategies than traditional marketing in order to reach the target consumers, proven to be more effective when it comes to turn a user into a purchaser. The traditional interruption marketing aims at attracting the viewers’ attention through disruptive ads that interfere with their ongoing activities in the hope of rooting in their subconscious and ultimately driving them to act by i.e. purchasing the advertised product. However, as noted by Godin (1999), such approach operates in a vicious circle of lacks affecting the viewers, namely of time, of attention and of money, therefore its effectiveness is not guaranteed, as the average viewer does not have the time, attention or money to develop an interest towards the advertised product. On the contrary, influencer marketing smoothly blends in with other contents and projects carried out by the influencer, leveraging the effectiveness of “word-of-mouth recommendations from trusted peers” (Backaler, 2018, p. 9) to overcome the aforementioned vicious circle individuated by Godin (1999), as the viewer is used to include the fruition of the influencer’s content in her everyday routine.

Table 3.1: Influencer marketing vs traditional marketing (Author's elaboration)

<i>Influencer marketing</i>	<i>Traditional marketing</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated in the user's daily routine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive ads interfere with the user's activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverages eWOM from trusted peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverages on repetitions of the message
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets in-scope audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User's attention hard to get
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches a vast audience quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches a restrained audience

Previously, even Brown and Hayes (2008) individuated in influencer marketing the answer to the problems of traditional marketing, based on outdated guidelines which fail in engaging and involving the consumers. According to the scholars, it is not enough anymore to keep on hammering the target audience with promotional messages. Furthermore, marketers should accept the fact that the modern consumer is reluctant and distrustful towards traditional advertising. At the time the authors were writing, Web 2.0, i.e. the Internet of social media and user-generated-content, was starting to bloom; however, what was happening was that the traditional marketing tools were simply applied to this new environment, without developing ad hoc strategies and tools to leverage the specific features of the new Internet. However, a new approach was ready to disrupt the traditional marketing industry: influencer marketing (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

Influencer marketing has proven to be effective because it is based on suggestions coming from trusted peers (Solis, 2017; Backaler, 2018). Influencer marketing has digitized word-of-mouth recommendations, making them available to a larger audience thanks to the new technologies and digital channels, which have contributed in overcoming the barriers would-be offline influencers had to face in the past, such as gaining access to the traditional media which presented high barriers to entry, learning new skills in order to create compelling content and actually producing the content itself – actions that required an expertise of the industry and a great amount of resources, both in terms of time and in terms of money (Backaler, 2018). Nowadays, instead, “individuals have access

to broader audiences via social media and they can leverage more accessible technology and talent resources to produce high-quality, impactful content to fuel audience growth and drive engagement over time” (Backaler, 2018, p. 16). Table 3.1 (p. 21) summarises the main differences between influencer marketing and traditional marketing presented in this section.

3.2.5 Characterising digital influencers

Nevertheless, despite the spread of new technologies facilitating the connection with large crowds worldwide and the creation of user-generated-content, becoming a digital influencer is not as easy as it sounds. Backaler (2018) individuates the “influencer ABCCs” (p. 28), i.e. a framework comprising the key elements an influencer needs to master in order to be successful in her niche. The aforementioned factors are ‘authenticity’, ‘brand fit’, ‘community’ and ‘content’. By balancing them in a unique and creative way, influencers are able to build a solid follow who will hang on their every word, engaging with the account’s content – which ultimately includes also sponsored collaboration with brands. For this reason, the scholar underlines the importance for a brand to collaborate with influencers whose ABCCs fit with the company’s values and target, to leverage the great influence social media gurus have on their followers in order to effectively promote its products to a vast, in-target audience.

In order to be categorized as influencer, one needs to be acknowledged by a certain target audience, on whom one exercises a certain degree of influence. Backaler (2018) identifies three different categories of digital influencers, depending on the width of their follow, namely ‘celebrity influencers’, ‘category influencers’ and ‘micro influencers’. ‘Celebrity influencers’ comprise traditional personalities such as actors or athletes, but also ‘category influencers’ who gained fame thanks to their activity online. ‘Category influencers’ are those individuals who gain a niche-specific follow thanks to their competence in a specific participant such as make-up or fashion, considered a reliable source of information on the topic by their community. ‘Micro influencers’ are enthusiasts of a certain topic who do not necessarily have a great follow online, but who nonetheless are considered experts by their inner circle. The width of their number of followers is not the only way

to categorise influencers; Gladwell (2000) individuates three main categories of influencers depending on their attitude, namely connectors, mavens and salesmen. Connectors are those influencers who boast an extremely large network, therefore are extremely powerful when it comes to word-of-mouth. Mavens are instead knowledgeable people who share insights and information with their followers. Last but not least, salesmen are charismatic persuaders with great negotiation skills, whose influence comes from their audience's subconscious tendency to imitate their behaviours. Therefore, connectors, mavens and salesmen are respectively responsible for the generation, communication and adoption of messages (Gladwell, 2000; Brown & Hayes, 2008).

Nonetheless, companies need to be careful when implementing an influencer marketing campaign, making sure to collaborate with professionals. In fact, even though influencer marketing has been shown to enhance electronic word-of-mouth as well as the consumers' positive brand attitudes and purchase intentions, reaching a huge number of potential customers in a very short period of time thanks to the employment of new technologies and channels, it is important that the influencers the brand collaborates with are clear concerning the relationship with the company, signalling that a post is fruit of a paid collaboration by including hashtags such as #sponsored or #ad to make sure that users are aware that they are engaging with a paid brand endorsement (Evans, Phua, Lim & Jun, 2017), consequently evaluating such post by means of their persuasion knowledge, i.e. that knowledge that allows customers "to recognize, analyse, interpret, evaluate and remember persuasion attempts and to select and execute coping tactics believed to be effective and appropriate" (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 3) – a knowledge which is only activated when the consumer realizes she is exposed to an advertising message. Therefore, despite it has been proved that the disclosure of product placement and sponsored posts negatively affects the consumers' brand attitude, paid influencers need to clearly signal this kind of collaborations in order to comply with the disclosure guidelines imposed by the Federal Trade Commission and to avoid charges of surreptitious advertising (Evans *et al.*, 2017).

To sum up, as of now the literature concerning influencer marketing is lacking, given the novelty of the topic and the fast changes such approach is participant to (Glucksman, 2017; Backaler, 2018). Nevertheless, it is possible to outline an essential conceptual framework of the influencer marketing phenomenon, highlighting the differences with a more traditional marketing approach and individuating the key elements that define an influencer and her role within the digital marketing environment. Furthermore, the literature has confirmed the critical importance of digital word-of-mouth within a digital influencer marketing strategy (Evans *et al.*, 2017; Solis, 2017; Backaler, 2018). Nonetheless, further research is needed in order to individuate the social working mechanisms and the best practices of influencer marketing. In particular, the academic research tends to apply already existing concepts to influencer marketing, lacking an experimental approach which could instead unveil features and processes pertaining exclusively to the participant in exam. Therefore, this master thesis attempts at partially filling such gaps by verifying whether influencer marketing is more effective than other kinds of contents when it comes to promote certain products by adopting an experimental approach.

3.3 Instagram: key facts and figures

Instagram is a visual-based social network which allows users to share pictures and videos and to connect and engage with other users, be they commoners, celebrities or brands. Since its launch in 2010, the number of 'Instagrammers' has steadily grown year after year, reaching the astonishing threshold of 1 billion monthly active users in June 2018 (Statista, 2018; Kemp, 2019; Instagram Press, 2019). With over 500 million daily active users and 400 million stories shared daily (Instagram Press, 2019), Instagram has become a powerful tools for marketers, who through the visual-based social network can reach a good percentage of the 3.26 billion users who use social media on mobile devices on a daily basis, spending on average more than 30 minutes scrolling on the social media (Instagram Press, 2017; Kemp, 2019). From 2017 to 2019, the global Instagram influencer market size is expected to more than double its value, passing from 1.07 billion US\$ in 2017 to a forecasted 2.38 billion US\$ in 2019 (Mediakix, n.d.). With a global Instagram influencer marketing spending of

5,670 million US\$ in 2018, forecasted to reach 8080 million US\$ in 2020 (InfluencerDB, n.d.), the importance of including influencers in a digital marketing strategy is undeniable.

Recently, Instagram has introduced the possibility for business profiles to upload 'shoppable posts', i.e. images on which the company can tag the products displayed with a link to a in-app page that gives basic information on the item, such as price or main characteristics, together with a 'shop now' button. Clicking on the call-to-action button, the user is redirected to the e-commerce page of the item, where she can then finalize the purchase (Keyes, 2017). The debut of such feature is of great importance for brands, as statistics show that more than 70% of Instagram users buy products and services they have seen advertised on the visual social network (Keyes, 2017; Clarke, 2018); the introduction of 'shoppable posts' aims at smoothing the purchasing process via Instagram even more (Keyes, 2017).

Despite Instagram being a global phenomenon, the scholar research on the participant is lacking on the majority of its aspects, from the whys behind its use to the way users engage with different content (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Sheldon and Bryant (2016) researched the motives of Instagram usage, individuating four factors at the basis of the use of the image-based social, i.e. 'surveillance/knowledge about others', 'documentation', 'coolness' and 'creativity'. Another study focused on the engagement of users with images displaying different contents proved instead that pictures containing a face are more engaging for the users (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014). In particular, by analysing a selection of one million images uploaded on Instagram, the scholars found out that those pictures including one or more faces had an higher impact on the users, who on average rewarded such images with 38% more likes and 32% more comments with respect to pictures which did not include any faces. Despite the demographic bias in Internet and social media usage, age and gender of the faces displayed in the pictures were proven not to have a particular effect on the level of engagement, despite common beliefs according to which images representing the faces of women and/or kids attract more the users' attention (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, the study showed that the number of faces included in the picture

did not impact on the image's engagement level either (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014). Thus, it is possible to state that "faces drive online social engagement" (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014, p. 966), a statement particularly relevant for the purpose of this master thesis which offers as well interesting inputs for further research, which might e.g. investigate the level of social engagement of different facial expressions. Such results are in line with the already established findings in neuroscience which individuated facial perception as the most advanced human visual skill, with a specific region of the brain dedicated to facial recognition (Kanwisher, McDermott & Chun, 1997; Haxby, Hoffman & Gobbini, 2000), as well as with the findings of Hershler and Hochstein (2005), who discovered that human faces 'pop-out' in composite images displaying a number of distractions and that they are detected at a higher speed with respect to other elements of the picture, despite the presence of disturbing components.

Given the enormous amount of users who use the visual social media platform every day, Instagram has become a strategic channel for the digital marketing strategy of many brands which, other than posting original content on the brand's own media channels, collaborate with famous personalities who can count on a high number of followers in order to promote their products and services (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This is because accounts with many followers are perceived as more appealing and trustworthy by users (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017); such finding is in line with the source credibility theory, of which Ohanian (1990) individuated the variables affecting the consumer's perception of the information source, namely attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise in the field of the advertised item. The involvement of celebrities for the promotion of products and services online can also be assimilated to the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) practice, which refers to the online communication of information on certain items to potential customers (Jin & Phua, 2014); different studies have proved that, to a certain extent, a successful eWOM strategy depends also on the perceived credibility of the information source (Reichelt, Sievert & Jacob, 2014; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Needless to say, nowadays category influencers are perceived as reliable information sources by their large audience; for that reason, brands have started to involve them in their digital marketing efforts.

Despite the widespread belief that Instagram eWOM is an effective strategy in order to promote products and services, little research has been made on the credibility of celebrities within social media (Spry, Pappu, & Bettina Cornwell, 2011; Jin & Phun, 2014). However, it has been proved that V.I.P.s' endorsements of products and services online are considered credible by the users (Kutthakaphan & Chokesamritpol, 2013; Spry *et al.*, 2011). Nonetheless, subsequent findings suggest that bloggers are perceived as more credible than celebrity spokespeople at the eyes of the users (Wiley, 2014; Camahort, 2016; Nouri, 2018). Such findings underline once more how important it is for a brand to include influencers and digital mavens in their marketing strategy.

In summary, all the key facts and figures push towards the inclusion of Instagram in a company's digital media strategy, leveraging on collaborate with Instagram influencers in order to reach a wider audience in a more effective way (Spry *et al.*, 2011; Kutthakaphan & Chokesamritpol, 2013; Jin & Phun, 2014; Wiley, 2014; Camahort, 2016; Nouri, 2018). Despite the existence of studies investigating the motives of Instagram usage (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), little research has been made on other aspects of the topic, although the importance of such channel for a successful digital marketing strategy has been widely proved (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). By taking as a starting point Bakhshi *et al.*' (2014) research, this master thesis aims at verifying whether Instagram users prefer images containing influencers as opposed to pictures only displaying the advertised products even if the promoted items are not strictly related to a personal use, testing such hypothesis by using content available on Westwing Italia's Instagram page.

3.4 Visual attention and eye movements

Humans have a limited information processing capacity; thus, by filtering the stimuli they are exposed to by means of their attention, they are able to process and elaborate only the relevant information; such filtering mechanism also works when it comes to visual stimuli and takes the name of visual attention (Duchowski, 2007). That of visual attention is an ever-evolving discipline that

traces back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Von Helmholtz (1925) established a link between eye movements and covert attention, i.e. an increased visual awareness towards peripheral elements despite the absence of a direct eye fixation of such elements. Covert attention is opposed to – and complements – overt attention, namely fixation selection, i.e. the focus on a specific element (Duchowski, 2007). In 1941, Gibson noted instead a correlation between visual attention and viewer's expectations of the incoming stimuli. Again, Deutsch and Deutsch (1963) suggested that attention mechanisms filter out information according to the importance it has for the viewer, only selecting that information which is relevant. Nevertheless, visual attention still has a major unsolved issue, i.e. that of 'scene integration', namely the human brain's ability to build a complete picture of a scene despite only focusing its attention on a limited number of elements; recording and visualizing viewers' eye movements allows to investigate such issue, attempting at clarifying the connection between visual attention and perception (Duchowski, 2007).

Eye movements and pattern of fixations have always been a topic much investigated by scholars in the field (Land & Tatler, 2009). Eye movements are the result of voluntary, involuntary and reflexive signals coming from different areas of the brain's cortical region. As any other primate, humans can perform five different kinds of eye movements, namely saccadic, smooth pursuit, vergence, vestibular, and physiological nystagmus movements. However, only three of such movements have been linked to visual attention, i.e. fixations, saccadic movements and smooth pursuits (Duchowski, 2007). During fixations the eye stabilizes the retina on a fixed element by performing a series of miniature eye movements that help in maintaining the retina focused on the target spot; saccades are rapid eye movements which reposition the fovea, i.e. that part of the retina of the eye where the centre of the field of vision is focused and thus visual acuity is highest, to a new spot in the visual scene, whereas smooth pursuits are those movements the eyes perform when visually tracking a moving target (Duchowski, 2007). The primary goal of eye movement analysis is thus to identify and distinguish between smooth pursuits, saccades and fixations. Fixations are linked to the viewer's desire to keep her visual attention towards a specific object, whereas smooth pursuits do the same but with objects in movement. Saccades are instead the demonstration of the viewer's desire to

shift her focus of visual attention towards a different point in the visual environment in a voluntary way. Eye-tracking systems can also record blinks, i.e. a semi-automatic rapid closing of the eyelid; however, most of the time such movements are considered as distractions for the purposes of eye-tracking analysis, thus it is necessary to modify the eye-tracker's settings in order to minimize the effect of blinks on the data recorded (Duchowski, 2007).

One of the most interesting dilemmas regarding eye movements is whether they are driven by external causes as e.g. distinct features of the surrounding environment, or if instead eye movements are driven by the viewer's internal agenda, i.e. her perceptions (Land & Tatler, 2009). Furthermore, predicting viewers' pattern of fixations – i.e. a sequence of eye fixations – is complicated, as the motivations behind eye movements vary from individual to individual and could bias the pattern if, for example, the viewer is trying to identify the objects in the image, as the eye fixations would be different from those of a viewer who has not been assigned any particular task when looking at the picture (Land & Tatler, 2009). That of eye movements is a discipline that traces back to the end of the 19th century, with the introduction of rudimental tools and techniques aiming at recording eye movements in order to investigate eye movements paths (see Wade & Tatler, 2005). However, during the course of the 20th century the attention of scholars shifted towards eye fixations (Wade & Tatler, 2005). Nevertheless, few – yet important – studies have investigated patterns of fixations (Buswell, 1935; Yarbus, 1967), contributing to revamp the contemporary academic interest towards such matter.

In particular, Yarbus' research (1967) pointed out three main concepts: first, that the two eyes follow almost identical paths, focusing on the main features of the composition; secondly, that the same viewer exposed to the same image at different times will look at it each time following very similar patterns; and thirdly, that different viewers will look at the same images with different eye movements paths, despite fixating the main elements of the picture. Especially the last finding will be relevant for the purposes of this master thesis, as by means of the eye-tracker it will be possible to investigate whether the individuals of the sample are attracted by particular elements displayed

in the pictures they will be exposed to – and whether such elements are the faces or the figures of the influencers featured in some of the selected images. In fact, the application of eye-tracking technologies in marketing allows marketers to investigate the consumers' actions and their relationship with their visual perception, bringing interesting inputs that help in further developing the consumer behaviour discipline (Duchowski, 2007). The consumer's final action, i.e. the purchasing of the product or not, is the result of a decision-making process influenced by a series of factors, both internal to the consumer and external. Such process is perceptual in nature and is composed by different stages. However, traditionally marketers are only able to measure the relation between marketing actions, i.e. the range of marketing activities implemented, and the final consumer action, both exogenous with respect to the perceptual process that actually leads the consumer to perform a certain action.

The implementation of eye-tracking technologies allows to investigate at least part of such perceptual process, namely the collection of visual information, thus offering marketers insights on how to best tailor and communicate information in order to get the consumer's attention. However, when it comes to online marketing, eye-tracking technologies have mainly been applied to web pages to investigate the so-called 'banner blindness' phenomenon (Duchowski, 2007), according to which users deliberately ignore commercial banner ads, directing their visual attention elsewhere and forgetting what such ads were about shortly after being exposed to them (Burke, Hornof, Nilsen & Gorman, 2005). Since banner blindness highlights the user's repulsion towards obvious advertisement, the involvement of digital influencers in marketing campaigns might help in soften the target audience's resistance to ads, easing the communication of the promotional message by leveraging the trust relationship between the influencer and her followers.

An interesting exception is the study by Daugherty and Hoffman (2014) which aims at investigating the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and consumer attention within social media by means of an eye-tracking system. The scholars hypothesised that the eWOM message valence and brand type would interact to influence consumer attention (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014). The

findings revealed that consumer attention is a key element for the effectiveness of electronic word-of-mouth on social media, thus companies need to take it into account when developing their digital marketing strategies leveraging eWOM, as the study has proven that consumer attention is related both to the brand classification and to the eWOM message which is being communicated (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014). Nonetheless, the study did not specifically inquire the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' visual attention.

Nowadays, scholars are still debating on what activates the eyes' saccadic movements, i.e. the frequent movements from viewpoint to viewpoint naturally carried out by the eyes multiple times per second (Land & Tatler, 2009). Buswell (1935) and Yarbus (1967) both believed that the element driving the eyes from a point to the other was that of 'interestingness' to the viewer, thus combining both the top-down and the bottom-up approaches, according to which the eyes focus on certain points because of goals internal to the viewer and that the movements are caused by properties of the image respectively (Land & Tatler, 2009). Some studies advanced the hypothesis that eye movements are driven by salient elements in the image, i.e. those points standing out from their surroundings because of their colour, shape and the like, as if a point sticks out it is more likely that it will attract the viewer's attention, who will then move her eyes towards such point (Koch & Ullman, 1985; Itti & Koch, 2000). Nevertheless, such salience-based models fail in assessing a relevant correlation between the distribution of salience and the distribution of eye fixations, as there are too many other variables affecting eye fixations, such as the natural tendency to focus on the central part of a display, to name one.

Another element affecting eye patterns is the freedom left to the viewer; in fact, depending on whether the viewer is given a task or if she is instead allowed to freely look at an image, the eye movements will differ (Land & Tatler, 2009). Nevertheless, as normally individuals look at their surroundings because they have actions to do in order to satisfy their needs or accomplish their goals, letting a viewer free of looking at a picture might not be the best option if the researcher's objective is to study the eyes' natural behaviour (Land & Tatler, 2009). In particular, Yarbus (1967)

exposed a sample to the same picture several times, requesting each time to perform a different task, and found out that the eye paths strongly differ from time to time according to the activity the viewers were asked to perform. However, not to bias the experiment included in this master thesis, it has been decided not to give any specific task to the viewers, who, both when monitored with the eye-tracker and when asked to scroll looking at the 12 selected pictures as if they were using Instagram, will be left free in order to understand which elements capture their attention and if the salient elements are represented by the human figures and the faces of the influencers – confirming Hershler and Hochstein' findings on the higher detectability of human faces in pictures (2005) – or if it is the advertised products that catch the viewers' attention. Furthermore, as one of the main reasons behind Instagram usage is 'to kill time' (Huang & Su, 2018), it can be inferred that most users spend their time on the social network without particular tasks or objectives in mind, thus leaving the sample free of viewing the pictures without being asked to perform any particular activity while being exposed to the images mirrors the natural usage of the visual social media.

3.5 Use of eye-tracking systems to detect visual attention

The development of new technologies has eased and improved the eye movements' detection activity (Land & Tatler, 2019). Eye-tracking-based studies range from psychology to linguistic to marketing; nevertheless, the common point between such researches lies in finding a correlation between eye movements and user's behaviour, individuating the cognitive and affective processes underneath. Furthermore, by recording a user's eye movements, eye-tracking technologies allow to determine which elements of a given image have attracted the user's visual attention (Barratt, Bertram & Nyström, 2018). Thus, eye-tracking systems are valuable assets for marketing research, as by understanding which elements attract more the consumers' attention marketers could develop more effective marketing campaigns. Nevertheless, few researches have investigated the correlation between visual processes and consumer behaviour – especially concerning decision-making processes – so far (Pieters & Wedel, 2008).

In order to highlight the importance of the eye-tracking theory applied to visual marketing, Pieters and Wedel (2008) individuated six pillars for the eye-tracking theory. In particular, the scholars theorised that eye movements are far from being smooth and continuous, thus enabling the possibility of measuring eye paths by means of eye-tracking systems, which would otherwise have troubles in detecting eye fixations and saccades. Moreover, Pieters and Wedel (2008) suggested that individuals are not aware of their eye movements, therefore eye-tracking technology is needed in order to determine which elements attracted an individual's visual attention. After having underlined the connection between eye movements and covert attention, i.e. a shift of the viewer's attention towards a different target object which results in an increased visual awareness towards such element despite the lack of eye movements, the scholars highlighted the importance of attention to ad processing, which is also reflected by eye movements (Pieters & Wedel, 2008).

Therefore, implementing eye-tracking technologies to visual advertising allows marketers to detect which elements attract more the consumers' attention, leveraging on them in order to build effective marketing campaigns; one of the goals of this master thesis is precisely to use an eye-tracker system in order to understand which are the elements that attract the user's attention and if such elements correspond to those actually advertised by the image. Nevertheless, Pieters and Wedel (2008) stated that "visual marketing stimuli [...] are specific types of scenes" (p. 44). According to Henderson and Hollingworth (1999), scenes are "semantically coherent (and often nameable) views of a real-world environment comprising background elements and multiple discrete objects arranged in a spatially licensed manner" (p. 244); however, while traditional visual marketing includes both pictures and textual elements, which clearly distinguish a natural scene by an advertising scene, influencer marketing implies promoting a product by smoothly inserting it in the influencer's routine, therefore the detection of sponsored products might result more complex for the consumer; the use of the eye-tracker can help in investigating such issue.

4. Company overview: Westwing Group

Westwing is a German home & living e-commerce platform founded in 2011 by Delia Fischer – former ELLE Decor editor – and her partners in order to fill the then-lack of online shops dedicated to fair-price interior design and decor items (Westwing Group, 2019b). The company has been welcomed warmly by the market and has undergone a steady growth over the years which culminated in the debut on the Frankfurt stock exchange in October 2018, raising more than 132 million € on the IPO day (Crunchbase, n.d.; Busvine, 2018). Nowadays, Westwing is present in 11 countries in Europe. With an average product price of 45€, more than 2.2 million orders shipped in 2017 and over 5.6 million products sold in 2017 (Westwing Group, 2019a), Westwing has generated a revenue of 220 million € in 2017, establishing itself as a giant of the online home and living industry.

The concept behind Westwing is to be a ‘shoppable curated interior design magazine’: both the website and the social media channels of the company act as a source of inspiration for the user, who can navigate different styles and moods to find the perfect products with which decorate her house, turning it into a lively and cosy home (Westwing Group, 2019b), in line with the company’s mission “to inspire and make every home a beautiful home” (Westwing Group, 2019a, para. 1).

Originally, Westwing Group was present in Italy under a different name. In fact, until the beginning of 2018 Westwing Italia was known as Dalani, but has ever since changed its name into ‘Westwing’, undergoing a rebranding process to align with the group and gain an international flair in line with the holder’s vision of being “the European leader in Home & Living eCommerce” (Pambianco Design, 2018; Westwing Group, 2019a, para. 2).

It is possible to categorize Westwing’s offer into two main groups, namely featured products of different home decor and lifestyle partner brands and own label and private label products. Westwing Collection is Westwing’s private label which offers the latest interior design trends at competitive prices. A further distinction can be done between the group’s two different e-

commerce platforms, Westwing and WestwingNow. The former is a subscription-based e-commerce which offers a limited selection of items grouped per style, mood or brand the user can buy at discounted prices in a short window of time – a sort of exclusive home & living club. The latter is instead a more traditional e-commerce hosting Westwing's permanent collection. WestwingNow offers a wide selection of partner brands and private label products always available to the user, generally with a low shipping time. In both cases, the assortment mirrors the latest trends in the industry, offering the consumers the latest fashion in terms of decor and interior design (WestwingNow, 2019).

Westwing's attention to fashionable, high quality products is a strong asset for the company which contributed in developing a solid base of loyal customers who make purchases either on Westwing or on WestwingNow multiple times per year. A whopping 85% of the company's sales are in fact generated by customers who visit the e-commerce on average 100 times per year (Westwing Group, 2019a).

4.1 Westwing on Instagram

Westwing Group does not have an institutional Instagram profile; such function is partially executed by Delia Fischer herself on her personal profile, @delia_westwing, where other than lifestyle content she shares the latest news about the company and the interior design world. Furthermore, from time to time Fischer hosts on her profile Q&A sessions regarding her business (Fischer, D., n.a.). Nevertheless, each of the 11 country branches of the group has its own Instagram profile targeting and engaging with the local audience. For the purposes of this master thesis, only the Italian Instagram page of Westwing – @westwing.it – will be analysed in depth.

As of February 26, 2019, @westwing.it counts over 315.000 followers and more than 5200 posts. The profile has gained followers steadily since its creation in June 2012 and has changed its username from @dalani.it in @westwing.it on February 27, 2018, following the directives of the holder to create a cohesive and international group (Pambianco Design, 2018; Westwing Italia [@westwing.it],

2019). On a weekly average, the profile gains more than 450 followers per day (Ninjalitics, 2019). With the company hashtag #MyWestwingStyle, the profile encourages its followers to engage with the brand, inviting them to share pictures of their Westwing-styled interiors. Furthermore, @westwing.it organizes from time to time contests and giveaways to engage even more with its audience, as well as regularly posting Instagram stories whose content comes from the followers to help them solve interior design problems by presenting different options the followers can choose from through Instagram stories' poll function (Westwing Italia [@westwing.it], 2019). Despite the aforementioned activities, the account presents a lower than average engagement rate, namely of 0.76%, with an average of 14 comments and 2373 likes per post (Ninjalitics, 2019). However, such result is in line with the home & décor industry's engagement level, whose benchmark is lower compared to other industries (Feehan, 2019).

@westwing.it presents four main kinds of content, i.e. inspirational pictures representing a certain room furnished following a particular interior design style (fig. 4.1, p. 37), 'shoppable' inspirational furnished rooms (fig. 4.2, p. 37), purely advertising images which make use of the 'shoppable post' feature to redirect the user to the e-commerce in order to finalize the platform (fig. 4.3, p. 37), and pictures featuring influencers and personalities with whom Westwing Italia has collaborated by e.g. re-furnishing their house or part of it (fig. 4.4, p. 37). Moreover, the account posts daily Instagram stories mainly presenting the new trends in the industry and showcasing new products.

In 2018, @westwing.it collaborated with a series of influencers in order to promote the products of the brand's private label. In particular, Westwing Italia has involved in its Instagram influencer marketing strategy Chiara Ferragni, Veronica Ferraro and Queralt Badalamenti, who have let Westwing's experts re-furnish their houses with the items of the private label's collection, posing then in pictures showing the final result of the makeover, then posted both on their personal profiles and on @westwing.it's account. This master thesis will only take into consideration the pictures featuring such influencers on @westwing.it's account.



Fig. 4.1: Example of inspirational image
(@westwing.it, Instagram, 2019)

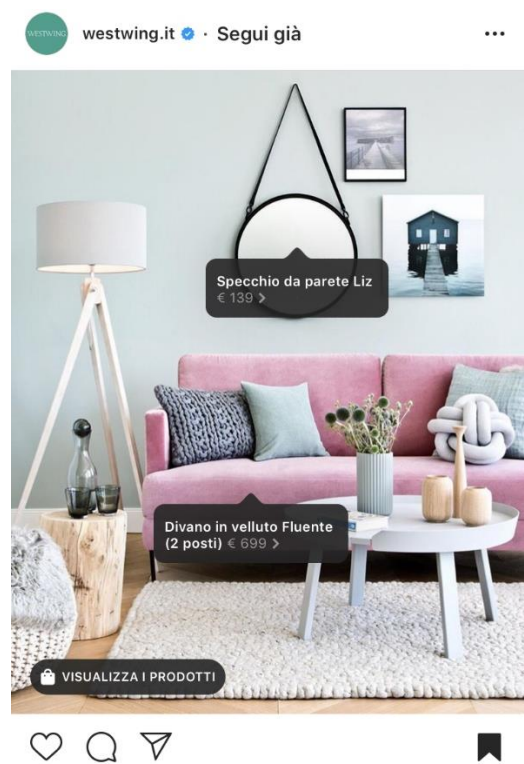


Fig. 4.2: Example of 'shoppable' inspirational image
(@westwing.it, Instagram, 2019)

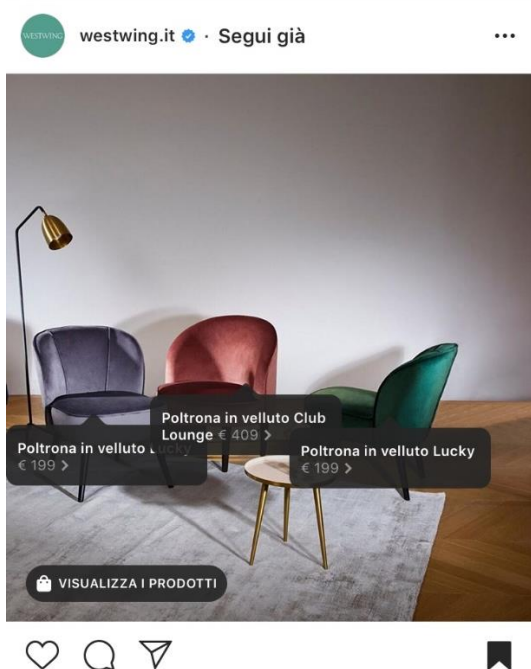


Fig. 4.3: Example of 'shoppable' image
(@westwing.it, Instagram, 2019)



Fig. 4.4: Example of image featuring an influencer
(@westwing.it, Instagram, 2018)

Chiara Ferragni and Veronica Ferraro are fashion and lifestyle influencers known worldwide, with an incredible amount of followers – more than 16 million for Ferragni (Ferragni [@chiaraFerragni], n.d.) and around 860,000 for Ferraro (Ferraro [@veronicaFerraro], n.d.) –, whereas Queralt Badalamenti is a young emerging Italian actress with almost 50,000 followers on Instagram (Badalamenti [@queraltbadalamenti], n.d.). According to Backaler's categories of influencers (2018), Ferragni is a fashion category influencer who has reached the status of celebrity influencer, Ferraro is a fashion category influencer, whereas Badalamenti is a micro influencer. Three of the pictures representing the aforementioned influencers in their newly-furnished Westwing rooms have been selected for the shortlist of images which will be used during the research (see Appendix 1, p. 91).

5. Methodology

The following chapter presents the methods selected in order to carry out the empirical part of the research and how they are implemented in order to answer the research question. Furthermore, the reasons behind the different methods chosen will be addressed. This chapter includes also a detailed description of how the different tools used have been set up.

5.1 Research design

5.1.1 Stimuli selection

As mentioned in section 4.1 (p. 36), it is possible to individuate four main content categories on @westwing.it's Instagram feed, namely pictures of rooms furnished following a particular style meant to inspire the user, inspirational images enabling Instagram's 'shop' function which leads the user to the brand's e-commerce to finalise the purchase, merely 'shoppable' promotional images, and pictures featuring influencers and celebrities endorsing Westwing Italia. Such classification has been taken into account when choosing the images to be evaluated by the sample.

The shortlist of the pictures has been selected by choosing from the content available on Westwing Italia's Instagram profile as follows: (A) three pictures representing inspirational interior design images; (B) three pictures representing 'shoppable' inspirational home decor images; (C) three pictures representing 'shoppable' advertising images; and (D) three pictures representing category influencers or celebrity influencers who have collaborated with Westwing Italia, for a total of twelve pictures (see Appendix 1, p. 91). The order of the pictures has then been randomized regardless of the date of publication to generate an arbitrary sequence all the individuals composing the samples will be exposed to in the different stages of the experiment, namely C-A-D-B-D-B-A-C-B-D-C-A.

The common denominator of the chosen images is that they all represent living rooms or products whose ideal collocation is in a living room so that the individuals could evaluate each picture without being biased by personal tastes which could lead them to prefer a room with a certain function over

a room with another function, regardless of the category of the image itself. However, for sure the individuals' personal tastes will have a strong influence on the likeableness evaluation of the different images. Nevertheless, the sample is given the possibility to justify its answers by means of short open questions following the 7-step Likert-like item used to evaluate each image's likeableness which will allow to understand if certain choices have been made because of personal taste. Furthermore, the four categories of images comply with some of the visual attributes proven to attract a user's attention, namely the presence of human figures, the presence of celebrities, the presence of vibrant colours and contrasting elements and the large image size (Hershler & Hochstein, 2005; Bakar *et al.*, 2015). In particular, applying the latter element to Instagram, it is possible to define as 'large-size images' vertical pictures in the 9:16 ratio, as this is the format occupying most of the user's mobile phone's screen, thus attracting the user's attention for a longer period of time (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Most of the selected pictures only contain some of the aforementioned elements; however, this will not invalidate the findings of this research in any particular way. Rather, it will be an interesting opportunity for the purposes of this master thesis to verify with the aid of the eye-tracker whether the images attracting more the attention of the components of the sample are actually those containing the most of such elements.

5.1.2 Sample composition

Since the majority of @westwing.it's followers are Millennial women, such demographical data have been taken into account when building the sample for the experiment. As explained in section 4.1 (p. 35), Westwing has separate Instagram accounts for the different geographical markets it operates in; as @westwing.it is meant to engage with Italian (potential) customers, it would be desirable to have a sample entirely composed by Italian women; however, since the research has been carried out abroad, only a minority of the sample is composed by Italian people. Nevertheless, since the focus of the experiment is images and not textual stimuli, the language of the posts should not affect the outcomes of the research.

The sample is composed by twelve 18+ women of different nationalities, namely four Italians, three French, one Swiss, one American, one New Zealander, one Mexican and one Guatemalan. The majority (10 out of 12) is aged 18-24, whereas the remaining 2 are aged 25-34. Only two of the 12 participants knew Westwing prior to the experiment, despite Westwing being present in three of the seven countries represented by the sample, namely Italy, France and Switzerland, home countries of 2/3 of the sample. The lack of brand awareness is likely to lead to interesting results, as most of the sample is not biased by already knowing Westwing and what kind of products it sells, thus especially for the pictures in category D – those including influencers – it will be possible to easily detect any sign of confusion on what it is believed to be advertised versus what it is actually advertised.

5.2 Structure of the experiment

The sample will be exposed to the same shortlist of selected stimuli in three different stages. First, the individual will be asked to scroll through the pictures as if she was actually using Instagram. The on-screen activities will be recorded to allow the monitoring of the user's activities and to favour the comparison between the actions run by the different components of the sample. Such a step has been envisaged in order to simulate as truthfully as possible the actual usage of Instagram, trying to preserve the original environment as much as possible. The individual will be able to interact with the pictures by e.g. leaving comments, tapping on the images to see tags and prices in the case of 'shoppable' content and liking the pictures, as she would normally do when using the visual social network in her everyday life. This simulated environment has been built by adding the selected images to the favourites section, following the aforementioned randomized order. Instagram's 'add to favourite' feature groups the user's favourite pictures in a separate folder accessible from the user's account, allowing to further organize the saved images into different mood boards and folders depending on their content. In this way, the saved images can be accessed normally, i.e. the user has to scroll down in order to see all the images, while being isolated by the actual Instagram feed, thus avoiding any distraction and out-of-scope images. The first stage of the experiment is qualitative in

nature; however, it will be possible to extract quantitative data by e.g. verifying with which of the four image categories the user engages the most with by leaving likes and/or comments.

During the second stage, the sample will be exposed to the twelve pictures in the aforementioned randomized order while being monitored with the eye-tracker. Such a tool allows to monitor the individual's eye movements and eye fixations, from which it is possible to understand which elements of an image have captured her attention. It will then be possible to look for correspondences – or dissimilarities – between the user's activity in the first stage of the experiment, where she could freely interact with the selected content, and the results provided by the eye-tracker, collected instead in a rigid and controlled environment. Moreover, after each image the participants will be asked to evaluate each stimulus's likeableness by means of a 7-point Likert-type item. The data extracted from the second stage are of quantitative nature, as the use of the eye-tracker allows to quantify the individual's subconscious reactions to obtain a visual representation of the distribution of the individual's visual attention. The experiment will be run on an iView X RED eye tracking system (SensoMotoric Instruments, Germany) comprising an IBM-compatible desktop computer with a 19" monitor on which the stimuli will be presented. The aspect ratio was 5:4, with a resolution of 1280x1024 pixels. In accordance with the optimal range recommended by the manufacturer, the viewing distance will be between 60 and 80 cm. Stimulus presentation and response registration will be controlled by the software Experiment Center, Version 3.6 (SMI). The participants' eye movements will be recorded at a sampling rate of 50 Hz. The actual testing will begin with a 9-point eye tracking calibration. The data will be analysed by means of the software BeGaze, Version 3.6, which offers many different tools to analyse the gathered data. Moreover, simple analyses with SPSS will be run.

The third and last stage consists of a questionnaire that aims at summing up the outcomes of the two previous steps. In this phase, the sample will be asked once again to evaluate each of the twelve images by answering to a questionnaire featuring Likert-type items and other evaluation tools in order to assess whether there is a correspondence between the individual's subconscious and

conscious perception of the same picture, related to the eye-tracer phase and to the questionnaire phase respectively. Specifically, questions about the likeableness of each image and about their nature – namely, if the individual perceives them as advertisement and what in her opinion is being promoted – will be asked. Moreover, socio-demographic information of the respondents will be collected.

The three steps have been designed keeping in mind the research question at the basis of this master thesis in order to assess whether the pictures pertaining to the category D, which includes the pictures representing influencers or celebrities who have collaborated with Westwing Italia, are in fact those attracting more the attention of the users as proven by previous researches (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014; Bakar *et al.*, 2015), despite Westwing not being a brand offering items “for personal use”. Furthermore, the experiment will allow to assess whether the presence of influencers in images advertising home decor products confuses the user on the actual promotional purposes of the picture.

6. Findings

In the following section, the findings emerged from the different phases of the empirical part of this master thesis will be discussed, aiming at giving an answer to the research questions presented at the beginning of this paper. After presenting the results of the three steps of the experiment, in section 7 (p. 75) a more comprehensive framework will be developed by putting in relation the findings of the different phases to offer a more exhaustive analysis.

6.1 Instagram feed simulation

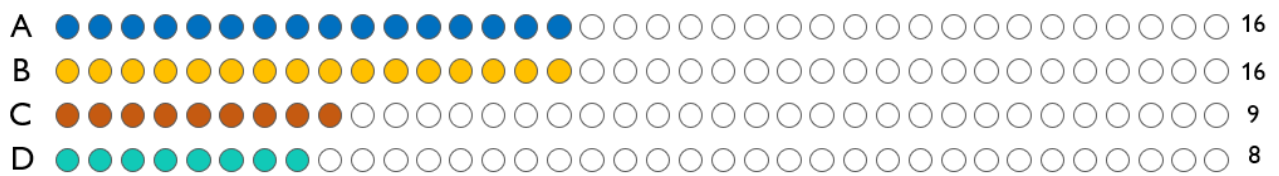
On average, it took the user 1 minute and 36 seconds to look at the twelve pictures by scrolling down in the Instagram app, with an average of 6.8 seconds per image. Without time constraints and in a not-controlled environment, on average the user spent 70% more time on each picture with respect to the fixed 4-seconds exposure in the highly controlled environment of the eye-tracker. Most likely, such increase is due both to the gestures the user needs to perform with her fingers in order to scroll down from one image to the next one - which undoubtedly takes time - and to the time spent engaging with the pictures by e.g. double-clicking to like a picture, reading the comments under an image, swiping left if the post is a carousel composed of different pictures to look at all of them and one-time clicking on an ad post to check out the names and the prices of the items displayed.

On average, each picture received 4 likes. However, some pictures were way more successful than others, as shown by table 6.1 (p. 45). For instance, picture #7 received the highest number of likes - 8, whereas two pictures – #3 and #11 – did not get any like at all.

Table 6.1: Number of likes per image. The images which received the highest and the lowest number of likes are highlighted in green and red respectively (Author's elaboration)

Image	Category		# of likes
#1	C	'Shoppable'	5
#2	A	Inspirational	3
#3	D	Influencer	0
#4	B	'Shoppable' inspirational	7
#5	D	Influencer	5
#6	B	'Shoppable' inspirational	3
#7	A	Inspirational	8
#8	C	'Shoppable'	4
#9	B	'Shoppable' inspirational	6
#10	D	Influencer	3
#11	C	'Shoppable'	0
#12	A	Inspirational	5

Overall, the categories which collected the highest number of likes are A – inspirational interior design images and B – 'shoppable inspirational home decor images, which both scored 16 likes, followed by the category C – 'shoppable' advertising images which obtained 9 likes. Surprisingly, the category which totalled the lowest number of likes is category D – images representing influencers who have collaborated with Westwing Italia, with only 8 likes (see graph 6.1, p. 46). Note that one of the two pictures which received 0 likes – #3 – belongs to this category, and it is specifically the picture representing Chiara Ferragni posing in a corner furnished with Westwing products. Such outcome is opposite to the findings of Bakhshi et al. (2014), who registered instead a higher engagement rate in pictures portraying human figures and/or faces. An explanation of the reasons behind such result will be proposed shortly when analysing the results of the three steps altogether.



Graph 6.1: Number of likes per image category. Each category could receive a maximum of 36 likes.

(Author's elaboration)

None of the individuals composing the sample left comments; however, this could be due to a language barrier, since both the caption of the images and the already existing comments were in Italian being @westwing.it a page dedicated to the Italian market, and only 4 out of the 12 participants composing the sample were native Italian speakers, thus able to understand the content of the aforementioned comments and to eventually engage with them by answering or by adding new comments. Moreover, a study has demonstrated how only the minority of the pictures posted on Instagram receive at least one comment – usually very short – (Manikonda, Hu & Kambhampati, 2014), thus the lack of engagement in terms of leaving comments registered in this experiment is in line with the general user behaviour on Instagram.

Six of the twelve pictures presented to the sample were 'shoppable' images, meaning that by clicking one time on the post the user could see tags containing the name of the products displayed and their price and eventually starting the purchasing process by clicking once more on the tag. Only a minority of the sample – five individuals out of twelve – checked the price of the products. Of these five, only three users checked the price on more than one 'shoppable' image, whereas two of them only checked the price of one image out of six. In total, the price was checked 13 times out of 72 (6 'shoppable' images * 12 users), thus 18% of the possible times. On average, the pictures in category B received 3 clicks whereas the pictures in category C received 1.3 clicks. In particular, the three pictures belonging to category B got three clicks each, whereas concerning the pictures in category C two of them received one click each and one received two clicks. None of the individuals composing the sample went further in the purchasing process. 9.7% of the time, the users engaged doubly with the 'shoppable' image, both by checking the price and by leaving a like. In all but one

case, users first checked the price and then liked the picture; further research might unveil the correlation between the price displayed and the likeableness of an Instagram post in the light of the user's price preferences.

6.2 Eye-tracker

After the sample has been exposed to the eye-tracker experiment, areas of interest (AOIs) have been outlined on each of the twelve visual stimuli (see Appendix 3, p. 96), to better understand which elements in the picture attract the user's visual attention. AOIs are areas of the image manually selected by the researcher which then allow analysing only the eye movements which occurred in the aforementioned area (Poole & Ball, 2006). The areas of interest individuated for the purposes of this research can be ascribed to five different groups, depending on the elements they highlight, namely (1) face, (2) body, (3) Westwing items, (4) other brands and (5) text and icons. The latter category includes the text above the picture, i.e. the name of the account – in this specific case, westwing.it – and/or the geotagged location and the four icons which can be found under every Instagram picture, namely the heart to like the picture, the callout to leave a comment, the paper plane to forward the image to other accounts and the bookmark to save the image in the favourite section. It has been decided to include the aforementioned icons and textual elements in the visual stimuli in order to recreate as much as possible the aspect of Instagram, despite acting in a highly controlled environment which is that of the eye-tracking system. Note that those items not attributable neither to Westwing nor to other brands have not been included in any area of interest.

The analysis of the eye-tracking data has been performed using SMI BeGaze software, which allows as well to export data to carry out statistical analysis. The software allows using different techniques to visualize the data recorded by the eye tracking system. The most relevant techniques implemented to analyse the participants' eye-tracking movements in this experiment and the relative outcomes are presented below.

6.2.1 Heat map

A heat map is a tool that allows visualizing the different levels of observation intensity, coding the different degrees of intensity so that red areas indicate the highest level of intensity and blue areas indicate the lowest level of intensity (Špakov & Miniotas, 2007). In other words, heat map patterns are visualized by altering the colour of the stimulus depending on the amount of attention received by a particular spot in the image, assuming a red to blue hue based on the number of fixations received. In a nutshell, heat maps show the accumulated time participants spent looking at different areas of the stimulus (SensoMotoric Instruments, 2014). Such technique is extremely useful when assessing which elements in the picture have drawn a participant's visual attention (see Appendix 2, p. 93).

In order to answer to RQ1, heat map analysis on the twelve visual stimuli has been performed to assess whether the participants directed their visual attention on Westwing products regardless of the presence of influencers. Concerning pictures belonging to category D, in line with the findings by Bakhshi et al. (2014), faces are the elements on which the participants focused more, overshadowing the promoted Westwing products. In the case of the image picturing Queralt Badalamenti (fig. 6.1), the actress's face is the spot most attracting the participants' visual attention, with minor fixations on her body and surrounding elements.



Fig. 6.1: Heat map of stimulus #5 (BeGaze, 2019)

Concerning the pictures including Chiara Ferragni (fig. 6.2) and Veronica Ferraro (fig. 6.3), their faces remain the elements participants mostly focus on, even though a moderate part of their visual attention is also given to the ‘coffee table’ fashion books which give both pictures a stylish vibe. The other elements in the picture attract the sample’s visual attention only marginally.



Fig. 6.2: Heat map of stimulus #3 (BeGaze, 2019)



Fig. 6.3: Heat map of stimulus #10 (BeGaze, 2019)

Concerning the pictorial stimuli pertaining to the other categories, the user’s visual attention seems to be drawn by the more outstanding elements in the pictures, such as flowers, mirrors or oddly-shaped items such as pillows or decorations. Bright colours also seem to attract more the participants’ visual attention, in line with Bakar et al.’s (2015) findings. Verticality also seems to attract and guide the participants’ visual attention all over the picture, probably also because of the vertical ratio of the image, since in images following a vertical composition the participants followed such vertical lines with their eye movements, focusing their attention on the different elements they encountered over such guided vertical trajectory (fig. 6.4, p. 50). On the contrary, in horizontally-composed images visual attention is more scattered and distributed in the middle part of the picture (fig. 6.5, p. 50). Nevertheless, in the images not containing faces most of the visual attention is

focused in the very centre of the picture, in accordance with the natural visual tendency of focusing on the middle of any visual display (Land & Tatler, 2009).



Fig. 6.4: Heat map of stimulus #9 (BeGaze, 2019)



Fig. 6.5: Heat map of stimulus #6 (BeGaze, 2019)

6.2.2 Key performance indicators

The software BeGaze allows visualizing key performance indicators (KPIs) for the different areas of interest depicted in each visual stimulus, displaying in different callouts - each referring to a particular AOI – a series of statistical indicators, such as rank and share of visual attention, individuation of eye catchers and order of fixation, to name a few. The major asset of such technique is that it allows having a quantitative and visible display of the eye tracking data, at a glance. Other than showing KPIs for the different AOIs present in the picture, such tool allows as well to visualize data related to the so-called “white space”, i.e. all the parts of the picture not pertaining to any AOI (SensoMotoric Instruments, 2014). Note that also the grey bands around the stimuli are part of the white space.

Table 6.2 (adapted from SensoMotoric Instruments, 2014, pp. 219-220) sums up the different KPIs registered by the software and their meaning, to better understand the subsequent data analysis:

Table 6.2: BeGaze's KPIs explanation
(Adapted from SensoMotoric Instruments, 2014, pp. 219-220)

KPI	Unit	Description
Sequence	Count	Order of gaze hits into the AOIs based on Entry Time, lowest Entry Time = first in Sequence
Entry time	Ms	Average duration from start of the trial to the first hit of an AOI
Dwell time	ms and %	Dwell time average ms = sum (all fixations and saccades within an AOI for all selected participants) / by number of selected participant Dwell time average % = dwell time average * 100 / (current time - start time)
Hit ratio	count and %	How many participants out of the selected participants looked at least one time into the AOI ("total hit count" / "number of selected participants")
Revisits	Count	Average Revisits = Number of revisits divided by number of selected participants with at least one glance
Revisitors	Count	Number n out of m participants where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - n is the number of participants with more than one visit in an AOI - m is the total number of participants with at least one visit into an AOI
Average fixation	ms and %	Sum of "average fixation time per participant in an AOI" divided by number of selected participants
First fixation	Ms	Sum of all "first fixations" for selected participants divided by number of selected participants

Fixation count	Count	Number of all fixations for selected participants divided by number of selected participants
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Since when it comes to visual attention the pictures of interest for the purposes of this master thesis are those including human figures, specifically influencers, following is a detailed analysis of the KPIs of the images belonging to category D. Nevertheless, key performance indicators for the other visual stimuli can be found in Appendix 3 (p. 96). The analysis reports the average KPIs of the 12 components of the sample and has been performed by describing the most relevant KPIs per AOI by following the average AOI gaze sequence; participant-specific information on her AOI sequence can be found in Appendix 4 (p. 102).

Visual stimulus #3 – Chiara Ferragni

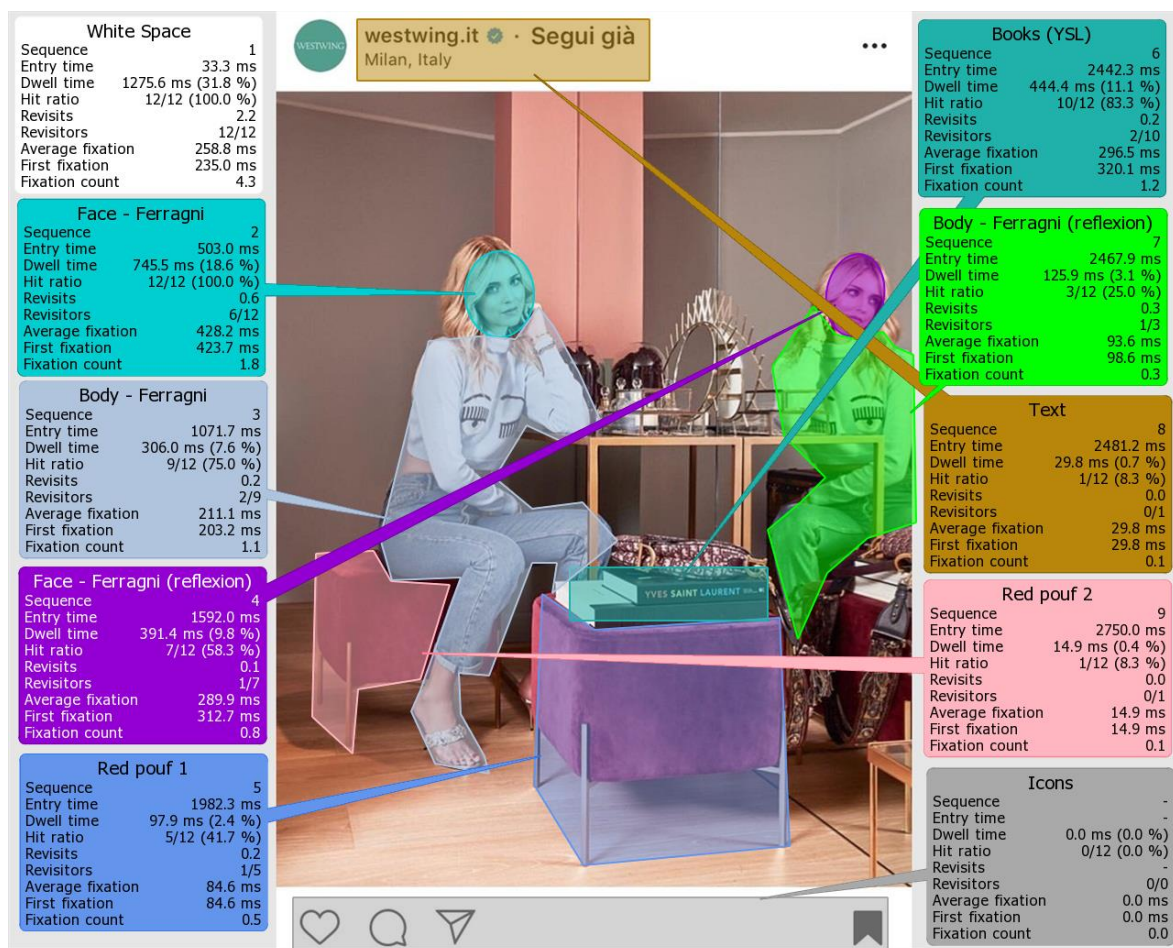


Fig. 6.6: Visual stimulus #3's key performance indicators (BeGaze, 2019)

The AOI attracting more the participants' visual attention was Ferragni's face, followed by the coffee table books displayed on the red pouf and by the influencer's face reflection. Westwing's red poufs combined only accounted for less than 3% of the total dwell time, catching the participants' visual attention for 99.5 ms. Nevertheless, the results are in line with different studies focused on the presence of human faces in pictures, proven to naturally draw the viewers' visual attention (Kanwisher *et al.*, 1997; Haxby *et al.*, 2000; Hershler & Hochstein, 2005; Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014; Bakar *et al.*, 2015). An in-depth analysis of the KPIs of the different AOIs is now presented.

The white space is the first area catching the participants' gaze, thus number 1 in the AOI fixation sequence. This outcome is not particularly surprising, as the middle point of the image is not included in any AOI and, as already mentioned before, such point is where the eye naturally looks at (Land & Tatler, 2009). Moreover, before each image the participants were asked to look at a fixation cross positioned right in the middle of the screen to make sure that they were looking at the screen and to maintain the eye-tracker's calibration, therefore such outcome is actually the only possible. On average, participants looked at the white space 31.8% of the time. The white space records a 100% hit ratio, 12/12 revisitors and an average fixation of 258.8 ms. Since most of the image is not included in AOIs, these data are not particularly surprising either.

The second element in the gaze sequence is Chiara Ferragni's face, in line with the findings of different researches on face recognition and face engagement (Kanwisher *et al.*, 1997; Haxby *et al.*, 2000; Hershler & Hochstein, 2005; Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014; Bakar *et al.*, 2015). Given the small surface of the AOI, the 18.6% dwell time and the average fixation time of 428.2 ms prove that faces are particularly engaging for the users and are able to attract the participant's visual attention. 100% of the participants looked at the face of the influencer, and half of them revisited the AOI, despite the already long first fixation (423.7 ms on average), underlining once more the human tendency to be naturally drawn to faces in pictures.

Next in the gaze sequence is the influencer's body, that scored a 7.6% dwell time and an average fixation of 211.1 ms. The hit ratio lowers at 75%, meaning that only 9 participants out of 12 fixed their gaze on Ferragni's body. Since such AOI's area is much bigger than that outlining the influencer's face, it can be inferred that, when it comes to human figures, there is a disparity in how a participant's visual attention is distributed between face and body, with faces being more interesting than bodies at the eyes of the viewers. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that the sample is only composed by women and that Ferragni is wearing covering clothes; different outcomes are likely to be registered if changes in the sample composition and/or in the choice of clothing were to occur.

The image has a particular composition, namely it pictures Ferragni sitting in front of a mirrored wall; her face and body are therefore reflected in the mirror, thus the picture includes two faces and two bodies. The fourth element in the gaze sequence is indeed the influencer's face reflection, which accounts for a 9.8% dwell time and for an average fixation of 289.9 ms – higher than that of the 'unreflected' body. Nevertheless, the hit ratio is lower (58.3%) and only one out of the seven participants who looked at the reflected face revisited the AOI. Probably, once realizing that the face was merely a reflection of the face they just looked at, the participants decided to move their visual attention towards new elements, whereas those who have not looked at the reflection might have sensed it by means of their peripheral vision and decided not to spend additional time on it.

The fifth element in the gaze sequence is finally a WestwingNow product, namely a red pouf. However, with a 2.4% dwell time and an average fixation of 84.6 ms, the item did not catch the participants' visual attention, which moved swiftly towards the following element in the sequence, namely a couple of coffee table books, one of which clearly stating the brand 'Yves Saint Laurent' on its spine. With a dwell time of 11% and an average fixation of 296.5 ms, the books happen to catch the participants' visual attention, probably because of the presence of text to be read. From 41.7% for the red pouf, the hit ratio increases to 83.3%, proof of the interest generated in the participants by such elements.

The seventh element in the gaze sequence is the reflection of Ferragni's body, only hit by 25% of the participants, with a dwell time of 3.1% and an average fixation of 93.6 ms, still better than the red pouf. The same reasoning behind the KPIs of the reflected face explained above can be applied to this element as well. The eighth element in the sequence is the text above the picture, stating the account name and the geotag. Only one out of twelve participants looked at this element, and for as little as 29.8 ms. The ninth and last element in the sequence - another red pouf by WestwingNow, on which Ferragni is sitting - registered similar KPIs, with only one participant looking at it for 14.9 ms. The AOI outlining the icons under the image did not receive any gaze.

Visual stimulus #5 - Queralt Badalamenti

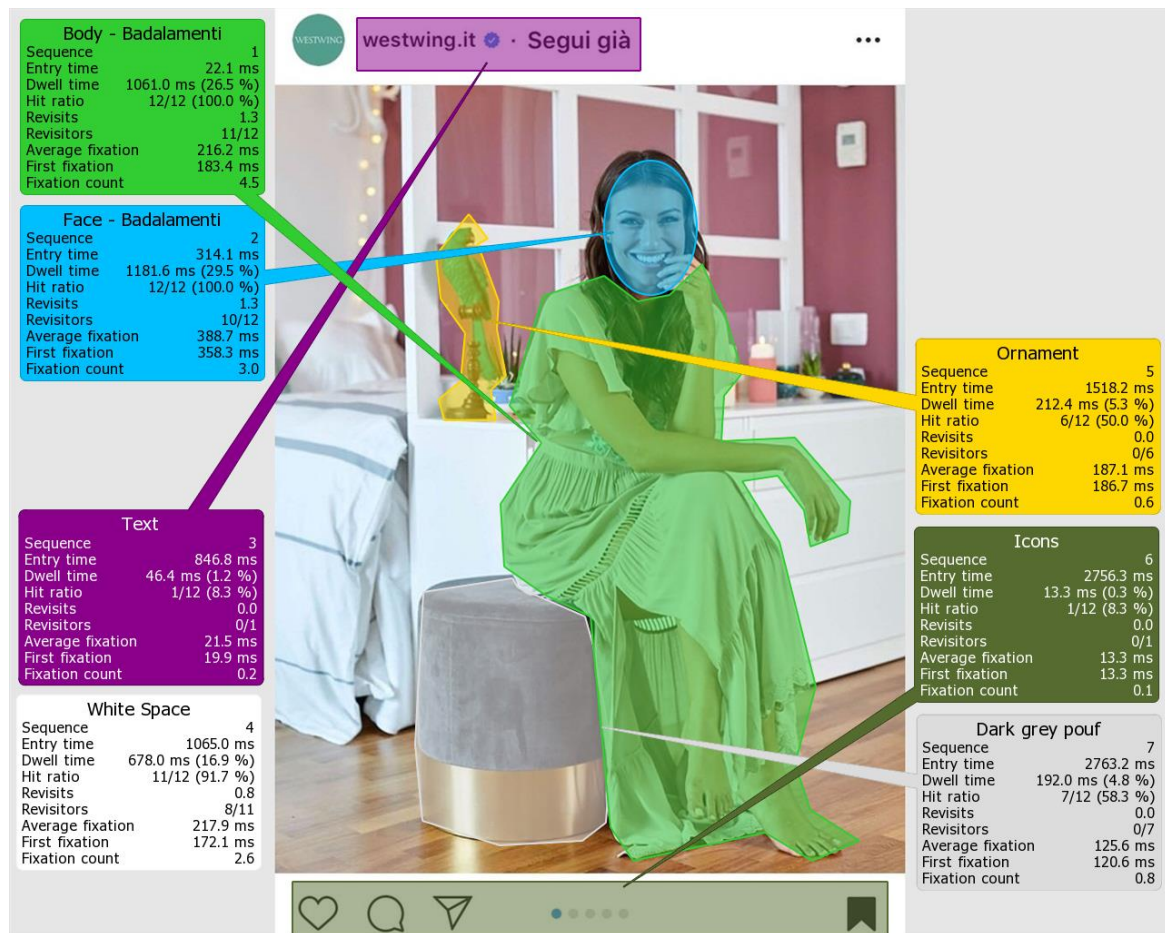


Fig. 6.7: Visual stimulus #5's key performance indicators (BeGaze, 2019)

Even in this case, the protagonist of the picture is the human figure portrayed, specifically the face of Badalamenti. The actress's face and body combined account for 56% of the total dwell time, undoubtedly catching the viewers' visual attention. Westwing items performed poorly, only attracting the participants' visual attention for 10.1% of the total dwell time. Following is an in-depth analysis of the KPIs of the different AOIs in the picture.

The first element in the gaze sequence is Badalamenti's body. Such outcome is unsurprising, since as explained in the section before the actress's body is right in the middle of the image. The AOI recorded a 100% hit ratio and a 26.5% dwell time, with an average fixation of 216.2 ms. 11 out of the 12 participants revisited the AOI, for an average fixation count of 4.5.

The participants' visual attention moved then to Badalamenti's face, the second element in the gaze sequence. Even in this case, such result is not particularly surprising, as the natural attraction for the human gaze towards faces pictured in an image has already been discussed in depth above. The hit ratio is stable at 100%, whereas both the dwell time and the average fixation duration increase, passing respectively at 29.5% and at 388.7 ms, a substantial result if considering the limited area of the AOI. The number of revisitors lowers at 10 out of 12; nevertheless, it is still an interesting result, as the participants' attraction towards the actress's face does not fade over time despite the long average fixation time. On average, in fact, the participants gave Badalamenti's face three distinct fixations in the four seconds of exposure to the picture.

The third element in the gaze sequence is the textual element above the image, which registers a hit ratio of 8.3%, a dwell time of 1.2% and an average fixation of 21.5 ms. Such AOI is probably third in the sequence because, as hypothesized in the previous section, viewers tend to follow the verticality of the Instagram post, thus passing smoothly from the body to the face to the text.

Surprisingly, the white space is only fourth in the gaze sequence, despite accounting for most of the total area of the image. Such result is likely to be caused by the particular composition of the image,

with the human figure right in the centre that captures the viewers' attention before anything else. Nevertheless, with a dwell time of 16.9% and an average fixation of 217.9 ms, the participants still indulge in wandering in those peripheral areas of the picture not pertaining to any AOI. Surprisingly, despite the wide extension of the white space the hit ratio is 91.7%, meaning that one of the participants never focused her visual attention outside an AOI, possibly because of the vertical composition of the picture.

Finally, the fifth element in the sequence is a Westwing product, namely a decorative ornament right next to Badalamenti, which registers a dwell time of 5.3% and an average fixation time of 187.1 ms. However, the hit ratio stops at 50%, and none of the participants revisits the AOI, meaning that such element was not that memorable at the eyes of the sample.

The sixth element in the sequence is the AOI outlining the icons under the image. Only one of the components of the participants looked at the icon, giving them an average fixation time of 13.3 ms and registering a very short dwell time – 0.3% –, possibly because of the familiarity Instagram users have with such icons.

The last element in the gaze sequence is a WestwingNow item, specifically a dark grey pouf on which Badalamenti is sitting. The hit ratio is at 58.3%, whereas the dwell time stops at 4.8% and the average fixation lasts 125.6 ms. Even in this case, apparently this element is not particularly catchy at the eyes of the participants.

Visual stimulus #10 - Veronica Ferraro

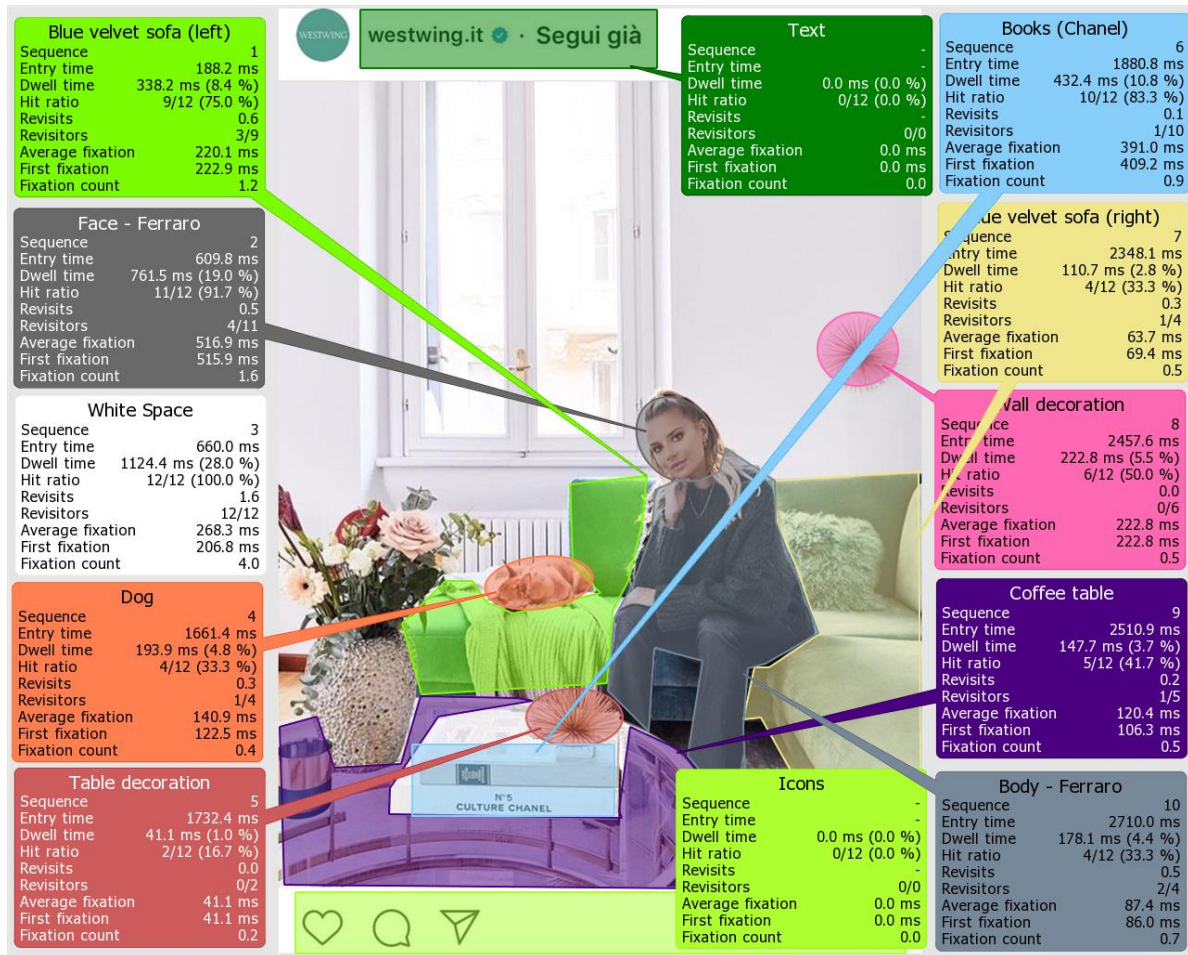


Fig. 6.8: Visual stimulus #10's key performance indicators (BeGaze, 2019)

With a dwell time of 19% and an average fixation of 516.9 ms Ferraro's face was still the AOI attracting the most the participants' attention, despite her body not being considered that much. In general, all the AOIs each accounted for a smaller part of dwell time compared to the other two stimuli in category D; this might be because of the high number of elements displayed in the picture, which led the participants to keep on moving their eyes to get as many details as possible. Both the textual elements and the icons were not included in the gaze sequence. An analysis of the KPIs for each AOI is presented below.

The first AOI in the gaze sequence is a WestwingNow item, namely a blue velvet sofa – possibly the seatback, as it coincides with the central point of the image. The area scores a dwell time of 8.4% and an average fixation time of 220.1 ms, however the hit ratio is surprisingly at 75%, despite

such element being the first one in the sequence. Probably, the participants' visual attention was immediately drawn towards another element in the picture - namely, Ferraro's face.

In fact, the influencer's face is second in the gaze sequence, however it surprisingly registered a hit ratio of 91.7%; one of the participants – P10 – has not directly looked at Ferraro's face, but from her scan path (fig. 6.9) it is likely that she has sensed the face's presence with her peripheral vision, but has decided to focus her attention on other elements in the image. Again, such outcome could be due to a slip of the eye tracker's calibration system. Nevertheless, the AOI totalled a dwell time of 19% and an average fixation time of 516.9 ms, thus the human natural attraction towards faces in pictures is once more confirmed.



Fig. 6.9: P10's scan path of stimulus #10 (BeGaze, 2019)

The third element in the gaze sequence is the white space. Given the composition of the image, in this case the white space is concentrated in the upper part of the picture. The white space gets a 100% hit ratio, with a dwell time of 28% and an average fixation of 268.3 ms. The heat map shows

that what attracts more the participants' visual attention is the bright window included in the white space.

The fourth element in the gaze sequence is Ferraro's dog, sleeping on the sofa, only noted by four of the twelve participants, that registers a dwell time of 4.8% and an average fixation of 140.9 ms. As it will emerge from the questionnaire's analysis, some participants have individuated in the dog a variable impacting on the likeableness of the image.

The fifth AOI in the gaze sequence is a WestwingNow element, namely an oddly-shaped gold ornament. The hit ratio stops at 16.7%, whereas the dwell time stops at 1% and the average fixation only lasts 41.1 ms.

The sixth AOI in the sequence is right under the ornament, namely a couple of coffee table books, on one of which is clearly readable the brand 'Chanel'. The books' hit ratio increases to 83.3%, and the dwell time assesses at 10.8%. The average fixation time is long - 391 ms -; this is probably caused by the presence of readable text, as hypothesized for stimulus #3.

The seventh element in the gaze sequence is a WestwingNow element, namely the other part of the blue velvet sofa on which Ferraro is seating, dividing it into two separate AOIs. With a dwell time of 2.8%, an average fixation of 63.7 ms and a hit ratio of 33.3%, such AOI does not seem to particularly attract the participants' visual attention.

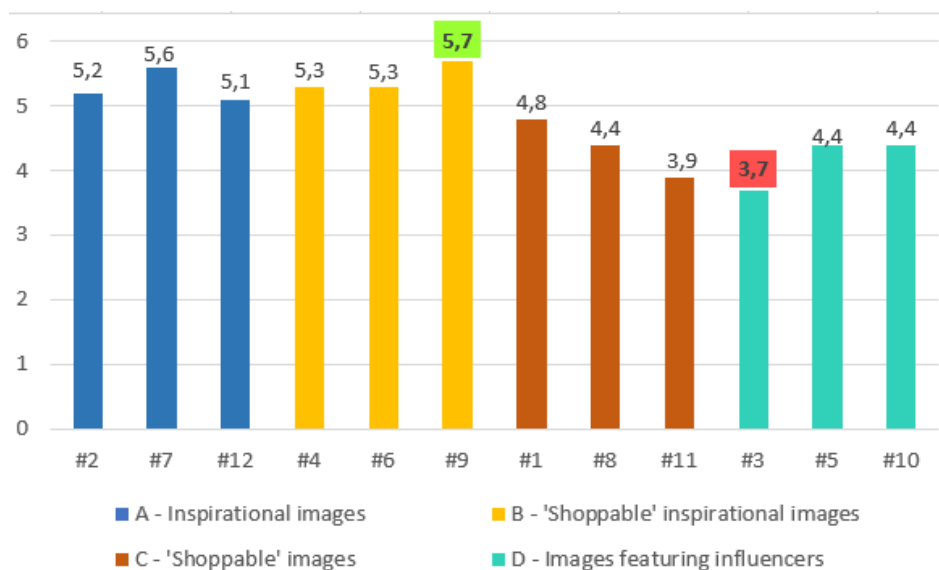
The eighth AOI in the gaze sequence is another WestwingNow item, specifically a wall decoration twinning with the ornament on the coffee table. The decorative element totals a 5.5% dwell time and an average fixation of 222.8 ms, quite long compared to that of other elements in the picture; the oddity of the decoration might explain why half of the participants spent such a long time looking at the item.

The ninth element in the sequence is the coffee table in the bottom part of the picture, which accounted for 3.7% of the dwell time and for an average fixation time of 120.4 ms. However, the hit ratio decreased to five participants out of twelve (41.7%).

Surprisingly, the tenth and last AOI in the gaze sequence is Ferraro's body, only hit by 33.3% of the sample. The dwell time of 4.4% and the average fixation time of 86 ms show how this area did not capture the participants' attention, possibly because of the dark colours of Ferraro's clothes compared to the bright and colourful surroundings.

6.2.3 Likert-type items

After each visual stimulus, the participants were asked to indicate their degree of accordance with the affirmation 'I like the image I have just seen' by means of a 7-points Likert-type item, where 1 = 'completely disagree' and 7 = 'completely agree'. Since it is a single question, it is incorrect to talk about a Likert scale, as these are usually composed by four or more Likert-type items that concur in defining a composite score that quantitatively measures a behaviour. Nevertheless, Likert-type items are single responses which maintain some aspects of Likert scales, thus it is still possible to run descriptive statistics analyses to explain the data (Boone & Boone, 2012).



Graph 6.2: Eye-tracker average likeableness rate per image, grouped by category. The highest and lowest scores are highlighted in green and red, respectively (Author's elaboration)

To answer RQ3, the participants do not seem to find the pictures including influencers more likeable than those not including them. On the contrary, all the three stimuli representing human figures ranked low if ordering the pictures by average score received (graph 6.2, p. 61). In particular, image #3 representing Chiara Ferragni placed last, with an average of 3.7, whereas picture #10 with Veronica Ferraro and picture #5 with Queralta Badalamenti tied for third to last together with image #8. In the questionnaire phase, other than answering once again to the Likert-scale item concerning the stimuli's likeableness, participants were also asked to justify their answer, thus that section will possibly shed some light on the results obtained. Moreover, it will be possible to check whether there is a correlation between the individual's subconscious and conscious likeableness perception of the same picture, emerging from the eye-tracker and from the questionnaire's Likert-type items respectively.

Since the answers to Likert-type items are ordinal variables, performing the traditional one-way ANOVA testing is not recommended. Nevertheless, a Kruskal-Wallis test has been performed in order to check whether there was a statistically significant difference between category D – images with influencers and the other content categories (table 6.3, p. 63). The test detected a statistically significant difference between the four categories ($p = .000$). In particular, statistically significant differences have been detected between categories D and A ($p = .001$) and D and B ($p = .000$). No statistically significant difference has been detected between categories D and C ($p = 1.000$). Concerning the other content categories, statistically significant difference has been detected between categories A and C ($p = .006$) and B and C ($p = .001$), whereas no statistically significant difference has been detected between categories A and B ($p = 1.000$).

Table 6.3: Output of Kruskal-Wallis test between eye-tracker Likert-like items' values and image categories (SPSS, 2019)

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Likert_ET is the same across categories of Category.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Each node shows the sample average rank of Category.

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
D - Images with influencers-C - 'Shoppable' images	4,194	9,553	,439	,661	1,000
D - Images with influencers-A - Inspirational images	35,458	9,553	3,712	,000	,001
D - Images with influencers-B - 'Shoppable' inspirational images	40,625	9,553	4,253	,000	,000
C - 'Shoppable' images-A - Inspirational images	31,264	9,553	3,273	,001	,006
C - 'Shoppable' images-B - 'Shoppable' inspirational images	36,431	9,553	3,813	,000	,001
A - Inspirational images-B - 'Shoppable' inspirational images	-5,167	9,553	-,541	,589	1,000

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same.
Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is ,05.
Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

6.2.4 AOI groups, average fixation duration and fixation count

In order to test whether there was a statistically significant difference in the participants' average fixation duration and fixation count according to the AOI group, a one-way ANOVA test has been performed on the three stimuli picturing influencers (table 6.4, p. 64). However, since one of the aforementioned pictures did not include any item pertaining to AOI group 4 – other brands, the test has taken into consideration only AOI groups 1 to 3, which anyway are the most relevant for this study.

It has been detected a statistically significant difference between AOI groups for the average fixation duration ($F(2,105) = 22,726$, $p = .000$). A Tukey post hoc test (table 6.5) registered a statistically significant difference between the AOI groups 1 – face and 2 – body ($p = .000$) and between the groups 1 – face and 3 – Westwing items ($p = .000$). There was no statistically significant difference between the AOI groups 2 – body and 3 – Westwing items ($p = .797$).

No statistically significant difference was detected between AOI groups for the fixation count ($F(2,105) = 1,968$, $p = .145$).

Table 6.4: Output of one-way ANOVA test between AOI groups and average fixation duration and between AOI groups and fixation count (SPSS, 2019)

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Average_Fixation_Duration_[ms]	Between Groups	1586230,485	2	793115,242	22,726	,000
	Within Groups	3664433,932	105	34899,371		
	Total	5250664,417	107			
Fixation_Count	Between Groups	11,796	2	5,898	1,968	,145
	Within Groups	314,750	105	2,998		
	Total	326,546	107			

Table 6.5: Output of Tukey post hoc test between AOI groups and average fixation duration and between AOI groups and fixation count (SPSS, 2019)

Multiple Comparisons							
Tukey HSD							
Dependent Variable	(I) AOI_Group	(J) AOI_Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Average_Fixation_Duration_[ms]	1	2	270,0750*	44,0324	,000	165,392	374,758
		3	241,7500*	44,0324	,000	137,067	346,433
	2	1	-270,0750*	44,0324	,000	-374,758	-165,392
		3	-28,3250	44,0324	,797	-133,008	76,358
	3	1	-241,7500*	44,0324	,000	-346,433	-137,067
		2	28,3250	44,0324	,797	-76,358	133,008
Fixation_Count	1	2	,194	,408	,883	-,78	1,16
		3	,778	,408	,142	-,19	1,75
	2	1	-,194	,408	,883	-1,16	,78
		3	,583	,408	,330	-,39	1,55
	3	1	-,778	,408	,142	-1,75	,19
		2	-,583	,408	,330	-1,55	,39

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Nevertheless, the two dependent variables taken into consideration violated both the normal distribution and the homoscedasticity assumptions of the one-way ANOVA test. Thus, to confirm the obtained results it has been decided to run a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test (table 6.6), which confirmed the results of the one-way ANOVA test.

Table 6.6: Kruskal-Wallis test between AOI groups and average fixation duration
and between AOI groups and fixation count output (SPSS, 2019)

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Average_Fixation_Duration_[ms] is the same across categories of AOI_Group.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Fixation_Count is the same across categories of AOI_Group.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	,052	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Each node shows the sample average rank of AOI_Group.

Sample 1-Sam...	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
2-3	-5,139	7,355	-,699	,485	1,000
2-1	39,861	7,355	5,419	,000	,000
3-1	34,722	7,355	4,721	,000	,000

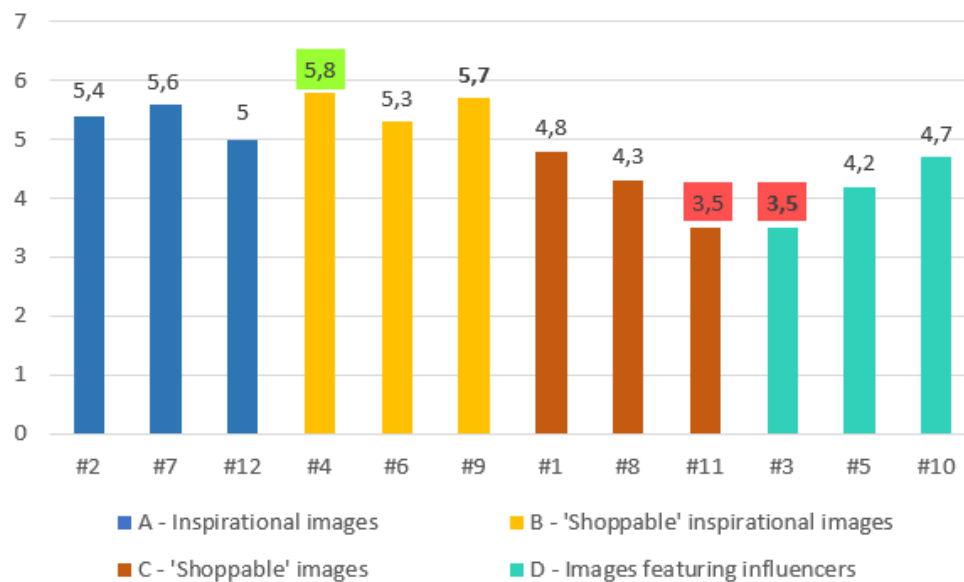
6.3 Questionnaire

The third and last step of the experiment consisted in conducting a questionnaire in order to allow the participants to consciously rate the likeableness of the twelve stimuli by means of a 7-points Likert-type item identical to that of the eye-tracker, as well as indicating their perception of such stimuli as advertisement by means of a close-ended question. Furthermore, open-ended questions allowed the participants to explain the reasons behind their answers. The questionnaire had no time limits, leaving the participants as much time as they needed to analyse the images in detail before answering. Insights on likeableness and on advertising perception will be provided in the next sections.

6.3.1 Insights on likeableness

The participants were asked to indicate their degree of accordance with the affirmation 'I like the image' by means of a 7-points Likert-type item, where 1 = 'completely disagree' and 7 = 'completely agree'.

The following graph displays the average likeableness score per image, grouped by category:



Graph 6.3: Questionnaire's average likeableness rate per image, grouped by category. The highest and lowest scores are highlighted in green and red, respectively (Author's elaboration)

To answer RQ3, the participants do not seem to find the pictures including influencers more likeable than those not including them. On the contrary, all the three stimuli representing human figures ranked low if ordering the pictures by average score received (graph 6.3). In particular, image #3 representing Chiara Ferragni placed last with an average of 3.5, sharing the result with image #11, whereas picture #5 with Queralta Badalamenti positioned just above, at the penultimate position, while. Image #5 with Veronica Ferraro ranked instead at the 9th place, always in the lower third of the ranking.

Subsequently, the open-ended answers have been analysed in order to detect any common element affecting the participants' likeableness perception. The analysis will now focus on the three pictures including influencers; nevertheless, all the questionnaire's answers can be consulted in Appendix 5 (p. 104).

Image #3 depicting Chiara Ferragni placed at the bottom of the rank. Four participants out of twelve admitted having given a low score to the picture because of the presence of Ferragni, who can count on a wide number of followers but is often criticized for her lifestyle.

"I don't like her [Chiara Ferragni, n.b.] as a person that much, so it translates poorly on the brand for me, and it is a very "normal" picture, nothing spectacular."

- P03 on Image #3

The low placement can also be ascribable to the image's composition, defined as 'weird' because of the presence of the mirror wall and as not particularly nice. A major point in the picture's low likeableness score was that it was clearly an advertisement, very staged and transmitting a vibe that did not resonate with some of the participants. Only one participant commented on the furniture, stating that she did not like it.

Image #5 including emerging actress Queralta Badalamenti ranked penultimate. By reading through the open-ended answers, most of the participants appreciated Badalamenti and her happy, smiling expression, despite some negative comments on her clothing choice. Nevertheless, most of the participants defined the picture as not particularly interesting or aesthetic, with one participant pointing out that the picture's composition gave more importance to Badalamenti rather than to the rest of the picture.

"Uninteresting, nothing original".

- P04 on Image #5

None of the participants commented the furniture or the home décor objects in the image.

Image #10 picturing Veronica Ferraro ranked at the 9th place. The participants appreciated the colours and the composition of the image, well-balanced between busier and more empty areas. The dog was very successful, with five participants acknowledging its presence, and one of them complaining of the lack of interaction between Ferraro and her dog.

“The sofa has a really nice colour - plus there is a dog in the picture.”

- P12 on Image #10

Ferraro's figure got contrasting comments: while some participants appreciated her powerful expression, others perceived her as angry, with one participant directly stating that she did not like her as a person. Overall, the furniture in the picture received positive comments, especially the sofa and the display on the coffee table.

6.3.1.1 Statistical analyses

As for the eye-tracker, since the answers to Likert-type items are ordinal variables, performing the traditional one-way ANOVA testing is not recommended. Nevertheless, a Kruskal-Wallis test has been performed in order to check whether there was a statistically significant difference between category D – images with influencers and the other content categories (table 6.7, p. 69). The test detected a statistically significant difference between the four categories. In particular, statistically significant differences have been detected between categories D and A ($p = .001$) and D and B ($p = .000$). No statistically significant difference has been detected between categories D and C ($p = 1.000$). Concerning the other content categories, statistically significant difference has been detected between categories A and C ($p = .002$) and B and C ($p = .000$), whereas no statistically significant difference has been detected between categories A and B ($p = 1.000$).

Table 6.7: Output of Kruskal-Wallis test between eye-tracker Likert-like items' values and image categories (SPSS, 2019)

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Likert_Q is the same across categories of Category.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	,000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Each node shows the sample average rank of Category.

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
D - Images with influencers-C - 'Shoppable' images	1,653	9,616	,172	,864	1,000
D - Images with influencers-A - Inspirational images	36,278	9,616	3,773	,000	,001
D - Images with influencers-B - 'Shoppable' inspirational images	45,181	9,616	4,699	,000	,000
C - 'Shoppable' images-A - Inspirational images	34,625	9,616	3,601	,000	,002
C - 'Shoppable' images-B - 'Shoppable' inspirational images	43,528	9,616	4,527	,000	,000
A - Inspirational images-B - 'Shoppable' inspirational images	-8,903	9,616	-,926	,355	1,000

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same.

Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Furthermore, to investigate whether an image's likeableness depended on the participants' conscious or unconscious perception of it – measured respectively by the questionnaire and by the eye-tracker – a correlation analysis was run on SPSS in order to check whether there was a correlation between the answers registered during the eye-tracker phase and those registered in the questionnaire phase. Since the variables were ordinal, a Spearman test has been preferred over a Pearson correlation test. As pictured in table 6.8 (p. 70), the test has detected a strong positive correlation ($\rho = .789$) between the two variables generated from the answers in the two stages of the experiment, thus the likeableness of an image to the eyes of the participants appears to vary in the same way both when such image is perceived at a conscious and at an unconscious level, being then independent from the perceptual channel.

Table 6.8: Correlation between eye tracker's and questionnaire's Likert-like items' values (SPSS, 2019)

Correlations				
Spearman's rho	Likert_Q		Likert_Q	Likert_ET
		Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,789**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	144	144
	Likert_ET	Correlation Coefficient	,789**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	144	144

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

6.3.2 Insights on advertising perception

Other than asking the extent to which the participants found each of the twelve pictures likeable, the participants were also asked whether they believed the images were advertisements, by means of close-ended questions featuring three different options (Yes/Maybe/No). As explained in section 4.1 (p. 36), only one of the content categories individuated on @westwing.it's profile, namely category A – inspirational pictures, does not have promotional purposes. All of the other categories are instead either 'shoppable', meaning that tags to proceed further in the purchasing process appear on the picture if the user clicks on it, or the output of a digital influencer marketing campaign (category D). This effectively makes of the categories belonging to categories B, C and D advertisements. Insights on advertising perception per category will now be presented.

Interior design inspirational images

Concerning category A – inspirational images, image #2 registered an equal number of Yes/Maybe/No answers; the unclear scope of the picture was pointed out by many participants. Those who categorized the image as an ad did so because of the staged setting, whereas participants who did not detect promotional purposes said so because the picture was felt more like a lifestyle or inspirational image rather than an advertisement.

*“This photo could just be someone showing off their own home,
but it feels curated which leads me to believe it’s an ad.”*

- P07 on Image #2

Image #7 was instead appointed as a promotional picture by the majority of the participants, who individuated in the great amount of furniture displayed and in the neat composition of the picture elements of advertising, as if it was a photograph in a magazine.

“It resembles what could be found in a magazine.”

- P08 on Image #7

Image #12 was perceived as an ad by five participants out of twelve, who found in the design and in the large number of pictures elements typical of advertising. Nevertheless, according to four participants the image pictured someone’s house, because of the presence of personal elements. Those who answered “Maybe” could not detect a clear scope for the image.

“Looks like home design magazine pictures.”

- P10 on Image #12

‘Shoppable’ home & décor inspirational images

Category B included inspirational ‘shoppable’ inspirational images. Since the ‘shoppable’ icon is only visible when clicking on the image, such feature could only be seen in stage 1 of the experiment; this explains why some answered “Maybe” or “No” despite the clear promotional purpose of such images on Instagram. The same reasoning applies to pictures in categories C and D. Concerning images #4 and #6, the participants individuated in the staged disposition of the furniture and in the overall ‘perfection’ of the room a clear sign of promotional purposes, even though those who answered “Maybe” still had doubts about the picture’s scope.

“Everything looks too perfect to be a “normal” living room.”

- P08 on Image #4

“The furniture is well set. I would like to have

something like that in my house.”

- P11 on Image #6

Concerning image #9, 50% of the participants categorised the image as an ad, pointing out the spotless, staged composition and the uniformity of the furniture displayed as signs of promotional purposes.

*“It is very staged and the furniture looks like
it could all be from the same brand.”*

- P01 on Image #9

‘Shoppable’ advertising images

Images in category C were mere advertising pictures. Concerning image #1, “Yes” and “Maybe” options registered the same number of answers – 5 each –, whereas only two participants did not categorise the image as advertisement. The central position of the pouf and the absence of other items around it were pointed out as symptoms of promotional purposes. Nevertheless, some could not detect what was advertised.

*“The chair [pouf, n.b] is really in the center which could make
the chair [pouf, n.b] the product, but it’s not obvious.”*

- P06 on Image #1

Image #8 was clearly an ad for nine participants out of twelve; one was dubious about the real scope of the picture, whereas two participants did not detect any promotional purpose. In particular, according to the participants the elements signalling the image was an ad were the image composition and the presence of few elements.

*“It looks like an ad for the chair, because it is central and basically
the only noticeable thing in the picture.”*

- P08 on Image #8

Concerning image #11, none of the participants believed the picture was not an ad. Ten out of twelve participants categorised the image as a promotional picture, whereas two of them still had

doubts about its purpose. In particular, the focus on the three chairs advertised and the professional setting have been individuated as elements typical of promotional images.

“It only features chairs, which I assume is the product.”

- P07 on Image #11

Images featuring influencers

Images belonging to category D where those featuring influencers posing in Westwing-furnished rooms. Image #3 pictured Chiara Ferragni. 50% of the sample knew her, whereas the other half did not. Nevertheless, eleven participants believed the image had promotional purposes, whereas only one participant had doubts about its scope. The participants aware of who Ferragni was pointed out her simply being present in the picture as symptom of an advertisement, however in general the presence of a person in the picture has been appointed as an element indicating a promotional purpose. Nevertheless, what was being advertised from the image was unclear for 25% of the sample, who believed the image was advertising Yves Saint Laurent products, since such brand was clearly stated on the back of one of the coffee table books on the pouf.

“The presence of Chiara Ferragni makes clearer the aim of the ad.”

- P10 on Image #3

“One can notice Yves Saint Laurent brand on a book in the front.”

- P08 on Image #3

Concerning image #5 picturing Queralt Badalamenti, only one of the participants knew who she was. Four participants out of twelve labelled the image as an ad, mostly because of the presence of a person in the picture; on the contrary, three of them did not detect any sign of advertising, stating it was simply a portrait of Badalamenti, whereas the majority of the sample – 5 participants – had doubts regarding the scope of the image. Not knowing that the woman featured in the picture was actually famous apparently impacted on the participants' answers.

“I focus more on the person and I don't know her

so I cannot tell if she's advertising or not."

- P04 on Image 5

Image #10 featured Veronica Ferraro, who was known by only two participants out of twelve. Nevertheless, ten participants out of twelve believed the image had promotional purposes; one participant was unsure, and one did not detect any sign of advertisement. As for the other pictures in this category, most of the participants individuated in the presence of a person a clear sign of advertisement, together with how the furniture has been arranged. As in the case of image #3, however, the participants had doubts regarding what was advertised, and some of them believed that the picture was an ad for Chanel, since the brand was clearly stated on one of the coffee table books.

"The girl is an influencer and usually advertises brands.

Also there are books by fashion brands clearly recognizable."

- P09 on Image 10

In order to check whether the perceived purpose of the images in category D depended on the participants' knowledge of the influencer depicted, a chi-square test has been performed (table 6.9). The test did not detect a statistically significant association between influencer awareness and perceived purpose ($\chi^2(2) = 2,415$, $p = .299$); that is, the perceived purpose of images in category D did not depend on the participants' awareness of the influencers depicted, and pictures including people were labelled as advertisement regardless.

Table 6.9: Chi-square test between influencer awareness and image's perceived purpose (SPSS, 2019)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2,415 ^a	2	,299
Likelihood Ratio	3,403	2	,182
Linear-by-Linear Association	2,341	1	,126
N of Valid Cases	36		

a. 3 cells (50,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,00.

7. Discussion

This section aims at binding together the findings of the different stages of the experiment in order to outline a comprehensive framework of the effectiveness of a digital influencer marketing strategy for Westwing Italia.

As demonstrated by Hershler and Hochstein (2005), Bakhshi *et al.* (2014) and Bakar *et al.* (2015), faces are the elements that, if present in a picture, attract more the viewer's visual attention, other than registering a higher level of engagement with respect to pictures in which the human figure is absent. The eye-tracker results confirmed that faces are a drive of visual attention; in fact, the participants tended to focus their visual attention on the influencers' faces, as both the key performance indicators (Appendix 3, p. 96) and the heat maps (Appendix 2, p. 93) showed. Nevertheless, since the participants' visual attention was mostly drawn to the faces in the image, little attention was given to the rest of the display – which included Westwing's furniture. Therefore, the presence of the influencers acted as an element of distraction rather than as a vector leading their attention towards the advertised products. Furthermore, despite not having doubts regarding the promotional purposes of the images including human figures – regardless of their familiarity with the influencers portrayed –, participants highlighted difficulties in understanding what was the object of the promotion. This may be due to the lack of awareness towards the Westwing brand, but also because of the unfit between the selected influencers – namely, two fashion bloggers and an emerging actress – and the home and interior design company (Backaler, 2018). Again, given the specific niche in which Westwing operates, it might be critical to find specific influencers, also since furniture and, in general, interior design are not meant for a 'personal use', thus trying to promote this kind of products by involving people might confuse the user. Another reason behind the participants' confusion towards the products advertised can be found in the presence of brands other than Westwing in two of the three images picturing influencers. In fact, both in the image including Ferragni and in that including Ferraro it is possible to clearly read the name of two prestige brands – Yves Saint Laurent and Chanel, respectively – on the back of two coffee table books in the foreground, which were possibly included in the picture simply to give the display a fashionable vibe.

However, some participants mistakenly pointed out the aforementioned prestige brands as protagonists of the ad.

Unexpectedly, the images including influencers did not register a higher engagement rate than the other pictures in which the human figure was absent. On the contrary, the first recorded the lowest engagement rate among the different image content categories, as well as the lowest likeableness rate, going against Bakhshi *et al.*'s (2014) findings. Such result may depend once more on the chosen influencers: in fact, more than one participant admitted she did not particularly like nor support Ferragni and Ferraro, whereas Badalamenti was not labelled as influencer, yet she was not someone the participants met in person, thus the participants were not prone to engaging with her picture. For the same reasons, the images including influencers received among the lowest likeableness rates. Nevertheless, few participants indicated in the furniture an element they (dis)liked.

In general, the participants appreciated equally both the inspirational images and the 'shoppable' inspirational images, whereas the merely 'shoppable' images were not particularly valued by the sample, possibly because of their clear promotional purpose (Burke *et al.*, 2005; Brown & Hayes, 2008; Backaler, 2018). Thus, in order to enhance the possibility of bringing the users further in the purchasing process and generating sales from its Instagram account, it is advisable for Westwing Italia to leverage on 'shoppable' inspirational images, since for the same likeableness and engagement rate this kind of images allows redirecting the user to the company's ecommerce, unlike merely inspirational images.

For sure, involving digital influencers in a company's digital marketing strategy allows reaching a wide, in-scope audience while containing costs and overcoming the consumers' rejection towards traditional marketing tools (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Berthon *et al.*, 2012; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Backaler, 2018). Nevertheless, a thorough preliminary research is necessary in order to select the right influencer for the right product (Backaler, 2018), as well as making sure that there are no doubts regarding what is being advertised, in order to implement an effective digital influencer

marketing campaign. Preliminary tests might help in assessing whether the material produced for the digital influencer marketing campaign is effective.

7.1 Limitations and further research

Different limitations can be individuated within this master thesis. First of all, it only focused on a specific company – Westwing – which acts in a very precise niche, i.e. home and décor products. Thus, the empirical findings might not be valid for companies operating in different markets. Secondly, the experiment has involved a small number of participants, therefore it is unlikely that the findings are statistically valid at the population level, also because the sample reflected @westwing.it's target audience, i.e. Millennial women, thus it is likely that the results only reflect the opinions of such target. Thirdly, because of time constraints and of the aforementioned limited number of participants, only a portion of the possible statistical analyses have been performed. Further research might perform similar experiments on companies operating in different fields, to check whether the same results are achieved. Furthermore, larger samples might be involved in order to generate statistically relevant outcomes. Again, more complex statistical analyses might be run to offer more thorough insights on the topic. Also, future research might further expand the relation between brand fit and digital influencer marketing campaign's effectiveness, as well as the relation between engagement, number of followers and influencer awareness. Coding the open answers in the questionnaire phase to analyse them quantitatively might lead to interesting results as well, however because of time constraints such analysis has not been included in this work.

A rising trend in digital influencer marketing is that of collaborating with micro-influencers, i.e. those influencer with up to 100,000 followers depending on the niche they are in, characterised by a more loyal audience, higher levels of engagement and an in-depth knowledge of the specific niche they operate in (Influencer Marketing Hub, n.d.). Future research might investigate the phenomenon of micro-influencer to check whether companies would benefit more in collaborating with lesser-known influencers, as they are hyper-specific and their followers belong to a well-defined niche, thus reaching such influencers' audience would be invaluable for companies operating in the same niche

as the influencer, since her followers would not be confused upon what is being promoted. It remains to be seen if a company such as Westwing would find influencers active in the interior design niche.

8. Conclusion

Digital influencer marketing is gaining more and more importance as it allows marketers to overcome the consumers' resistance to traditional marketing techniques, leveraging the trust relationship between an influencer and her followers to promote products and services. Nevertheless, digital influencer marketing campaigns can be more or less effective depending on what is being advertised and on the fit between the chosen influencer and the brand (Backaler, 2018).

Westwing Italia, part of Westwing Group – a giant in the digital home and living market –, has recently collaborated with different influencers to promote items belonging to Westwing's private label collection. Unlike clothes or jewellery, furniture is not a product “for personal use”; thus, a three-steps experiment has been arranged in order to investigate the overall effectiveness of the digital influencer marketing campaign, as the company decided to collaborate with influencers who had no connection with the home & living industry.

Findings suggested that, in the case of a brand such as Westwing Italia, a digital influencer marketing campaign might not be the most effective technique to promote Westwing products. In fact, images including influencers recorded a lower engagement rate compared to the pictures belonging to the other categories included in the experiment, i.e. inspirational images, ‘shoppable’ inspirational images and ‘shoppable’ images, as well as being considered less likeable. Such results go against the findings of Hershler and Hochstein (2005), of Bakhshi *et al.* (2014) and of Bakar *et al.* (2015). However, in accordance with the aforementioned studies, the visual attention of the sample was mostly directed to the faces of the influencers (Hershler & Hochstein, 2005; Bakhshi *et al.*, 2014; Bakar *et al.*, 2015), with the furniture being considered only marginally. Nevertheless, according to the participants the presence of human figures made was a clear sign of the promotional purposes of such images. However, according to the participants it was not clear what was being advertised. In particular, since two of the images including influencers also displayed fashion books which clearly stated

prestige brands on their back, some participants believed that the images were advertising such fashion brands, and not furniture.

Thus, despite digital influencer marketing being an asset for marketers working in an array of fields, it is not always the right tool to promote a brand, especially if there is no clear link between the influencer and the product advertised. Different marketing techniques should be implemented in order to reach the marketing campaign's goals, to effectively promote a brand without generating confusion in the (potential) customers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Selected visual stimuli per content category

Category A – Inspirational images



Image #2



Image #7



Image #12

Category B – ‘Shoppable’ inspirational images



Image #4



Image #6



Image #9

Category C – ‘Shoppable’ images



Image #1



Image #8



Image #11

Category D – Images featuring influencers



Image #3



Image #5



Image #10

The images have been selected from Westwing Italia's (@westwing.it) Instagram profile.

Appendix 2 – Heat maps



Heat map of image #1



Heat map of image #2



Heat map of image #3



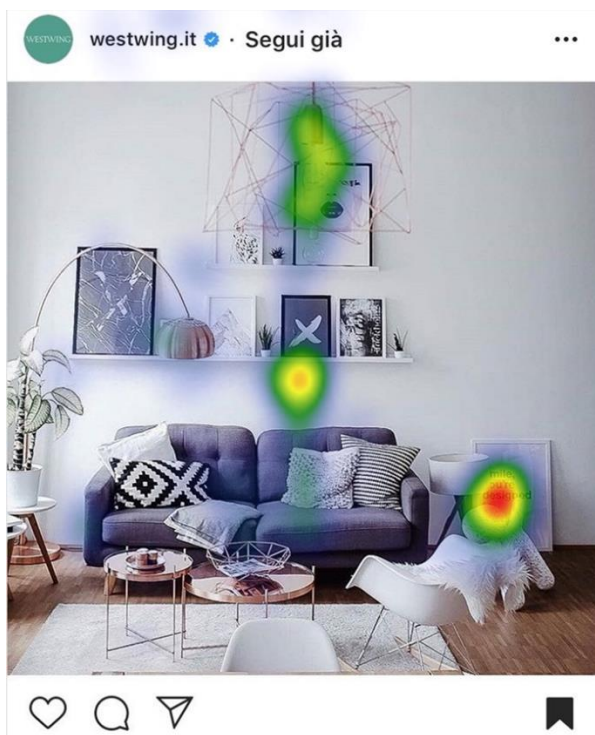
Heat map of image #4



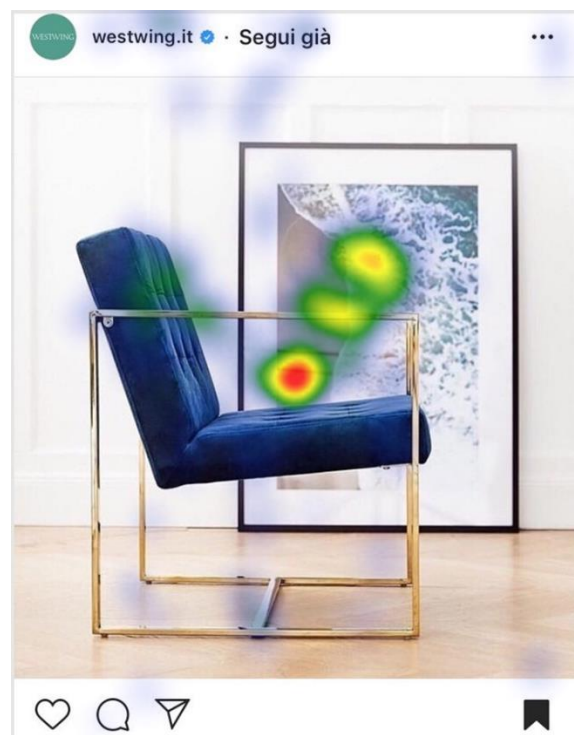
Heat map of image #5



Heat map of image #6



Heat map of image #7



Heat map of image #8



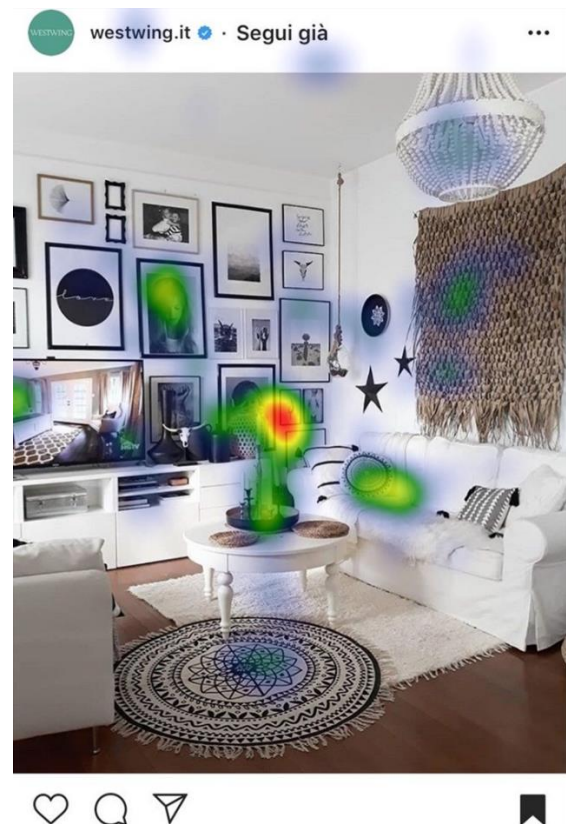
Heat map of image #9



Heat map of image #10



Heat map of image #11



Heat map of image #12

Appendix 3 – Key performance indicators per areas of interest

Image
#1

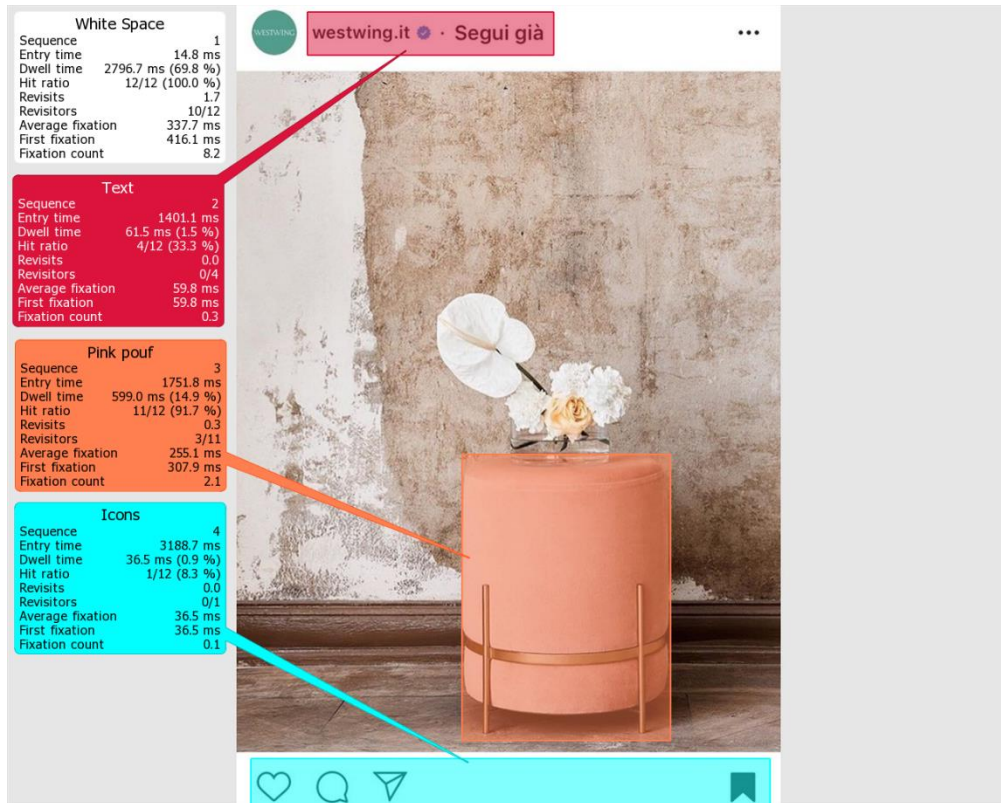


Image
#2

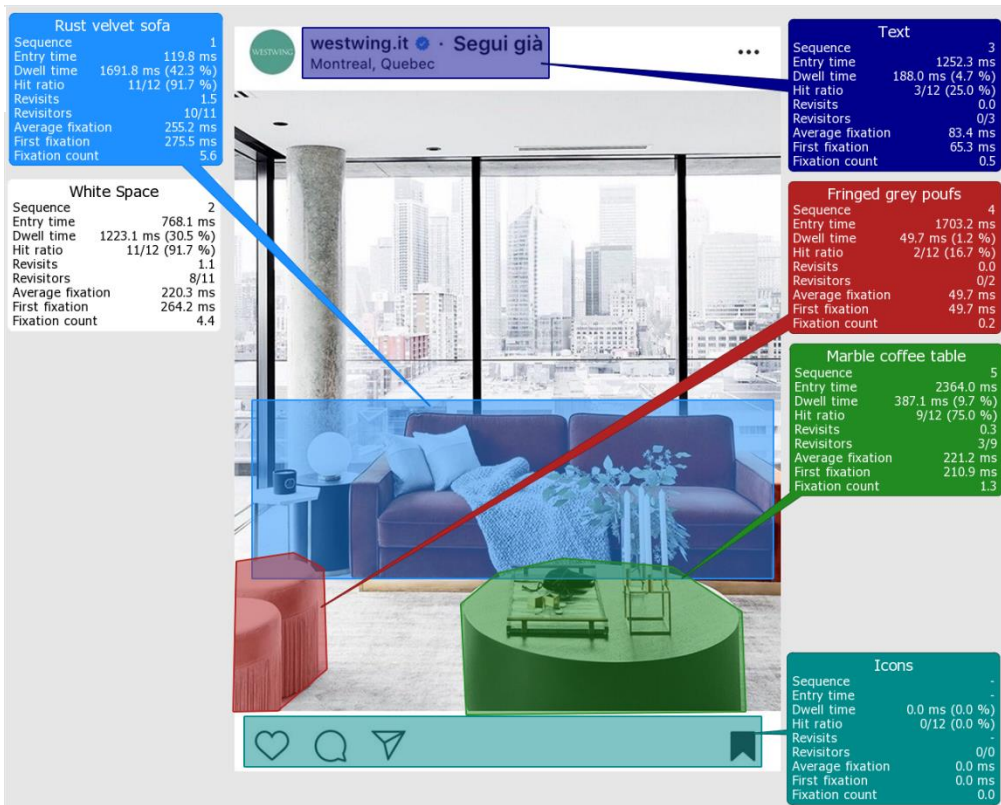


Image #3

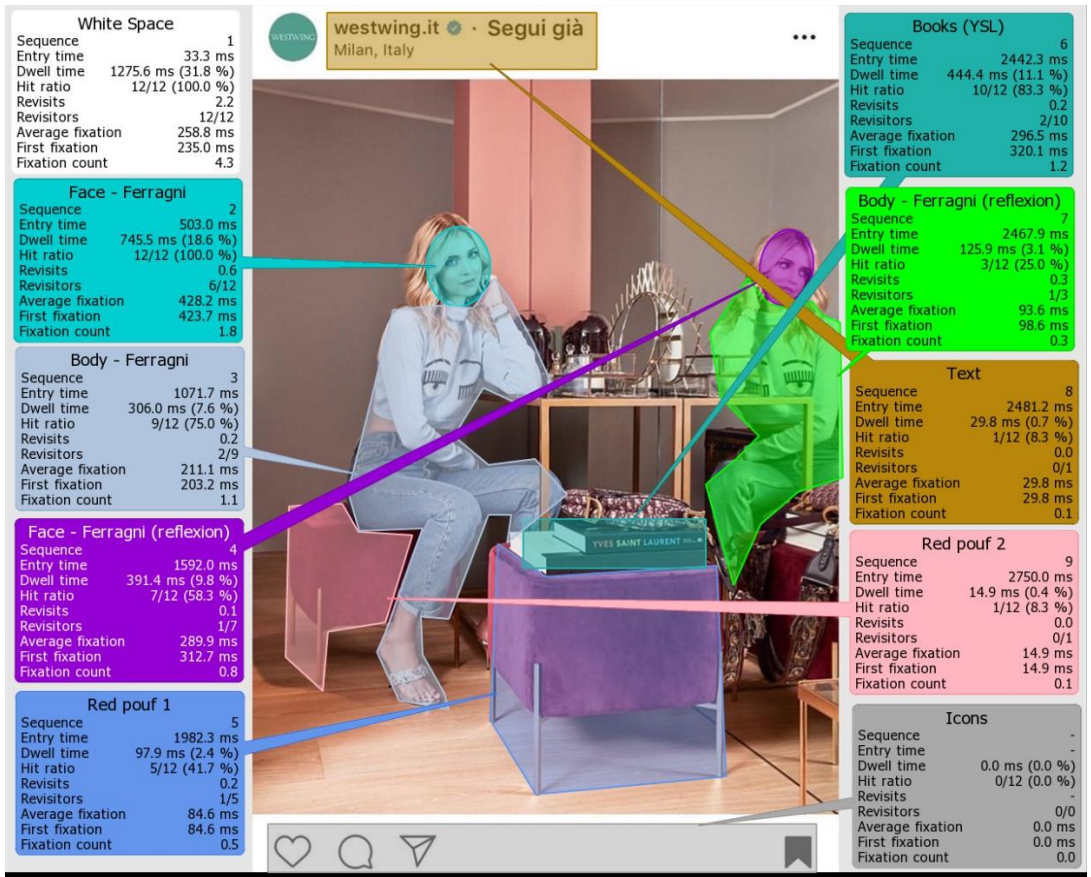


Image #4

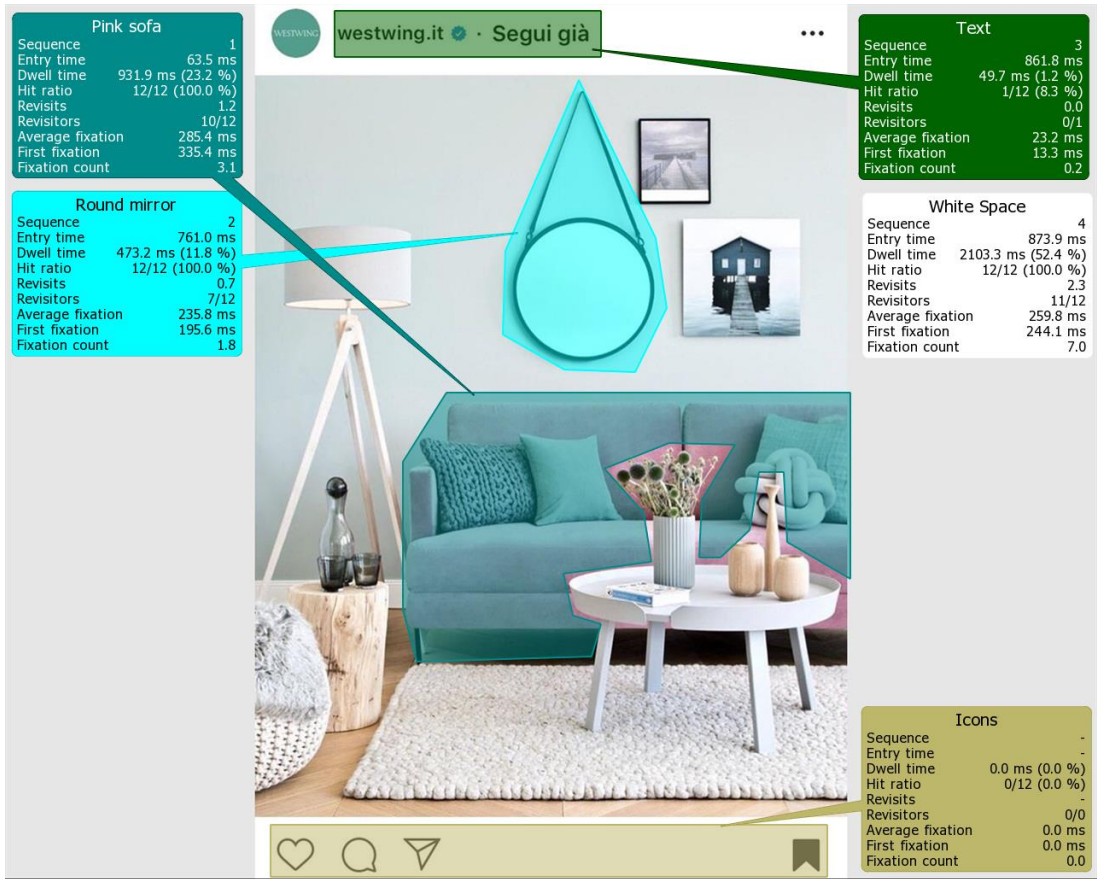


Image
#5

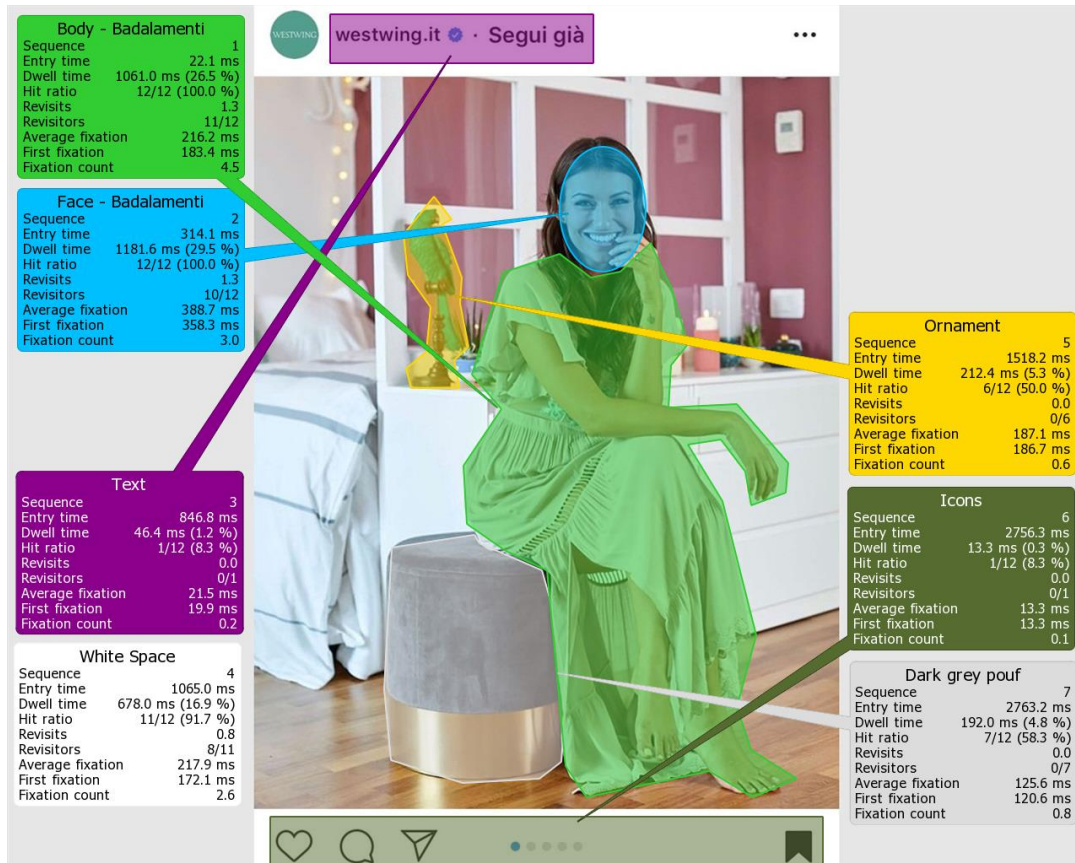


Image
#6

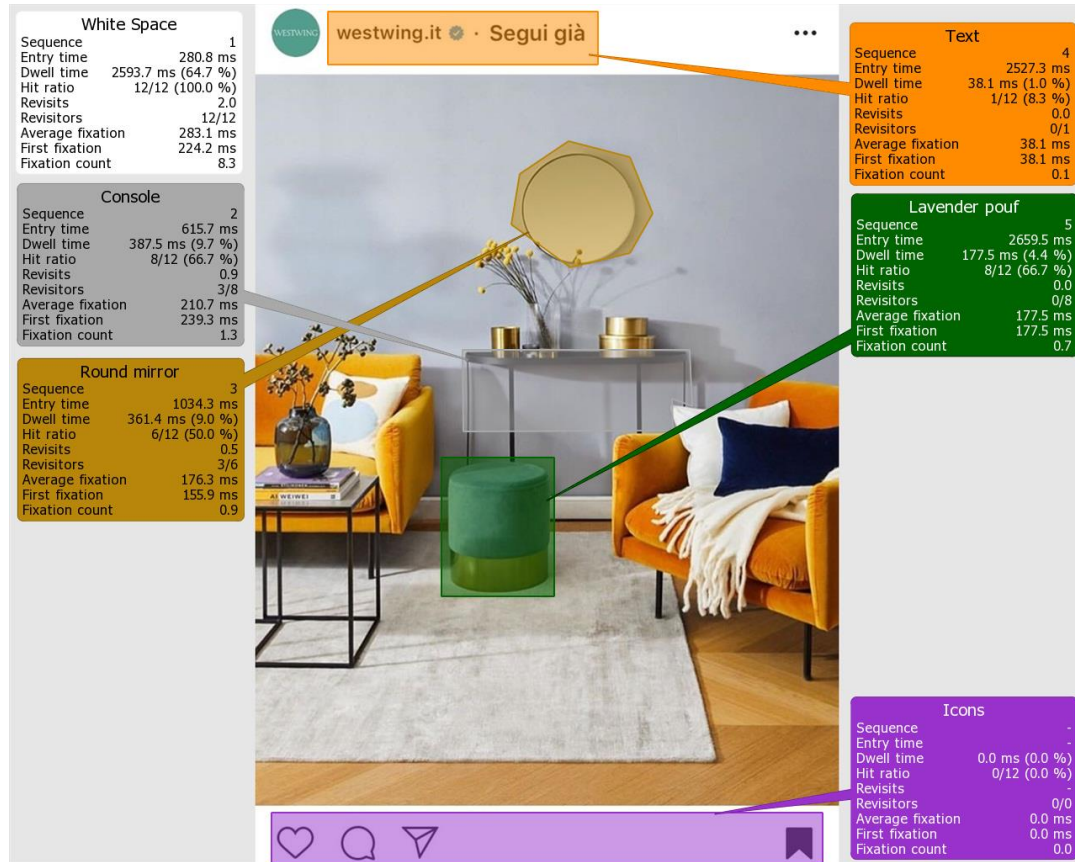


Image
#7

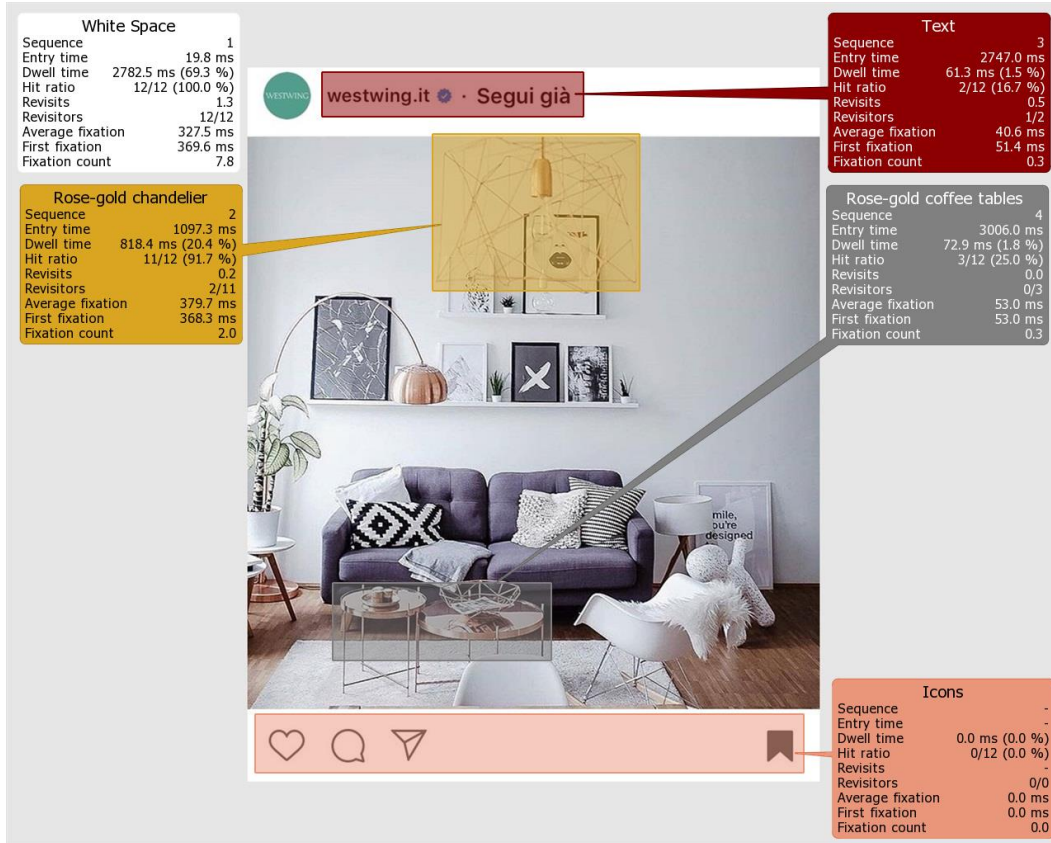


Image
#8

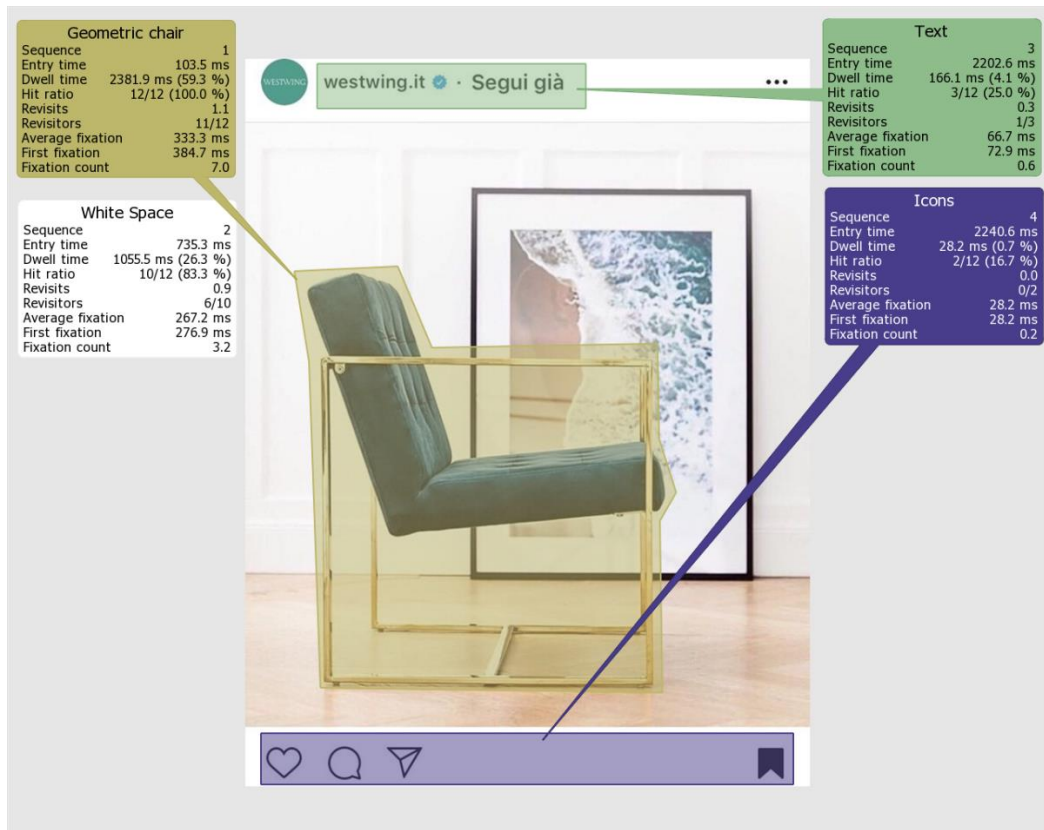


Image
#9

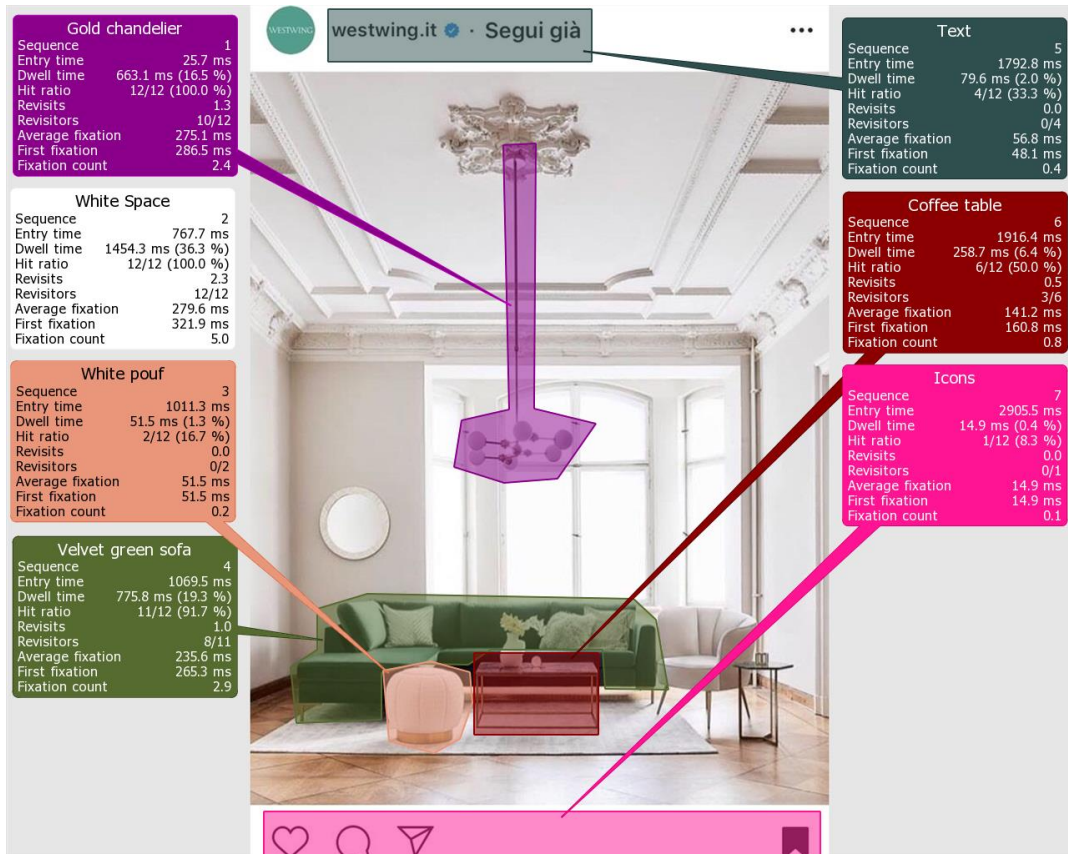


Image
#10

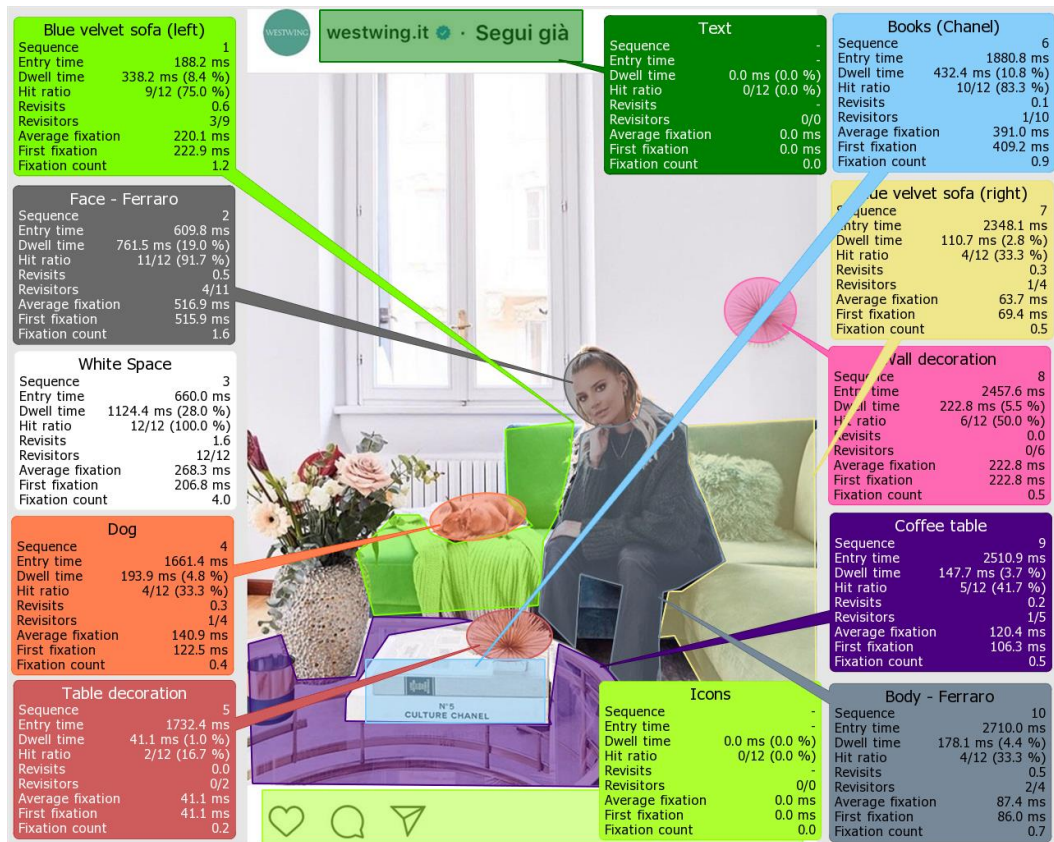


Image
#11

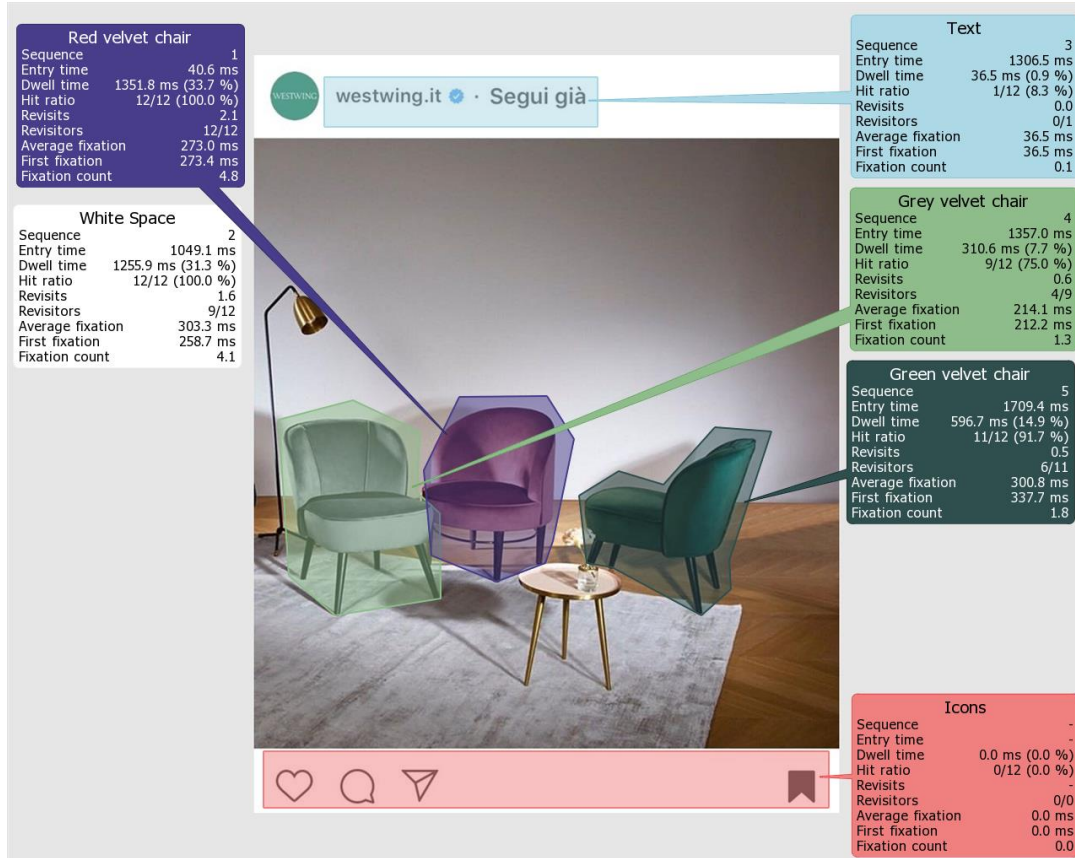
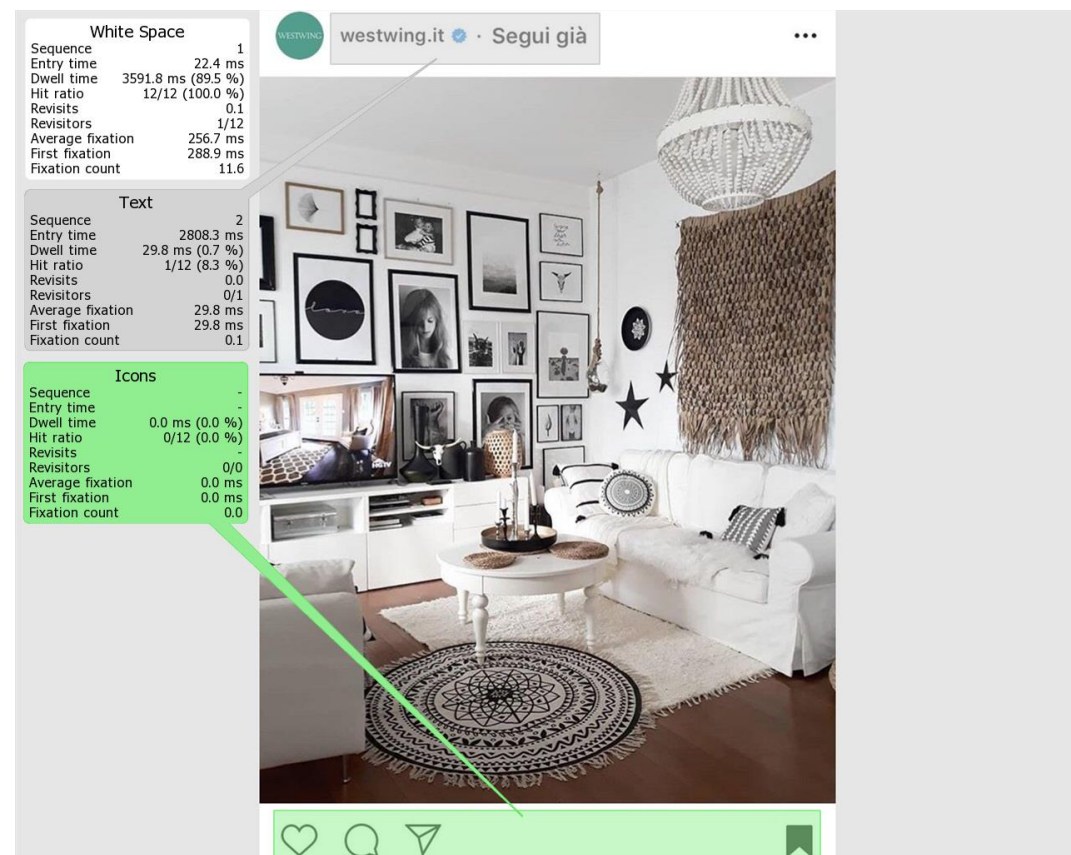


Image
#12



Appendix 4 – AOI sequence charts for stimuli featuring influencers

Image #3

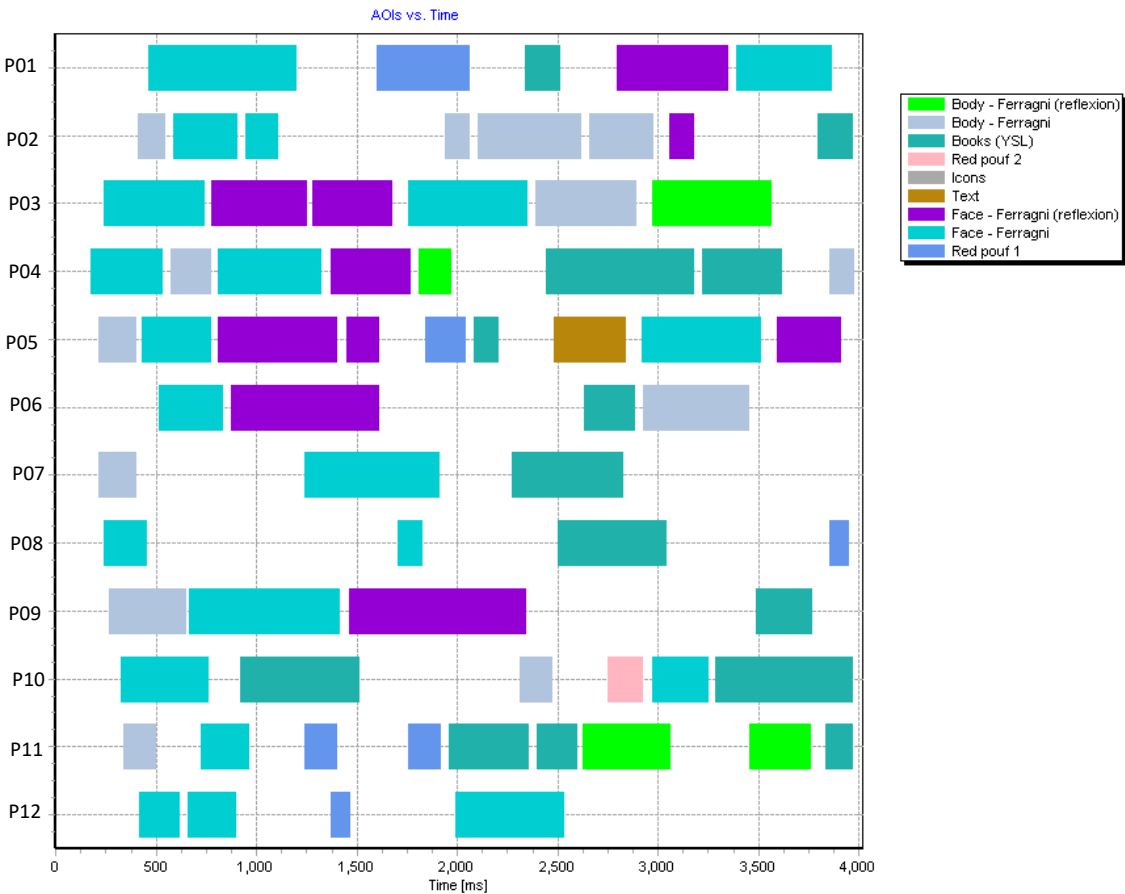
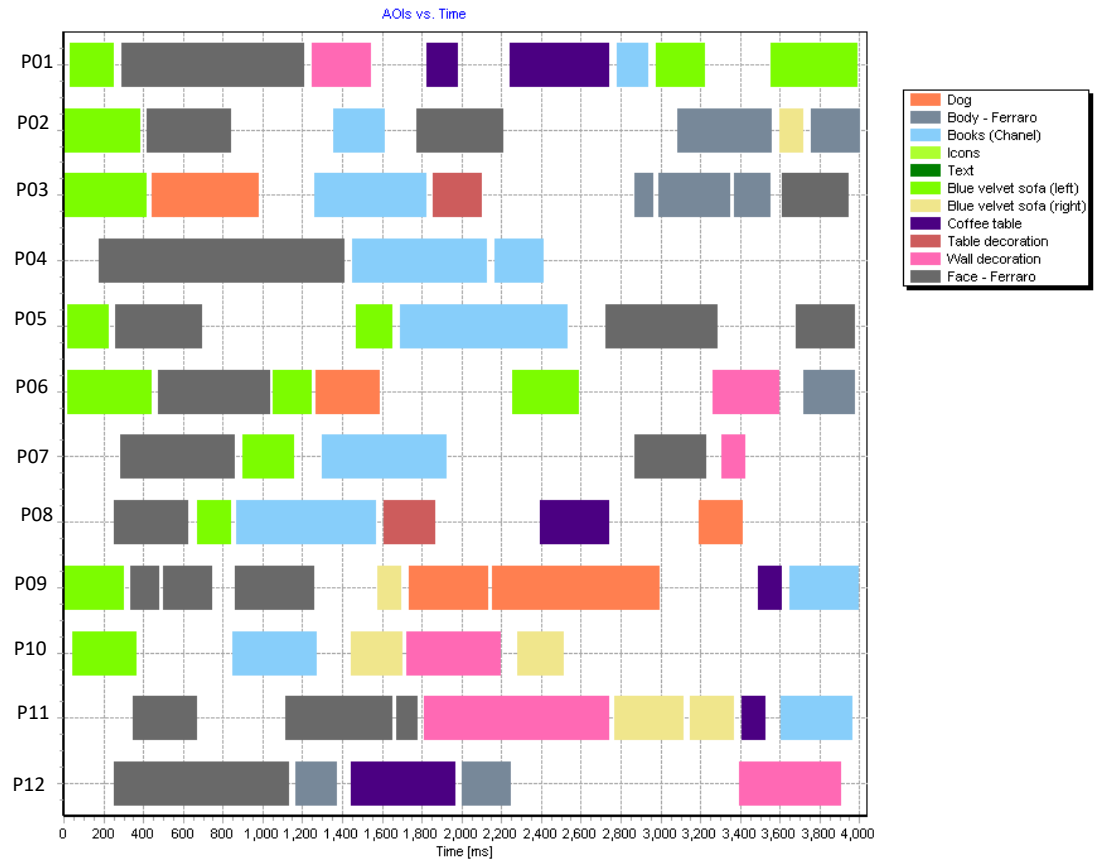


Image #5



Image #10



Appendix 5 – Questionnaire

Image #1

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	6	I like the stool and the flowers but I don't like the colour of the wall with the colour of the stool.	No	It just looks more like it's for the aesthetic rather than trying to sell me something.
P02	5	the color combination and placement of objects	Maybe	the ottoman
P03	6	I like the colors, how they blend	Yes	It looks a bit random, like you wouldn't find that combination in a house.
P04	6	I like the colours and the simplicity of the image	Yes	The place of the furniture on the picture
P05	4	the background, the emptiness	Maybe	the fact that there is only one central element on the image may indicate an advertisement of this product
P06	5	colors, combination of colors, looks peaceful	Maybe	the chair is really in the center which could make the chair the product, but it's not obvious
P07	4	I think the colors and positioning is aesthetic, but I probably wouldn't 'like' it.	Yes	The main focus is a stool, and there isn't much else pictured.
P08	4	the colours go well together but it is quite uninteresting	No	it doesn't look like an ad
P09	6	I like the flower and the colour of the piece of furniture	Yes	The only thing displayed is a piece of furniture so I supposed it is what's advertised
P10	3	The table on what the flowers are	Maybe	I don't think I'm sure what is the main object of the ad
P11	4	It is nothing special. I am not interested in it. Nice colours	Maybe	The picture composition
P12	4	It's quite empty	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #2

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	5	I like the red against the more neutral colours but I think maybe it's too busy	Maybe	It could be trying to sell me a style but I think it's more just for the aesthetic especially since they obviously tried to focus on the red which I think is more artistic
P02	6	the colors and their contrast, the structure	Yes	the way the picture is taking the elements in it
P03	6	I like the view of the city from behind, I don't know if it is relevant but it was important to me to see a location in the picture.	Yes	the placement of the furniture is very particular, it has been thought out.
P04	5	I don't like the fact that it looks too much like an advertisement (IKEA magazine)	No	It looks more like a lifestyle picture, I focus more on the landscape than the furniture
P05	5	how the couch stands out compared to the rest	No	it just seems like a normal livingroom

P06	4	like the composition of the picture (nice view, table), I dislike the color of the sofa	No	no product is really in the center, I wouldn't know for what it is an ad
P07	5	The picture looks like an 'ideal' living space, so I like it as inspiration for my own living situation.	Maybe	This photo could just be someone showing off their own home, but it feels curated which leads me to believe its an ad.
P08	5	I like how the couch stands out compared to the rest and the modern atmosphere	Yes	it looks like a classical setting for a furniture brand
P09	7	I like the whole setting, very inspiring and close to my taste	No	It feels more like an inspo
P10	6	Forniture and view	Maybe	Is a good picture, but is not clear the object of the ad
P11	5	Nice view from the flat. Nice sofa. With the grey background it catches the attention	Maybe	The colours in the picture
P12	6	The colors are really nice, and I like the city landscape in the background.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #3

	<i>I know the person in the picture</i>	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	No	5	I like the colour scheme but its a bit too ad like	Yes	The model and the Yves Saint Laurent book
P02	No	4	I think the reflection in the mirror looks strange	Yes	the girl posing
P03	Yes	4	I don't like her as a person that much, so it translates poorly on the brand for me, and it is a very "normal" picture, nothing spectacular	Yes	the fact that it is someone famous, they would use it to promote the brand
P04	Yes	5	I don't really like the person	Yes	The person advertises a lot
P05	No	3	I don't find the scene particularly nice	Yes	the brand one can see (Yves Saint Laurent)
P06	No	3	dislike the colors, don't like the person that much	Yes	the person makes it look like an ad
P07	No	3	I think the picture looks very 'instagram influencer' which I don't connect to much.	Maybe	She looks like an influencer.
P08	No	3	I don't like the way the model is dressed, it doesn't correspond to the global feeling given by the room	Yes	one can notice Yves Saint Laurent brand on a book in the front
P09	Yes	4	It is very staged	Yes	The influencer in the picture always advertises products
P10	Yes	3	I don't like the forniture	Yes	The presence of Chiara Ferragni makes clearer the aim of the ad
P11	Yes	4	It is a bit anonimous. I like the mirror	Yes	Influencer
P12	Yes	1	Because I don't like Chiara Ferragni	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company, plus Chiara Ferragni is in it.

Image #4

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	7	I love the pastels but they have also worked in darker shades like black in a subtle way	Maybe	Could be a furniture add or something. But it could also just be an aesthetic
P02	5	the combination of elements and their colors	Yes	product placement
P03	4	I think it has too much furniture, it is a bit aggressive on the eyes.	Yes	it is too well thought out, it does not seem spontaneous
P04	6	I like the colours but I don't like that the scene is not so natural (looks like an IKEA magazine again)	Yes	The way the furniture is organized
P05	6	it looks cosy	Maybe	similar to what Ikea is doing in its ads
P06	6	i like the colors, combination of elements in the picture and the inventory displayed	Maybe	not sure
P07	3	The space is well decorated, but not too my taste.	Yes	Feels very staged, with very general pictures in the background rather than personal memories.
P08	6	I love the colours and the materials, it looks comfortable	Yes	everything looks too perfect to be a "normal" living room
P09	7	I really like the colour of the sofa and how the room is arranged. Also the details and decor items are very nice	Maybe	It looks like someone's house but also looks staged somehow
P10	6	Furniture, how it is assembled	Yes	It seems more clear that the ad is sponsoring the furniture
P11	7	I like the picture composition, the colours. I like the furniture, it looks cozy	Maybe	There is a nice setting
P12	7	The colors are really beautiful.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #5

	<i>I know the person in the picture</i>	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	No	4	I like the colours but the girl laughing for no reason is cliché and I don't love the setting that much	Maybe	Could be an ad for clothing or something but might just be an Instagram model
P02	No	5	that she looks happy and i like the room	Yes	the girl, but if it had been posted on her personal account I wouldn't have thought of it as an ad
P03	No	6	she seems happy, it translates well	Yes	the woman is clearly posing for the picture, but her smile is genuine
P04	No	5	I don't really have an opinion, I am indifferent	No	I focus more on the person and I don't know her so I cannot tell if she's advertising or not
P05	No	3	uninteresting, nothing original	Maybe	it just looks like a portrait
P06	No	3	i don't like the person that much, it's nothing special or especially aesthetic	Yes	the model in the picture

P07	No	5	She's a pretty girl and I like her dress.	Maybe	She looks like an influencer - but it's not clear to me what she's advertising.
P08	No	5	the colours and the model are nice	No	nothing stands out, I don't know what it could be an ad for
P09	Yes	5	I like the girl's smile	Maybe	She might be promoting some items
P10	No	3	It gives more importance to the girl instead of all the picture	Maybe	It seems a good picture of a girl, not an ad
P11	No	3	It is a pointless picture	No	Not really interesting
P12	No	3	I don't like how the person in the picture is dressed.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #6

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	5	I like the orange and the gold, I'm just not sure if I like it with the grey	Maybe	It's very staged like it's trying to sell me something but could be used for anything
P02	6	the color combination and the furniture	Yes	the way the picture is taken
P03	5	it is a bit boring	Yes	it looks like a magazine
P04	5	The picture is fine I like colors and the way it is arranged	Yes	The way the furniture is organized in the picture
P05	4	I don't really like the colours but I like the design	Yes	similar to what furniture companies advertise
P06	4	i don't like the colors that much, but i like the inventory in general	Maybe	it could be an ad, but i don't know for what
P07	6	I like the colors, the couch - these are items I would want in my home.	Maybe	Only features furniture which makes it seem like an ad - doesn't have additional personality.
P08	5	the colours look quite sad	Yes	everything looks very tidy and makes the room cold, without life
P09	6	I like the furniture and its colours	Maybe	It is probably too staged to be someone's real house
P10	6	furniture arrangement	Yes	looks like home design magazine pictures
P11	5	Nice colours, like the mirror	Maybe	The furniture is well set. I would like to have something like that in my house
P12	7	The colors are beautiful.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #7

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	7	I like all the soft colours. It's more relaxed and the little bit of soft gold is nice.	No	The picture is quite staged but it doesn't seem like they wanted it to look that way. Almost like they wanted it to look more relaxed.
P02	4	I like some elements in it and dislike others e.g. the lamp cutting the picture behind	Yes	the way the picture is taken
P03	6	i like the style, the lifestyle it shows and the colors.	Maybe	it is really pretty, so it looks like an ad, but it is not too set up, it could easily be a normal home

P04	6	I like the colors and it's my style	Yes	The way the furniture is presented, I tend to focus on it
P05	5	I like the colours but there are too many items on the picture	Yes	looks like a typical ad for furniture
P06	7	i like the colors, the lamp, the whole inventory is nice	Maybe	it looks like a picture out of a catalogue, but i wouldn't know what their exactly selling
P07	4	It has a lot of cool items I would want - the tables, the plant, the fuzzy blankets. But it feels cluttered, so it's not styled to my taste.	Yes	Only features furniture - tried to put as much in the photo as possible.
P08	6	I like the neutral colours and the association with metal, the geometrical patterns on the cushions	Yes	it resembles what could be found in a magazine
P09	5	I like many of the items in the picture but maybe overall is too messy, too full	No	I think it's someone's living room
P10	7	furniture arrangement	Yes	looks like home design magazine pictures
P11	6	I like the lampadario	No	Too many elements. I don't really notice where the focus of the picture is
P12	4	The colors are nice, but I really don't like the chandelier and the pictures on the wall.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #8

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	3	It is kinda boring. I like the colours but I mean its just a chair with a nice picture.	No	Could be trying to sell me the chair but I feel like brands tend to try and show more of their products in ads so I dont think this is one.
P02	3	I dislike how the chair cuts into the picture behind it	Yes	It looks like it is an ad for the chair
P03	6	it is simple, but it is pretty	Yes	the light of the picture, rooms usually don't
P04	4	Too simple	Yes	Because the whole picture is the object
P05	3	too little information, emptiness	No	the product is not presented at its best
P06	4	don't like the desing of the chair that much, but i like the colors and the atmospere of the picture	Yes	the chair is prominently displayed in the picture
P07	4	The style is nice and the photo is clean.	Yes	It only features one product, which I assume is what they're selling.
P08	2	it is useless, no harmony, nothing happening	Yes	it looks like an ad for the chair, because it is central and basically the only noticable thing in the picture
P09	7	I like the colour of the chair and the lines, very clear and neat. I also like the picture in the back	Yes	Since there are few elements I suppose they are being advertised
P10	7	the picture and the chair	Yes	the object is clear
P11	5	I olike the chair	Maybe	Nice furniture but it is not the best composition of the picture
P12	3	It's a bit empty.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #9

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	6	I like the pop of green amongst all the white but I do feel like the green is a bit dark	Maybe	It is very staged and the furniture looks like it could all be from the same brand
P02	4	I like the furniture but dont like the distance from the ceiling in which the lamp is hanging	Yes	the way the picture is taken, the way the furniture is placed
P03	6	it seem very spatous, nice and matching	Yes	it looks like a picture taken in a photoshoot
P04	6	I like the type of the apartment	Yes	Only furniture nothing else on the picture
P05	6	uniformity, space, light	Maybe	it could be an ad because everything is really neutral, there is no feeling of life in this picture
P06	6	the inventory and the colors of the picture are nice, but it looks a little bit cold (not that much emotion)	Yes	only a few inventories so that you concentrate more on their products, this makes it look like an add
P07	5	Looks clean and airy. It has a nice aesthetic.	Maybe	I don't know many people who live like that, so I assume its staged.
P08	5	sensation of freedom because the ceiling is high and the room is big	Maybe	it looks too clean for people to actually live here
P09	6	I like its elegance and the high ceilings	No	It seems like someone's living room
P10	7	pictures and forniture	Yes	looks like home design magazine pictures
P11	7	This is my dream flat.	Maybe	It looks so nice
P12	4	The sofa is cute, but I don't like the chandelier.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #10

	<i>I know the person in the picture</i>	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	No	6	I like the blue with the flowers. The image is busy in areas but balanced out with more simple areas.	Yes	The presence of a person clearly trying to sell me a brands lifestyle. Also the chanel book (the brand might not be chanel but its like its trying to attach itself to that brands prestige)
P02	No	4	I like the colors, I dont like the way the girl is not interacting with the dog	Yes	the girl is posing instead of interacting with the dog
P03	No	6	i like that she seems powerfull, but still in the same furniture, it makes me think it has multiple uses.	Yes	it could be an add for her house, like she cleaned it just for the picture
P04	Yes	4	I don't really appreciate the person in the image	Yes	The person is keen to advertize (plus same type of picture as Chiara Ferragni)
P05	No	4	I like the colours and the dog, I don't like the flowers	Yes	we can see the brand name Chanel in the front
P06	No	3	i don't like the flowers and the sofa that much, and also don't like the person in the picture that much	Yes	because of the model in the picture
P07	No	6	The dog looks cozy and the muted colors are nice.	Maybe	She looks like an influencer, and it feels a little staged.

P08	No	4	I like the dog and the couch, I don't like the model	Yes	maybe for Chanel since one can see the name of the brand in on the table
P09	Yes	5	I like the display in the coffee table, the dog and the sofa but I think the girl looks angry somehow	Yes	The girl is an influencer and usually advertises brands. Also there are books by fashion brands clearly recognizable
P10	No	4	Forniture	Yes	arrangment of objects in the picture
P11	No	4	Nice, but nothing special	No	I don't really notice anything special
P12	No	6	The sofa has a really nice color - plus there is a dog in the picture.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #11

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	2	I dislike the colours of the chairs, how they are placed, and intensely dislike the lighting.	Yes	Just the repetition of the chair and the focus on them.
P02	3	one chair is facing the other way and the other two are too close together	Yes	that the chairs are the main focus of the picture
P03	3	it seems to fake, like just random chairs.	Yes	there is no way it is a room randomly in a house
P04	3	The colors are too dark	Yes	Only furniture
P05	5	it looks artistic but I don't like these colours together	Yes	its looks like it hqs been set by professionals which could indicate that it is an ad
P06	4	I don't like the color of the chairs that much	Yes	clear focus on the chairs
P07	4	The chairs are beautiful and unique looking.	Yes	It only features chairs, which I assume is the product.
P08	5	it is artistic, visually nice to see, the light is also beautiful	Yes	it looks professional
P09	4	I like the chairs but maybe it's a little too grey	Maybe	It really looks like an editorial
P10	2	colors match and chairs	Yes	is clear what is the object of the ad
P11	4	it looks a bit sad	Maybe	Could be but it is a bit depressing
P12	3	I don't really like the three colors of the armchairs together.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Image #12

	<i>I like the image</i>	<i>What do you (dis)like of the image? Please answer concisely:</i>	<i>The image is an ad</i>	<i>Which elements make you think that the image is (not) an ad? Please answer concisely:</i>
P01	7	I like that it is all black and white with hints of warmer calm tones. The simple colour scheme kind of balances out how busy everything is.	No	Because of the tv and the relaxed placement of everything.
P02	4	I like the pictures on the wall and the color combination, but i dont like the mat on the wall and the round rug	Maybe	i am not sure
P03	6	i like it, but the pictures in the background are a lot, it distracts me from the furniture	Yes	it definitely is , because of the location

P04	6	I like this type of arrangement, feeling of cosiness (hygge)	No	The room looks more personal
P05	4	I like the colours and the natural materials but there are too many items, in particular frames on the wall	Yes	no one put so many pictures on the wall in his/her house
P06	7	i like the color and all the small details in the room, also like the atmosphere of the photo	Maybe	it looks like an add, but not so clear for what
P07	3	I think it looks a little cluttered, and the styling is not too my taste.	Maybe	It looks like a staged house, but there are elements that look like it could be someone's personal home - like the photos on the wall.
P08	3	there are too many things	Yes	everything is perfectly placed
P09	5	I like many of the elements displayed but maybe it's too full	No	It looks like someone's living room
P10	7	fornitures	Yes	looks like home design magazine pictures
P11	5	Nice pictures	No	Too many elements in the composition
P12	3	I don't like the brown thing hanging from the wall and the whole fake country vibe.	Yes	It's from the Instagram page of a company.

Demographics

	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Level of education	<i>I knew Westwing before this experiment</i>
P01	18-24	Female	New Zealand	Bachelor of Science	No
P02	25-34	Female	Guatemala	Master of Science	No
P03	18-24	Female	Mexico	Bachelor of Science	No
P04	18-24	Female	France	Bachelor of Science	No
P05	18-24	Female	France	Master of Science	No
P06	18-24	Female	Switzerland	Bachelor of Science	No
P07	18-24	Female	USA	Master of Science	No
P08	18-24	Female	France	Master of Science	No
P09	25-34	Female	Italy	Master of Science	Yes
P10	18-24	Female	Italy	Bachelor of Science	No
P11	18-24	Female	Italy	Master of Science	No
P12	18-24	Female	Italy	Master of Science	Yes

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