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Social media practices by Human Resources companies: How do they impact brand image and customer engagement?

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Internship report presented as partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Information Management and Marketing Intelligence.

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Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação

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**SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES BY HUMAN RESOURCES
COMPANIES: HOW DO THEY IMPACT BRAND IMAGE
AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT?**

by

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Information Management with a specialization in Marketing Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

In this new era of technology, using social media networks has become ordinary and necessary for both societies and organizations. In this context, social media marketing emerged as a strategic tool for branding improvements, raising customer engagement, and creating brand awareness. This internship report aims to complement the existing literature regarding social media practices by human resources companies, and how do they impact the brand image and customer engagement levels of those same companies. Considering the case of Placement in Portugal and through the application of *Benchmarking*, I will compare what the company has been doing online with some of the most well-known Human Resources and Recruitment companies worldwide. Afterward, it will be possible to gain insights into the best practices and strategies that Placement in Portugal should follow to increase and improve its performance online.

KEYWORDS

Social media Marketing

Digital Content Marketing

Brand Image

Brand Perception

Customer Engagement

Customer Engagement Initiatives

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ACADEMIC CONTEXT

This Internship Report Proposal is part of the second year of my Master's in Information Management and Marketing Intelligence from the University of NOVA Information Management School, in Lisbon. Students must complete either a thesis, a working project, or an internship report. In this context, I chose a company named Placement in Portugal to complete my curricular internship, which I started on the 10th of September 2020 and it was completed on the 14th of March 2021.

1.2 BUSINESS CONTEXT

Placement in Portugal is a Portuguese start-up organization based in Lisbon and settled in 2012. Its biggest mission is to use its international trainee program to help international graduates and young professionals finding an internship in Portugal. Those internships are opportunities that match their skills, education, and preferences. Even though the market is not fully aware of the Erasmus internship program, PIP wants to change it soon.

Between 2012 and 2020, Placement in Portugal's broad network of contacts has enabled more than 500 internships in Portuguese companies, specialized in various fields and areas of knowledge, like tourism, design, marketing, finances, and technology. Placement in Portugal counts with more than 60 partnerships with universities within and outside the European Union. The company gives priority to students that participate in the Erasmus Program or any other Scholarship. Nevertheless, it also accepts non-European candidates who do not have a scholarship or Europeans who can finance their stay in Portugal by themselves, applying on their website. It is also important to know that the majority of the internship opportunities are unpaid, and therefore the scholarship or capability of financing their expenses is required by companies. However, it is always necessary to have the University involved in the process because without documents like the Learning Agreement, it will not be possible to proceed with the internship.

The company also offers extra services -support with bureaucratic issues and assistance with relocation to Portugal- to the accepted interns before and during their internship to guarantee the best experience for all parties involved.

1.3 DEVELOPED ACTIVITIES

During my internship, I conducted a few tasks and developed several activities that allowed me to improve Placement in Portugal's brand image, and consequently, increase its customer engagement levels in each social media channel. With this regard, in this first part of the Methodology, I am going to describe those tasks to be possible to contextualize what I have been doing during my internship.

- **Branding ambassador**

Branding is a key marketing asset for every business. Placement in Portugal's brand image was already very consolidated when I came to the company. Since I was one of the candidates who registered at Placement in Portugal's website and who had the opportunity to be chosen, I can speak about my personal experience.

I considered the website of the company very intuitive and accessible. The same happened for their social media platforms. In this regard, I checked that they were very friendly and professional considering answering to the candidates and very effective in promoting the available offers. Nevertheless, I felt that the type of content that Placement in Portugal used to share with its followers was not appealing since it didn't lead me to engage with the brand and check older posts. The company focused a lot on providing informative content when promoting the internship opportunities, which sometimes can be boring for someone scrolling in the newsfeed. In this context, I tried to be proactive concerning creating new opportunities for the business, focusing my attention on upgrading its brand image and bringing more entertaining content to its followers.

- **Candidates & Partnerships**

Placement in Portugal counts with a wide network of contacts, having a database with several Portuguese companies and Universities within and outside the European Union- the two main partners of its business. The company works with students from various exchange programs, bringing international knowledge and skills for local startups. The company uses its social media platforms as a marketing tool to promote internship opportunities and attract those students. Besides, Placement in Portugal also uses social media to create new partnerships, highlighting the amazing benefits offered to startups, small businesses, and

large companies from all sectors. The process of creating a partnership was very simple and easy. After those companies are reached on social media or contacted by email, they have some steps to follow, such as making the correct registration at Placement in Portugal's website with all the information needed to validate the offerings. Afterward, it will be possible to start conducting the interviews with students.

Despite the current partnerships that the company had, I noticed that the number of students looking for an internship in the platform was higher compared to the number of internship positions available to receive those students. For this reason, I also prioritized finding new potential partners for Placement in Portugal, mostly from sectors of the economy that were not affected by Covid 19. In this context, I researched new companies on LinkedIn and online communities, like Made of Lisboa, Startup Lisboa, and contacted them to present Placement in Portugal's business plan, with the respective mission, objectives, and budget conditions.

- **Promotion & Communication**

During my internship, I noticed that Placement in Portugal's promotion and communication strategies were defined to make the company's services known and reach new relevant candidates to the platform (at least a min of 50 per week). Besides, I also verified that Placement in Portugal, when compared to other recruitment companies, follows an informal communication strategy. The company uses a lot of emojis and hashtags and is very accessible for everyone who reaches them on social media.

In my view, this communication strategy is very effective and crucial concerning building Placement in Portugal's brand image since its audience is mainly students looking for internship opportunities abroad. Placement in Portugal should be perceived as a warm brand, a friend that young people, who don't have any experience in the job market, can count on. In this context, my biggest challenge was to bring the maximum number of applicants to Placement in Portugal's website and propose new creative ways to do it through social media.

- **Social Media Management & Email Marketing**

As I mentioned before, social media is a crucial component in Placement in Portugal's communication strategy since it is the only source of advertising and the only channel that the company uses to promote its services and report its mission to its audience. In this context, the effective management of all social media channels was a huge responsibility for me as an intern, and I had to understand what could or not work on each platform (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn). After I started my internship, I realized that Placement in Portugal only bets on producing organic content, which is the content created and produced by the Marketing/ Communications department in real-time and does not need paid promotion to be seen by the audience.

Having in mind the small number of followers on social media platforms and the size of the company (small enterprise), this type of content is the one that makes the most sense. For this reason, investing in sponsored social media content – the content that has monetary backing- was never an option for Placement in Portugal. Besides, the company had already a lot of people searching for their services and making their application on its website so the organic reach achieved with posts was enough to guarantee engagement.

Nevertheless, If the business grows in the future, the investment in paid content can be a good strategy for Placement in Portugal.

- **Analysis and report of results**

As Lead Generator and Business Developer Trainee, I had to communicate the results and the improvements made to the managers of Placement in Portugal. Through the completion of monthly written reports, I was able to highlight the most relevant information regarding my position, such as the number of new candidates reached on each social media, the number of posts done and published, the number of new partnerships obtained. In this way, I could prove how I was adding value to Placement in Portugal's online performance.

Besides, I also had to communicate the difficulties I felt with my position's tasks and some recommendations through brainstorming. For instance, and how I will discuss it later, I noticed that by having a consistent presence across all social media channels and by creating both interactive and informative posts, it would be possible for the company to reach more followers and, consequently, obtain more engagement from them.

1.4 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM AND STUDY RELEVANCE

In this new era of technology, social media has been emerging as a marketing tool for brands and organizations, replacing traditional Marketing. According to Ajina (2019), digital and social media marketing has allowed companies to achieve marketing objectives at a lower price. Nowadays, everyone is spending a lot of their time online, whether searching for information about products, services, and brands or communicating with other people about their experiences. In agreement with Bilgin, Y. (2018), this change in consumer behavior led many businesses to create their brand profiles on social media channels and develop activities to engage and share content with consumers.

In 2012, Kim and Ko defined social media as an online application program, platform, or mass media tool that facilitates communication, collaboration, or sharing information among users in general. Social media is very effective in promoting brands, products, and services and as claimed by Elaydi, H. (2018), is one of the marketing strategies used by successful businesses to be part of the online consumers' network.

Additionally, in 2012, Erdoğan & Cicek (2012) stated that social media marketing is more sincere in its communication with the consumers and has contributed to the individualization of marketing by which organizations can communicate, collect data, and provide customized responses and solutions for their customers (Royle and Laing, 2014). Besides, as stated by Tuten (2020) in his book, social media marketing is used across sectors and refers to the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders. One year after, in 2018, Langaro, et al., expressed that social media marketing (SMM) is generally recognized to play a reasonable role when it comes to influencing consumers' perceptions towards brands.

According to Schulze et al., (2015), social media marketing is still considered a relatively new marketing tool so, the understanding of the influence of social media marketing activities on brand image is still limited. Nevertheless, given the growing importance of social media in marketing, marketers are now using social media marketing to communicate brand messages and brand personality and build a strong and favorable brand image in consumers' minds (Keller, 2013). Particularly the literature remains scant on the best practices of social media by HR companies.

Literature also indicates that social media marketing not only intensifies the existing firm-to-customer and customer-to-firm relationships, but also creates new ways of interaction and communication between firms and customers (Farook & Abeysekara, 2016), proving the existing relationship between social media marketing and customer engagement.

Despite growing scholarly interest in customer engagement, understanding the best social media practices for HR firms is valuable since the total amount of active social media users worldwide is continually growing every day. Although there is a reduced number of studies regarding Human Resources and Recruitment companies' best practices on social media, these companies are also aware of the importance of being "online", as well as the usage of social media channels as strategic tools for "*branding, acquisition, and retention*" (Pozin, 2014, p. 2). According to Rietveld, R. et al. (2020), a report by Brain Research Institute indicates that visual social media were rapidly increasing in popularity once consumers together uploaded on average 42 million images and liked posts 1.65 billion times a day only on Instagram. More recently, Statista (2020) reported that "*in 2020, over 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025*".

In this way, the present report aims to contribute with further information regarding the implications of social media marketing for the brand image and the customer engagement of organizations, framing the case of Placement in Portugal. Since social media is becoming a convenient talent acquisition tool for many Human Resources and Recruitment companies, this report will help Placement in Portugal defining the best practices to follow online and how to use LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram to hire people. On the one hand, this study will contribute to the improvement of Placement in Portugal's branding in terms of the quality and the type of content published. On the other hand, it will enhance the company's online performance in terms of several social media metrics like reach, organic mentions, post engagement rate, number of likes, comments, and followers.

In this context there are some sub-questions that this study aims to answer:

- 1) Which type of content works better for each social media platform channel?
- 2) Should Placement in Portugal social media content branding be more formal or informal?

- 3) Should Placement in Portugal rely on informative or interactive content to boost customer engagement?
- 4) Will the company's interaction style on social media affect its customers' perceptions of warmth and competence?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 INFORMATIVE VS INTERACTIVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Over the last years, brands have been developing several online initiatives that create value and drive customer engagement. Eigenraam et. al, (2018) reported in their article that brands are launching an extensive range of customer engagement initiatives due to technological advancements. Customer engagement initiatives are organizational initiatives that facilitate firm–customer interactions to strengthen emotional or psychological bonds between customers and firms (Gill, Sridhar, & Grewal 2017).

The concepts of online initiatives and brand-generated content on social media are not new. According to Agichtein et al., (2008), entertainment in social media marketing occurs when marketers provide experiences on social media platforms that are funny and playful. Otherwise, as stated by Meire et.al, (2019), informative initiatives are neither directly promotional in nature nor aimed at prompting audience engagement. In 2017, Akpınar & Berger proposed a distinction between “emotional vs. informative” appeals in online advertising and found that online video ads with strong emotional appeals are more likely to be shared, while online ads with informative appeals drive brand evaluations and purchase.

Meire et.al. (2019) reported that message content categories in social media could be described as having a more informative or more entertaining nature. As stated by Eigenraam et. al (2021), while entertaining initiatives are more focused on creating emotional and hedonic experiences for the consumer, informative initiatives are aimed to inform the consumer, providing a utilitarian value. Understanding the customer journey can also be a good strategy when it comes to developing online engagement initiatives. In 2020, Demmers et. al declared that consumers feel more engaged with informative brand-generated content in a stage of prior consumption, whereas entertaining posts may attract more likes, shares, and comments in the post-consumption phase.

Consumers are both looking for information and interactivity when searching online. In 2018, Lee et.al stated that consumers’ engagement with brand-generated content is a key metric to assess the performance of brands’ social media activities. This information is supported by Voorveld et.al, (2018) who outlined that the effectiveness of digital engagement initiatives is usually evaluated through social media monitoring tools that provide quantitative

metrics, like the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks, as indicators of engagement levels. For instance, a study conducted by De Vries et. al (2012) showed that the content of the brand post (information and entertainment), together with vividness, interactivity, the top position of a brand post, and the valence of comments, are determinants of brand post popularity (i.e., the number of likes and the number of comments). If on one hand an interactive brand post such as a video or a contest, can enhance the number of likes and comments, on the other hand, entertainment can have a negative effect on the number of likes, because entertaining brand posts contain content that is unrelated to the brand, and brand fans are interested in the brand (De Vries et. al, 2012).

Associated with online engagement initiatives appears the term “authenticity”. The importance of authenticity was highlighted in a recent survey developed by Stackla (2018) whose results suggested that 57% of consumers perceive a minority of brand-created content as authentic, and 20% of consumers have even unfollowed a brand for considering its content to be inauthentic. This information was supported by Eigenraam, et. al 2021, who found out that consumers are more supportive of engagement initiatives that are seen as authentic, in other words, that are consistent with their perception of the brand.

In this context, the use of interactive content in digital marketing strategies has been considered the solution. As reported by Muntinga et. al (2011), entertainment leads people to consume, create or contribute to brand-related content online. More recently, Hall (2020) mentioned that interactive content is the perfect strategy to differentiate a brand, since it allows to connect with a broader audience using consumer-targeted content, as well as create an authentic business-to-consumer (B2C) relationship, which not only involves lead generation but also investing in long-term strategies.

Kusumasondjaja (2018) conducted research which determined that interactive brand posts were the most frequently responded to in comparison with the informative message content. Findings of the same research also showed that interactive brand posts with both informative and entertainment appeals received the most reactions on Facebook and Instagram, while an only self-centered message with an informative appeal obtained a lower customer engagement (Kusumasondjaja, 2018). This study meets the findings of research conducted by Raney et al, (2003) who stated that information content aligned with entertaining elements is usually evaluated positively by customers when compared to information content without any entertainment features.

Human Resources and Recruitment companies have been following several online engagement initiatives to increase the number of interactions from followers on social media channels, namely on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. According to Madia (2011), companies should always be looking for relevant and interesting content that will offer value to potential hires, like tips for job seekers, prerequisites for positions, a sneak peek at life at the company, the state of employment, and tips for interviewing for instance.

Although Instagram is a successful platform with over one billion users, the usage of this social network sometimes might not be appropriate for HR companies. Usually, its content is associated with the hedonic and fun aspect of life and might reduce the company's competence when they do so (Li et al., 2019). Nevertheless, since this social network is more informal and is suitable for both informative and entertaining content, companies have a lot of freedom when it comes to announcing the news. For instance, a video recruitment ad can be even more fun than simply publishing a picture and following it with the right hashtags can help to maximize the reach of the post and even make it viral (Clarke, A.,2021). These findings are supported by Hall (2020), who believes that by using interactive content, companies can have accurate data to better market their audience. By making daily posts, such as short clips that aren't information-heavy, blog posts and interviews, the audience will stay engaged.

On Facebook, companies can create different types of posts too, and each one of them can spark engagement in different ways. Informative content like text posts can be useful for sharing important information that the audience might be looking for on the page (Newberry & McLachlan, 2020), like a job announcement in the case of recruitment companies. Nevertheless, according to the authors, photo posts have a better engagement since an impressive photo is a great strategy to catch the attention of a potential customer scrolling through the news feed.

Regarding LinkedIn, this business-to-business platform is more professional in terms of customer engagement. According to Bradley, R. (2018), about 45% of users are company managers, VPs, CEOs, or other senior management. Since they are looking for content related to their industry, LinkedIn is the ideal place for sharing more informative posts like research-based case studies, reports, and whitepapers. Even so, a more entertaining post like sharing an attractive photo taken at a business event is a great way to show off a company's personality, and so a good strategy to gain a lot of attention on LinkedIn (Bradley, R. 2018).

2.2 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Brands and organizations have always been worried about building strong emotional connections with their customers as well as getting the greatest number of interactions from them - Customer Engagement. Even though the literature regarding Customer Engagement is still rising, there are already some studies concerning the term.

In 2009, Bowden understood customer engagement as a psychological process that models how customer loyalty regarding a service brand is formed in new customers, as well as the mechanisms by which that loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand. In fact, it's proven that the more engaged customers are, the more they buy, the more they advocate, and the more loyal they are. Nevertheless, according to Kumar, Petersen & Leone (2010), customer engagement surpasses satisfaction and loyalty since it provides a real competitive advantage that leads to successful businesses for companies.

More recently, Thakur (2018) defined customer engagement as a psychological state that leads to frequent interactions with the focal object (brand or medium) and goes beyond the transactional motive of merely a purchase. In the same year, Lee, Hosanagar & Nair (2018) considered that managing visual social media is a continuous representation of customer engagement marketing once brands attempt to stimulate their customer interactions through liking, sharing posts, and commenting on social media platforms. According to Farook & Abeysekara (2016), today the biggest challenge for companies is to attract people's attention to brand posts and persuade them to visualize and interact with the content published.

Based on Kemp (2020), active social media users are equal to 3.8 billion, while 4.5 billion people use the Internet. For this reason, Human Resources and Recruitment companies are also concerned about their customer engagement levels on social media, using digital tools to enforce recruitment efforts and attract talents who spend a lot of their time on the Internet. As said by Wigston, S. (2017) human resources companies can go social by using social media to support HR initiatives, like building the company's culture and supporting training and development of employees.

According to Jobcast (2018), social media can play a major role in making this process more efficient once it is a proficient and convenient talent acquisition tool. Furthermore, nearly 95% of employers use or intend to use social media for recruiting (Harrington, D., 2020). Recruiters should be aware of the importance of reflecting diversity on social media, not only through images or language, but making sure that speaking engagements, webinars, and any other projects include a diverse range of participants. (Forbes, 2021).

In accordance with Schmitz (2021, p. 4) “marketing campaign performance data can help talent acquisition teams understand who to engage, as well as when and where”. Recent studies have also proven that companies are following several best practices to increase their customer engagement on social media. In 2019, Hollebeek & Macky stated in their article that companies like Rolex, Nike, Coca-Cola, New York Times and Random House are successfully implementing digital content marketing initiatives since they represent an important vehicle for promoting consumer engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

In this regard, many HR and Recruitment companies are also following these digital content marketing strategies on their social media. According to Madia (2011), before a company turns on social networking sites and develop its content strategy, it must be ensured that the corporate recruitment site should up-to-date and capable of handling additional volume, as well as has the enough resources to engage online- conversation, timely response and interactivity.

On one hand, Beese (2015) reported that the use of emoticons has become a valuable social currency of marketers in a wide range of companies through various channels, including social media networks. It is proved that the use of emojis could boost customer engagement levels for brands when used correctly. According to Aboulhosn, S. (2020), a study of WordStream showed that posting a tweet with an emoji increases engagement levels by 25% when compared to a message without any emoji. Besides, this study also verified that using an emoji in a Facebook post can increase the number of shares by 33% and interactions by 57%. On the other hand, in accordance with Clarke, A. (2021), the use of the right hashtags is also very powerful when it comes to increasing the scope of a message in a specific social media and, instead of focusing on multiple witty hashtags, recruitment companies should work on promoting the one that’s linked to the recruitment opportunity that is being offered.

Clarke, A. (2021) focused on her article that companies also need to choose carefully the right social networks that they want to work with, as well as the different approaches for each one of them to get the highest level of engagement online. In agreement with Brandcdn (2010), HR companies should create a dedicated careers page on Facebook to highlight job offerings, accept resumes, and describe benefits or other important details. Besides, HR companies should also join relevant LinkedIn Groups to establish themselves as an expert, raise their profile, and find qualified professionals who are influential in the industry (Brandcdn, 2010).

This information is supported by an article of Schmitz (2021), who reported that early-career professionals may be more active on Facebook or Twitter, more seasoned professionals may be best reached via LinkedIn and people with certain trade skills may be more receptive to communications sent via industry forums. The author also mentioned that If companies want to recruit the next class of interns, they should ask former interns, who know better the culture, to join recruiting events, making themselves accessible to answer questions from candidates, and proactively contributing to community forums.

Sharing video content on social media is also a good practice that companies should take into consideration. As claimed by Madia (2011), YouTube, which remains the second-largest search engine, is a strategic place for companies to publicly showcase their personalities, testimonials, management, and work ethic to consumers.

2.3 BRAND IMAGE

We are living in an era where competitiveness between companies and brands is continually increasing day after day, so betting on having a strong and favorable brand image is, according to Seo & Park (2018, p.37), a “key marketing component”. As reported by Bilgin, Y. (2018), branding can be considered an important competitiveness factor that distinguishes similar goods and services of different firms in consumers' minds, making those goods and services preferable for them.

Brand image is an important marketing activity since it represents the current view of customers regarding some brand. Lee, Goh, and Noor (2019) defined brand image as the customer’s perception of a brand promoted by the interaction of the affective, cognitive, and evaluative processes in a customer’s mind.

Brand image strongly influences current brand-loyal purchase behavior and has a positive effect on customer’s intentions to continue to buy from the same brand in the future (Esch, Langner & Schmitt, 2006). In this context, Hsieh and Li (2008) stated that a strong brand image creates a better brand message of a particular brand over the competitor one, influencing customer behavior. In other words, when companies try to build a positive image of their brands in the mind of consumers, they create a positive value for their brands, helping consumers in their decision-making process (Sallam, 2016). According to Timothy (2016), consumers will create an impression of a brand based on a diversity of factors, such as the uniforms and clothes of employees, the website, the business cards, among others.

Furthermore, Godey et al. (2016) indicated social media marketing has become, over the years, a key tool for the branding of organizations. This reality was demonstrated by Bilgin (2018) that reported the significant outcome of social media marketing activities on consumers' brand image. Also, in 2018, Seo and Park, stated that social media marketing activities enrich brand awareness and create a positive brand image, since businesses are facilitating their interaction with both potential and current customers.

In this work, I suggest that social media practices by Human Resources and Recruitment companies vary from other companies. By drawing on sizable literature on social perceptions of warmth and competence (e.g., Fiske et al.,2007). I suggest that the type of HR practices affect potential company's employees when they check their social media platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn. It is proven that brands that are more consistent with

their posts have a positive brand image from the consumer perspective, and consequently, better customer engagement levels. According to Smartbrief (2019), potential hires want to see that companies regularly update their social media pages because it gives them reasons to keep returning, even if they aren't actively job-seeking on the right moment. Moreover, the consumer also wants to have access to content, both images and videos, that is attractive and has quality. In this regard, successful employer brands tend to use quality images and videos to gain the advantage, and the same holds for recruiting efforts (Smartbrief, 2019).

Even though there isn't extensive knowledge about the effect of brand image on customer engagement, there are already a few studies that verify the existing relationship between brand image and customer engagement. In 2016, Islam & Rahman outlined in their research that brand image is one of the antecedents of customer engagement and, in accordance with the authors, it is more likely that consumers will feel engaged with a brand when its brand image is appealing and contributes to improving one's self-image and self-identity (Hansen & Jensen, 2009). For instance, photos and videos shared on Facebook and Instagram that are fun and appealing from consumers' perspective are an effective strategy when it comes to attracting the attention of consumers who seek pleasure and happiness online (Merrilees, 2016).

2.4 BRAND PERCEPTION: WARMTH AND COMPETENCE

Nowadays organizations and brands should look at their digital branding efforts as a relationship with their consumers. According to Sheehan & Doherty (2012) some studies have shown that a brand's online media effort is related in a positive way to its perceived innovativeness, transparency, and technological competence. Since we are living in an era where every market is becoming flooded with businesses offering identical products, services, and solutions, brands really need to stand out by creating meaningful relationships with consumers.

In 2012, Batra et. al reported that consumers become emotionally attached to brands they love and relate. In the same year, Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone (2012) presented in their study a theoretically-rigorous framework for understanding people's relationships with brands, suggesting that brands act as intentional agents. In this context the authors divide people's perceptions of brands in two main social dimensions: brand's intentions (warmth) and ability (competence).

According to Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick (2007) while warmth captures such issues as friendliness, helpfulness, sincerity, and trustworthiness, competence captures traits related to competence, expertise, and intelligence (Scott et al., 2013). As reported by Aiello et al., 2020, perceived warmth is easily associated with the interpersonal and social feature, which is how individuals' interaction with others determines warmth judgments. Otherwise, competence is more expected to have a "transactional nature", developed in trade relationships for instance (Bolton & Mattila, 2015).

More recently Xue et. al (2020) stated that perceiving a brand to be high competent can further consumers' positive evaluation of product quality and performance, and then increase their purchase intention. Otherwise, perceiving a brand to be warmer can promote consumers' positive evaluations of the enterprise or brand, as sincere and friendly. In this context, marketing experts can use specific advertising messages or elements to highlight those different characteristics and develop the perceptions of warmth and competence when strengthening brand relationships (Chang et al. 2019).

In marketing, recent research shows that warmth and competence are important when it comes to judging brands (Kirmani et al. 2017), brand endorsers (Chen & Wyer, 2020),

service providers (Wang et al., 2017) among others. In 2016, Bernritter, Verlegh, and Smit reported that brand perception is a key factor in consumers' decision-making process to endorse brands on social media. The authors also showed in their study that warmth of a brand is the main driving factor in consumers' decision to endorse brands online, which means that consumers have a preference to support brands on social media that are evaluated as warm, not competent. Another example, was given in a study developed by Wang et al. (2017) who suggested that the intensity of marketers' smiles in advertising can help out consumers to develop associations with the marketers with greater warmth or competence, thereby strengthening purchase intention.

In 2013, Hoffman & Novak advanced that advertisements with features that are socially interactive or have formats that encourage forwarding or sharing can enhance a brand's online advertising efforts on brand warmth. Nowadays, the type of interaction (formal or informal) that companies use on social media to communicate with consumers is an important branding effort and affect their purchase decision. More recently, Li, et.al (2019) demonstrated that the use of emoticons can affect consumer behavior and lead to warmth and competence judgments. According to this study, service employee's use of emoticons can lead customers to perceive the service employee as warmer but less competent compared to one who does not use emoticons.

Considering consumers' increasing lack of trust and doubt toward brands and their advertising messages, brand managers should look at brand's competence and brand's warmth as strong predictors of consumer purchase intention. In this context, brands managers should think of ways to leverage digital technologies to improve the brand's personality perceptions, as well pay attention to interacting with consumers at the right time and with the right content (Chan, et. al, 2018), developing the right customer engagement strategies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to gain more insights regarding the best practices that HR and Recruitment companies should adopt in their social media channels, applying to the case of Placement in Portugal. Currently, I am the Business Developer and Lead Generator Trainee of Placement in Portugal (PIP), so I assume an essential role in managing all the social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn) of the company. Besides, I am also responsible for the media and communication of PIP, being responsible for coordinating the e-mail marketing and for promoting the Organization's services to acquire new partnerships. During my Master's I had the chance to study the relevance of this new tool of marketing and why companies should bet on social media as key- marketing strategies.

In the first stage, I will describe the tasks that I conducted during my internship and the changes I made on Placement in Portugal's social media. Afterward, in order to be possible to draw conclusions and make further recommendations to the company, as well as add value to the existent literature regarding the topic, I decided to apply the technique of *Benchmarking*. According to Downs, B. (2019) benchmarking is a practice that involves looking outside a business to examine how others achieve a high level of performance and the processes they use to maintain success, having in mind that it's not a one-time exercise, but an integral component of a company's business plan that will help the business grow and thrive.

In this context, I will compare the current online performance of Placement in Portugal with some of the most well-known and biggest Human Resources and Recruitment companies worldwide. Based on the number of social media followers and reach, I decided to choose three important references to make some comparisons with my company. Those companies are Michael Page, Hays and Addeco.

This part of my Internship Report aims to respond to the questions defined in the Introduction. By comparing what the company has been doing on social media with what are considered the best practices in the industry, it will be possible to discuss which strategies Placement in Portugal should follow to strengthen its presence and performance online. During this process, I will have into consideration the behavior of several social media metrics - reach, organic mentions, post engagement rate, number of likes, comments, and followers-, before and during my internship.

4. RESULTS: SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

On this topic of the internship report, I decided to perform a general overview of Placement in Portugal social media, namely Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn (the three main social networks that the company uses), to be able to understand and recognize better the impact of my internship on the social media practices of the company. In this context, I decided to explore each social media platform one by one. This action gave me the possibility to analyze some statistical tools available in Facebook that provide me with pertinent insights about different social media metrics before, during, and after the completion of my internship, for the sake of understanding whether there has been any change or improvement.

4.1 INSTAGRAM

Instagram is one of the most important social media platforms of all time, and the easiest way for brands to engage with their audience and ensure that they will come back for more. Considering what I learned during my Master's with Digital Marketing course, for example, brands should continually adjust their Instagram strategies to stand out in an overcrowded market. Many types of research have proved that Instagram is the social media platform with the highest average engagement rate since it covers an audience that is more open to branded content when compared to other platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn.

Nevertheless, before starting my internship at the company, Placement in Portugal's Instagram was the social media with a lower customer engagement rate by having a lower number of followers, likes, and comments on posts.

For this reason, I tried to see the old practices of the company and understand how I could change the levels of engagement. When examining Placement in Portugal's feed on Instagram and the type of content published, it was possible to identify some common mistakes. As it is possible to see in Figure 1, the company used to put too much text and information in the images chosen, and the design choice wasn't the most appealing one neither. Although the type of content produced in the three posts below is still interesting and meaningful, sometimes it can be hard to read the information.

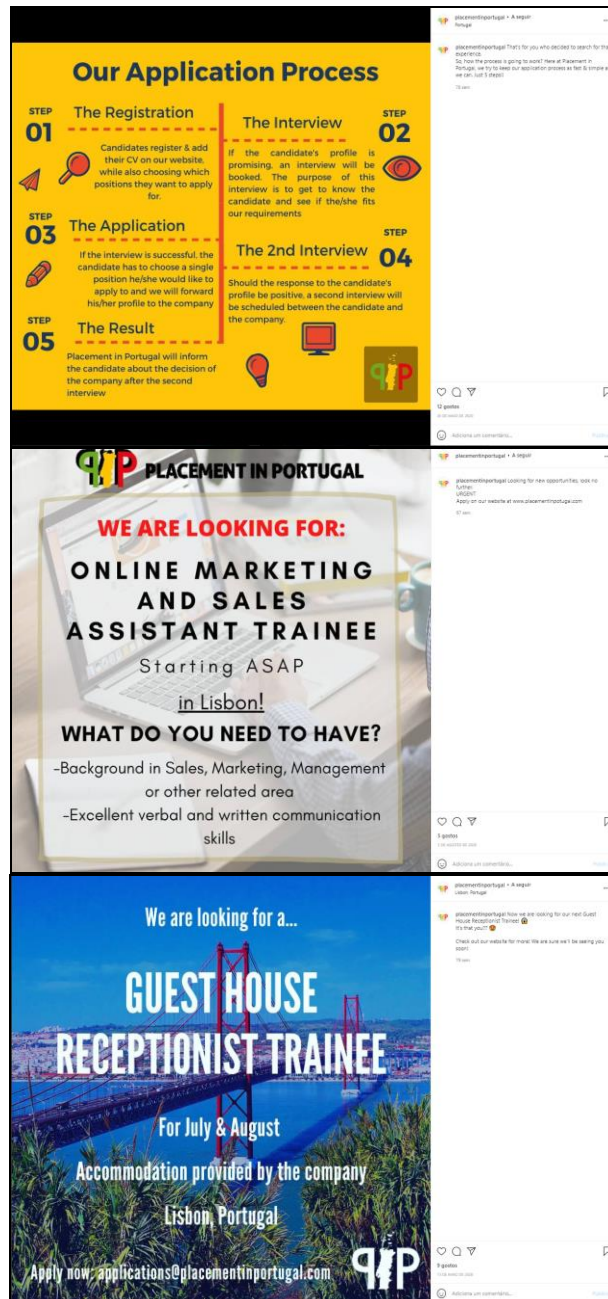


Figure 1: Placement in Portugal’s Instagram posts before starting the internship

As reported by Hughes (2021), photos are the most engaging content on the Web, with visual posts producing 650% higher engagement than text posts only. When people are searching for something on Instagram, they are not only looking for content with relevant and useful information, but they also want to see appealing posts that catch up their attention and make them want to engage or search for more. Besides, companies must know very well the audience they have to communicate their message more effectively. In the case of Placement in Portugal, most of its followers are interns who are studying or recently graduated, so they

are young and very familiar with social networks. For this reason, they are not only looking for informative content, namely regarding the internship opportunities that the company offers but also expect the brand to be entertaining and funny.

With this regard, after starting my internship with Placement in Portugal, I focused my attention on changing the feed appearance and the quality of content published on Instagram. Afterward, I noticed that interactive posts like Fun Facts and Curiosities about Portugal (Figure 2.), Memes (Figure 3.), and engaging Instagram stories (with both games and videos), were the ones that got the most attention from followers since they had the most likes, shares, and comments on this social media channel.

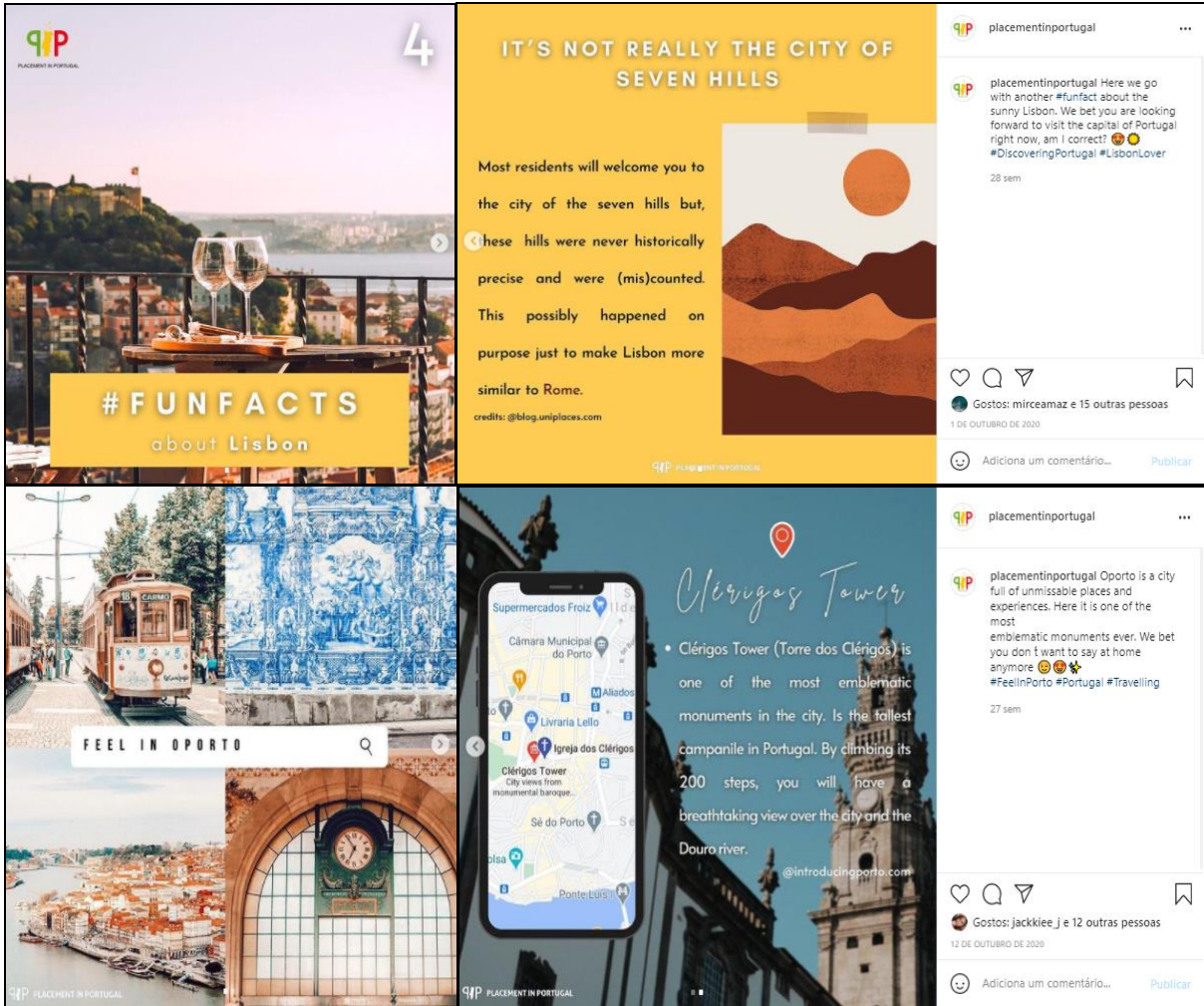


Figure 2: Example of interactive posts with fun facts and curiosities about Portugal



Figure 3: Example of an interactive post using a Meme

○ Instagram Stories

Instagram stories are a very important marketing tool to increase engagement and stimulate interaction with followers since they are displayed outstanding at the top of every newsfeed, so it is more likely that people take notice of the content. As reported by Zote (2021) stories have the “urgency factor” since they are only available for 24 hours, so companies should take advantage of this tool to create time-sensitive content that can build excitement and urgency.

In fact, according to StoriesEdit (2019), by creating dynamic Instagram Stories, brands can show their capabilities by visually communicating how their products can be used in real life. As it is possible to check in the picture below (Figure 4.), stories are an important tool to keep the gamification moments, and games such as “True or False” with facts about Portugal keep followers engaged and entertained while scrolling in their newsfeed.

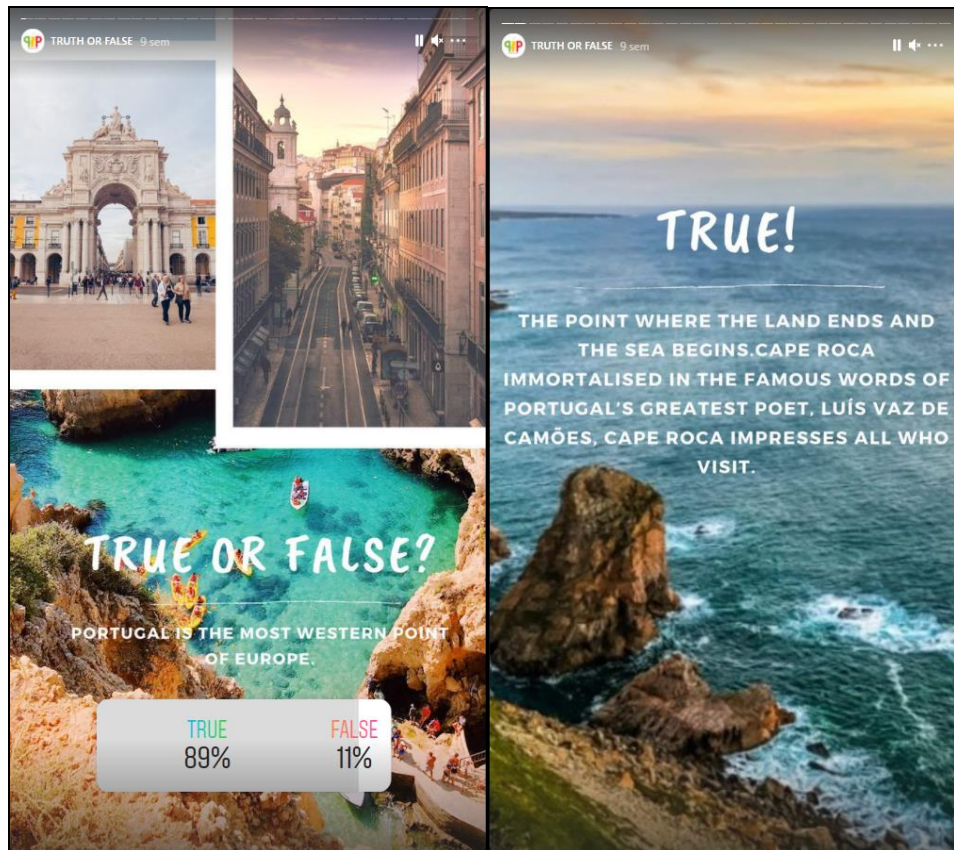


Figure 4: Example of “True or False” stories created to engage with followers

o Video Content

Video content is becoming a very popular marketing tool for businesses and brands. As reported by Warren (2020), video content typically performs best with most algorithms, based on the fact that it captures a viewer’s attention for longer and, the longer a viewer engages with a piece of content, the more likely an algorithm will boost that content to a vast audience.

As it is possible to see in the figure below (Figure 5.), both videos count more than 100 views. That could mean that more than 100 people felt curious enough to watch the testimonials of Placement in Portugal’s team members, proving here the importance of video content to strengthen brand image and increase customer engagement levels online. Video marketing is also an adequate method to show brand personality and the behind-the-scenes of a company, bringing more trust and authenticity from the consumer perspective.

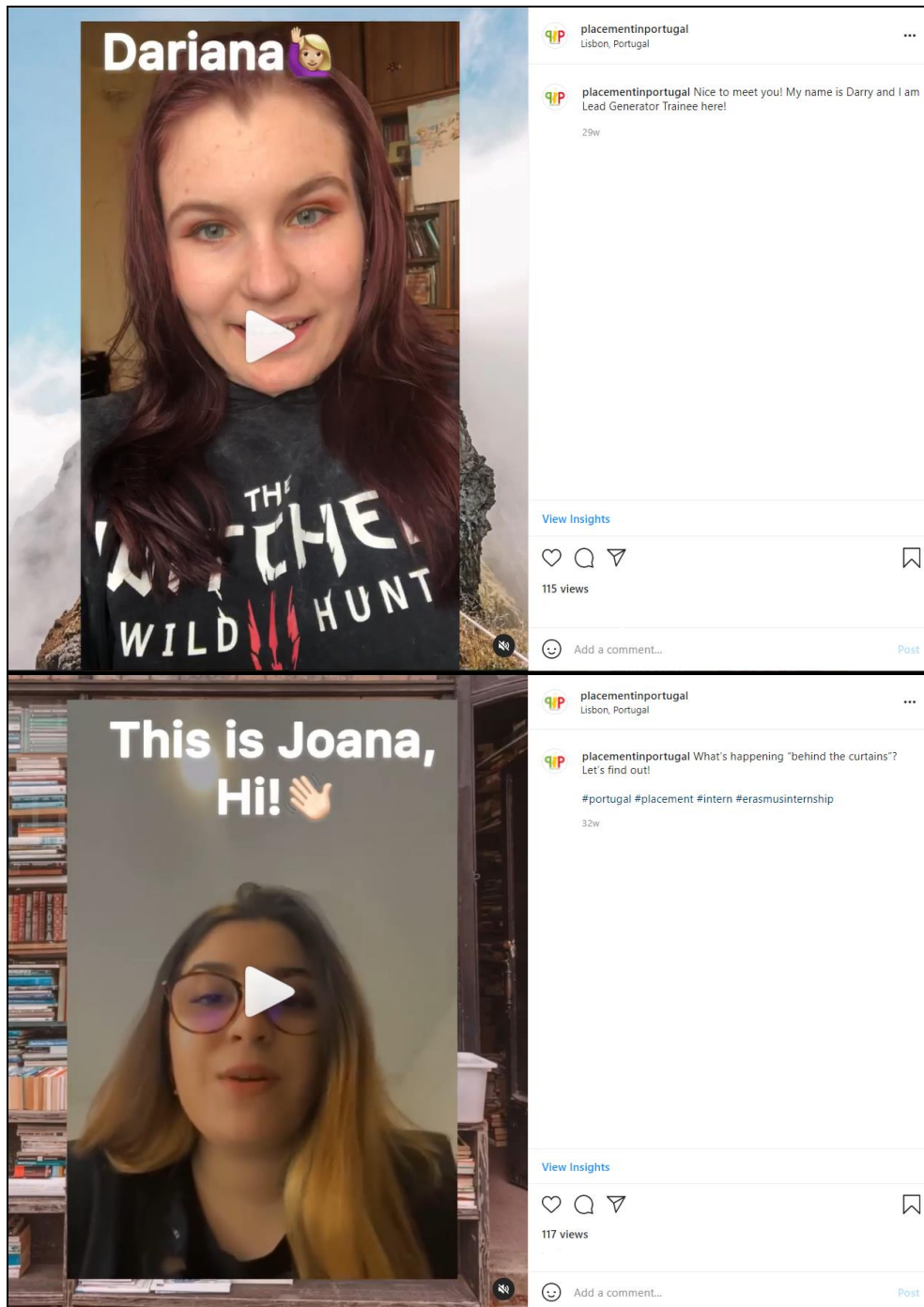


Figure 5: Example of videos made by Placement in Portugal’s team members

○ **Hashtags and Emojis**

Emojis and hashtags are considered efficient marketing tools for messaging and branding on social media, and their power is undeniable when it comes to stimulate engagement. According to Aboulhosn (2020), an emoji can help make a brand more relatable, add context to its messaging, and appeal to the emotions of its audience on a deeper level.

Regarding hashtags, some studies have shown that posts with 11 or more hashtags get nearly 80% interaction (Duran, 2017). However, Placement in Portugal should be careful and not use the most popular hashtags. Since it is an HR company, using niche hashtags related to internship opportunities in Portugal or Erasmus experiences, for instance, will help the content become discoverable by a wider audience. It is relevant to keep in mind that every time Placement in Portugal uses a specific hashtag, its post will appear on the page for that same hashtag, and users could see the hash tagged post in their feed even if they don't follow the page.

By comparing the number of Placement in Portugal's Instagram followers before and after finishing my internship, I noticed that the number passed from 311 to 460 (Figure 6), which means an increment of 47% of its page followers between September 2020 and March 2021. This increment over time could mean that by using emojis and hashtags to communicate and improving the type of content published (easy to read posts, catchy videos, and dynamic Instagram stories that promote interaction with followers), Placement in Portugal attracted more people. After checking its Instagram page, those people felt engaged enough to start to follow it.

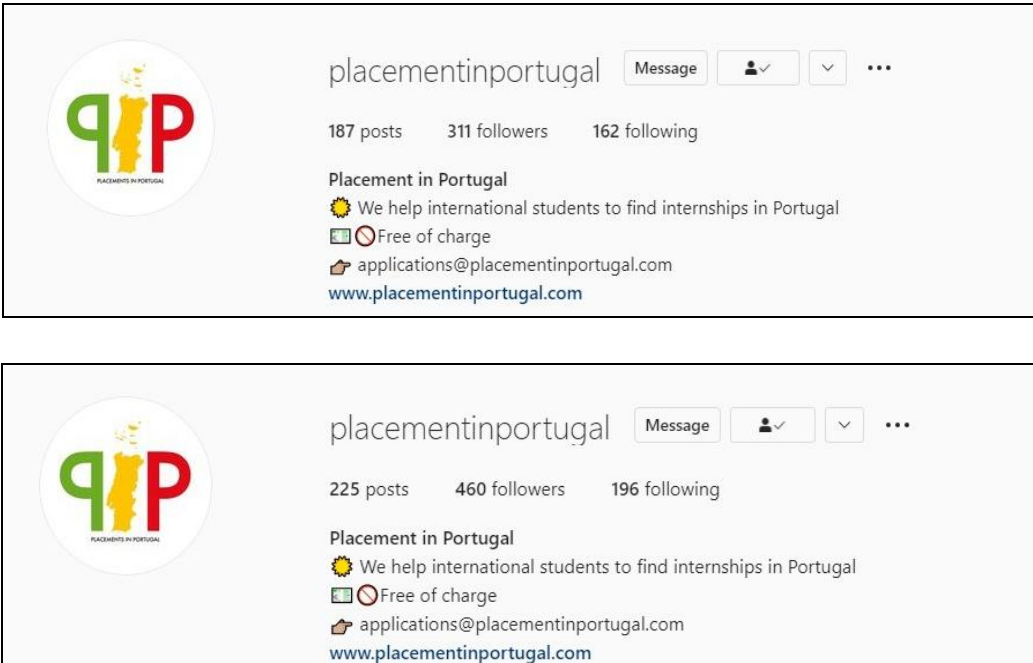


Figure 6: Placement in Portugal's Instagram followers' evolution

4.2 FACEBOOK

Facebook is one of the largest and the most famous social media platform of all times but, some studies and statistics prove that is getting “less cool” and is in disuse. According to Nozinic (2021) this social media is currently a lot less popular than was a few years ago, especially among generation Z., who don’t have much interest in Facebook. This reality should be taken into consideration since the target audience of Placement in Portugal is mostly younger people, namely students, who are looking for internship experiences abroad. Nevertheless, Nozinic (2021) also states that Facebook is “*one of the leading platforms for sales and advertising*”. Indeed, the Facebook account of Placement in Portugal is the social media network with the largest number of followers, counting with more than 5000 followers. For this reason, I decided to not put aside and continue to bet on Facebook as a strategic way to promote the internships offers available and promote Placement in Portugal’s services to acquire new partnerships.

Facebook Insights

In order to be possible to verify the impact of my internship on Placement in Portugal’s brand image and customer engagement levels, and gain insights regarding the best practices to follow online, I decided to use the Facebook statistic tools to evaluate some of the most important social media metrics on this social media platform. For a better comprehension of my contribution to the social media practices of the company, I considered two periods of time: 14/01/2020 until 14/09/2020 (the period before the internship); and 14/09/2020 until 21/04/2020 (the period during the internship).

○ Post reach

Post reach is one of the most important metrics to measure engagement since it represents the number of people who saw a specific post in their newsfeed. On the figure below, it is possible to see that Placement in Portugal’s organic reach was not very consistent and stable over time. It is possible to check that between 14/01/2020 and 14/09/2020 (the period before I started my internship), there are some months where the post reach was too low, which means that the company didn’t use to update the news feed regularly (Figure 7).

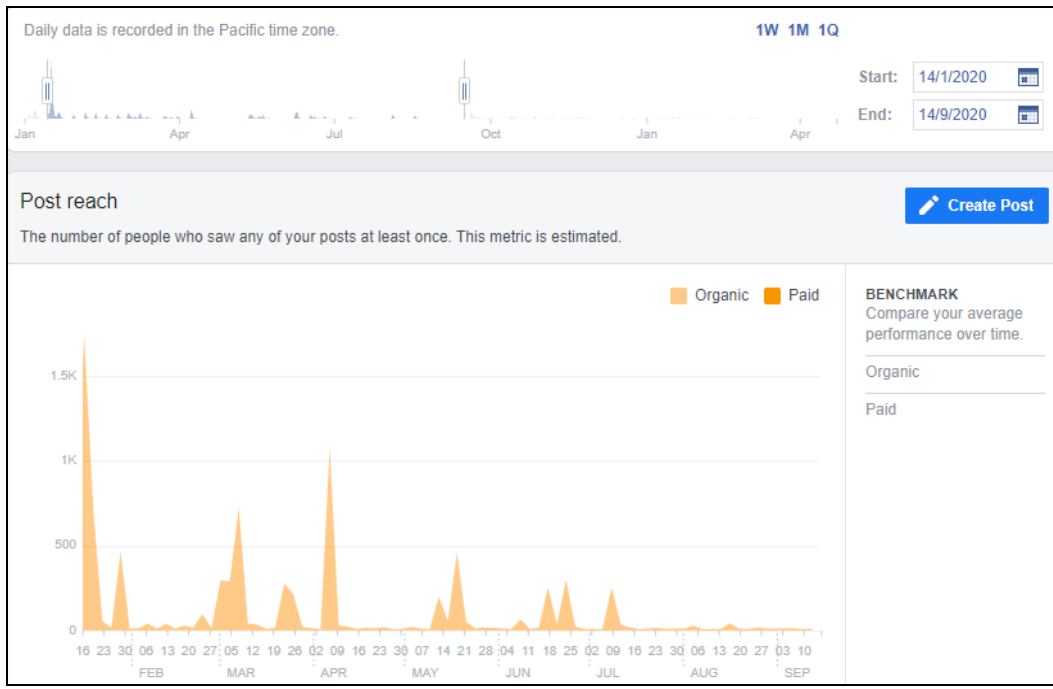


Figure 7: Placement in Portugal’s post reach before the internship

For this reason, during the internship, I decided to start posting weekly, as it is possible to see in Figure 8. By publishing posts more regularly, it was possible to ensure that Placement in Portugal's followers could see its content with frequency, increasing the levels of brand awareness and visibility. Besides, it also allowed the company to gain important insights about what kind of content works and which content doesn't on Facebook.



Figure 8: Placement in Portugal’s post reach during the internship

- **Likes, comments and shares**

I had some difficulties concerning the analysis of this type of social media metric because Placement in Portugal didn't receive a considerable and significant number of likes, comments, and shares on their posts over time. As it is possible to see on the two graphics below (Figure 9 and Figure 10), there wasn't a substantial change in this social media metric performance after starting the internship, so it won't be possible to make a relevant evaluation of it.

Nevertheless, this social media metric is paramount because, according to Lua (2020), when a post receives engagement, Facebook will serve it to more people as the engagement on the post implies that people are interested in that post. For this reason, a better engagement leads to a higher reach.



Figure 9: Reactions, comments and shares of Facebook posts before the internship

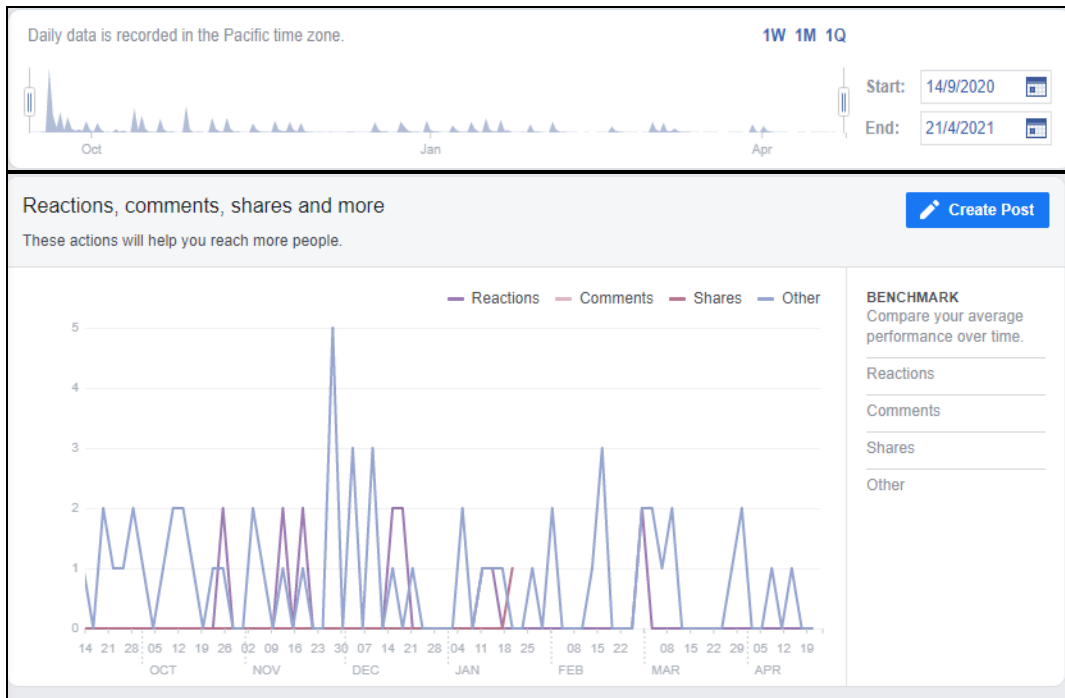


Figure 10: Reactions, comments and shares of Facebook posts during the internship

Through the analyze of the social media metrics mentioned before, it was possible to verify which type of content works better in Placement in Portugal’s Facebook page. As it was referred before, I decided to use Facebook as a promotion tool of Placement in Portugal’s offerings and services, once the type of social media content that works better is the one that provides information about the services of the company as well the internship vacancies available.

As it is possible to verify in the image below (Figure 11), the post regarding the internship offer had a relatively good performance in terms of engagement since from the 407 people reached, 8 of them had clicked on the link associated. This could mean that these 8 people had identified themselves with the content published and interacted with it, probably to see more information about the internship opportunity publicized or even had applied to it on Placement in Portugal’s website.

Placement in Portugal
 Published by Filipa Cristóvão · 2 November 2020 · 🌐

Despite the current situation we are living in, Placement in Portugal is still focused on finding the best opportunities for you. 😊👍
 Check our website <https://www.placementinportugal.com/placements.php> and take a look at our offerings at the moment. We are available to help you in case you have any questions.
 #Internship #Portugal #Lisbon

WE ARE LOOKING FOR INTERNS FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS
ALL OF THEM TO START ASAP

- On site Operations Support Trainee
- Document translation and project management (Native German, Native French, Native English);
- Junior Full stack JS / React Trainee;
- Business Operations Manager Trainee;
- Online Marketing and Sales Assistant Trainee;
- Translation and Content Analyzer Trainee;
- Hostel Receptionist Trainee.

VISIT WWW.PLACEMENTINPORTUGAL.COM

PIP PLACEMENT IN PORTUGAL

Performance for your post

407 People reached

3 Likes, comments and shares

15 Post clicks

5 Photo views | 8 Link clicks | 2 Other Clicks

[View More Details](#)

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

1 Hide all posts | 0 Hide post

0 Report as spam | 0 Unlike Page

3 Likes, comments and shares

BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION [View Breakdown](#)

407 Total reach | 407 Organic reach | 0 Paid reach

436 Total impressions | 436 Organic impressions | 0 Paid impressions

407 People reached | 18 Engagements | - Distribution score [Boost post](#)

2

Like | Comment | Share

Figure 11: Placement in Portugal internship offer on Facebook- Informative content

On the second image (Figure 12), Placement in Portugal tried to give its followers some tips about productivity at the workplace. When analyzing the performance of this post, it is possible to compare and conclude that the engagement levels were not as relevant as the first post (promotion of internship opportunities available), proving once again what was already mentioned before regarding the aim of this social media platform. Posteriorly it will be possible to verify that this same type of content results better on LinkedIn, in comparison.

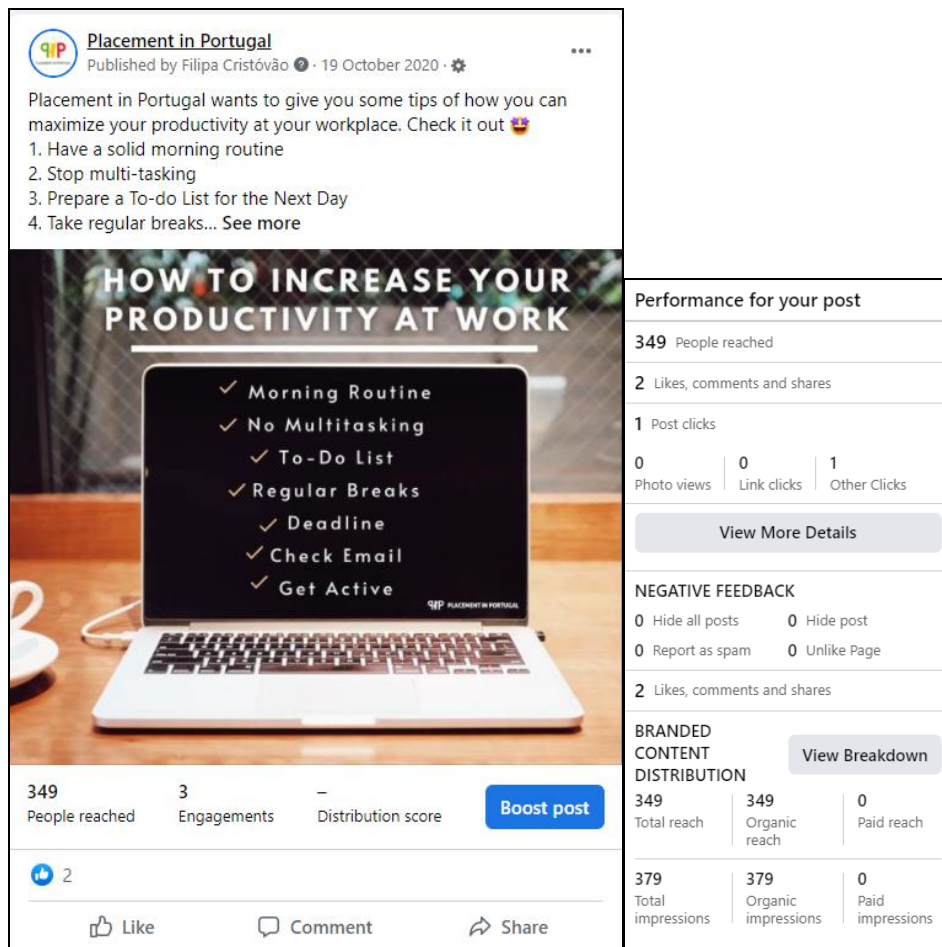


Figure 12: Facebook post with tips about productivity- Informative content

4.3 LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a very efficient marketing tool for both business and consumer marketing campaigns, surpassing Facebook as the most important social platform for B2B marketers. As stated by SmartRecruiters (2015), LinkedIn can be a powerful tool for individuals and companies that are looking for making new connections, generate leads, and build their brand, being a true game-changer for B2B (business to business) companies.

Since LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional networking platform, this platform is mostly attended by company leaders and students from several different areas of study who are currently studying or have recently graduated. LinkedIn is usually used with the aim of finding job opportunities or creating a network of contacts that may help build a career path. In this sense, Placement in Portugal should focus on creating content that aims to make known its services and internship offerings for both potential partners and students.

With this regard, I focused my attention only on creating more informative content rather than interactive, like promoting the available vacancies from the various partner companies and the services offered by Placement in Portugal to attract new partners through this social network (Figure 13).

The image shows a LinkedIn post from the company 'Placement in Portugal'. The post includes a text introduction, a large infographic, and a statistics panel. The infographic is titled 'WE ARE LOOKING FOR INTERNS FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS' and lists two areas: 'LANGUAGES' and 'COMPUTER STUDIES'. The statistics panel shows 370 organic impressions, 8 reactions, and a 6.76% engagement rate.

Placement in Portugal
1,410 followers
3mo • 🌐

Once again, Placement in Portugal is here to help you in finding the best opportunities for you. We have several offerings from different areas, so we bet you can find something that fits you. 😊🤔
Visit now our website https://lnkd.in/dB_Pk-y 🟢. We are available to help you in case you have any questions.
#Internship #Portugal #Lisbon

WE ARE LOOKING FOR INTERNS FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS
ALL OF THEM TO START ASAP

AREA: LANGUAGES

- Document Translation and Project Management Trainee (Native German, Native French, Native English);
- Translation and Content Analyzer Trainee;

AREA: COMPUTER STUDIES

- Junnior Full-Stack JS /React Trainee

VISIT WWW.PLACEMENTINPORTUGAL.COM

👍 8

Like Comment

Organic impressions: 370 Impressions Hide stats ^

Organic stats 📊
Targeted to: All followers

370	8	4.59%
Impressions	Reactions	Click-through rate
0	0	17
Comments	Shares	Clicks
6.76%		
Engagement rate		

Figure 13: Placement in Portugal internship offer on LinkedIn- Informative content

As a professional platform, Placement in Portugal’s LinkedIn should provide useful, informative, and relevant content to its professional connections. For this reason, LinkedIn is a good place for companies to give up-to-date career advice, like perfecting the CV, being productive or preparing for a job interview. In figure 14, it is possible to check that 8 people liked the tips provided by that Placement in Portugal team members concerning how to act before and during an online interview.

q/p Placement in Portugal
1,568 followers
9mo • 🌐

Some helpful tips from our team!
Online interview are mentally harder to take comparing to the usual ones. In order to feel more confident, check out our recommendations #interview #team #jobsearch #recruitment #hiring #interviewing

TIPS FOR AN ONLINE INTERVIEW
FROM
q/p PLACEMENT IN PORTUGAL

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW
Check your equipment and surroundings. Manager of the company came to see and hear you clearly, so try to avoid your family walking in the background.
q/p PLACEMENT IN PORTUGAL

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW
It is really important to dress properly and join the call earlier, as you will never have a first impression twice.
q/p PLACEMENT IN PORTUGAL

DURING THE INTERVIEW
Take your time and do not rush, try to have just a normal conversation. As well, look straight into the camera and watch out for non-verbal communication.
q/p PLACEMENT IN PORTUGAL

8 🗨️ 1 comment

👍 Like 🗨️ Comment

q/p Add a comment... 🗨️ 🖼️

Organic impressions: 342 Impressions Hide stats

Organic stats **i**
Targeted to: All followers

342 Impressions	8 Reactions	20.18% Click-through rate
1 Comment	0 Shares	69 Clicks
21.35% Engagement rate		

Figure 14: LinkedIn post with tips about preparing for an interview- Informative content

After starting my internship and analyzing LinkedIn followers' demographics through the available statistic tools, I noticed that most of Placement in Portugal's followers were from Portugal, namely from Lisbon. (Figure 15). Since the biggest mission of the company is to help international students find internship opportunities in Portuguese companies, I decided to invest in creating testimonial posts of interns from all parts of the world who got an internship thanks to the company. In this way, and by sharing their experiences, it would be possible to reinforce the brand's trustworthiness and credibility and reach a worldwide audience.

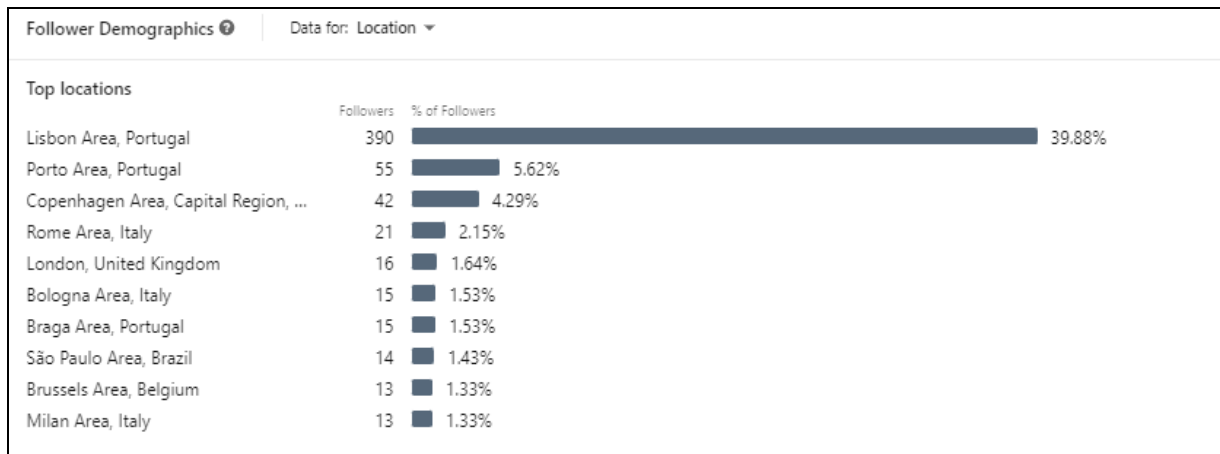


Figure 15: LinkedIn followers demographics

Reviews and Customers testimonials can be powerful and decisive for a brand and should be regarded as strategic tools to increase engagement on social media. As reported by StrategicFactory (2017), consumers naturally trust each other more than they trust just marketing campaigns, so testimonial ads have more weight on the decision they are trying to make.

Below in figure 16, it is possible to verify that one testimonial of one of Placement in Portugal interns was visible 687 times in its users' timeline or feed, 18 people liked the post, and 50 people clicked on the image. This click on the image could mean that 50 people felt excited enough to click on the link and continue to read the full testimonial of Aleksandra, or even took a look at Placement in Portugal's website to see more information about the internship offers.

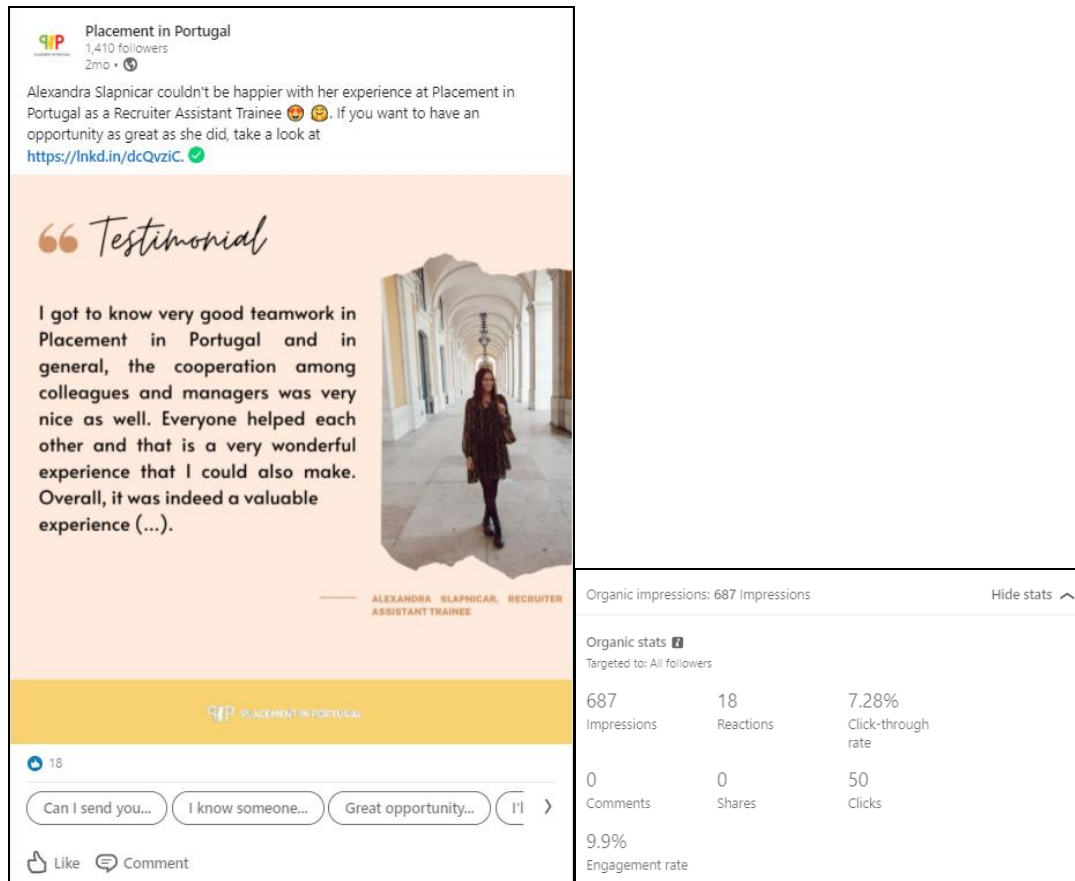


Figure 16: Testimonial post of one of Placement in Portugal's interns

4.4 BENCHMARKING

In this section of my internship report, I am going to use the technique of Benchmarking, which means that I am going to compare Placement in Portugal's social media practices with other HR and recruitment companies that are already known for having a good online presence, by having a larger number of followers, likes, and shares, and interactions. In order to be possible to make recommendations and suggest the best practices, I decided to choose 3 of the most famous and well-regarded companies of the sector, namely, Michael Page, Hays, and Adecco and analyze their social media platforms. It is important to have in mind that these companies mentioned before have a bigger dimension when compared to Placement in Portugal, and their mission is a little bit different.

The main goal of this topic is not to change or devalue Placement in Portugal's practices on social media, but to gain other insights and perspectives about it, in order to be possible to make some recommendations to the company and improve their performance on social media.

4.4.1 Michael Page

Michael Page is one of the best-known and most respected consultancies in the recruitment sector, counting with an office network crossing six continents. This company has a powerful online presence, counting with 2.579.328 followers on LinkedIn, 8600 followers on Facebook, 9830 followers on Twitter, and 3000 subscribers on YouTube. Looking at these numbers, it is proved that Michael Page knows the power of social media to reach its customers, gain valuable insights, and strengthen its brand.

After spending a lit bit of my time taking a look at Michael Page's social media channels, I noticed that the company follows several best practices which should be taken into consideration and which allow its levels of customer engagement. In the first stage, it is possible to verify that Michael Page has a strong brand image since it is known for being very professional and expert in the recruitment industry. This company has a consistent presence on its social media channels since they are updated on a regular basis. With regard to communication, Michael Page is formal and professional when communicating with the audience, and doesn't use emojis or hashtags. Although the HR consultancy does not have a lot of likes, comments, or shares of its posts, Michael Page makes sure that its message is passed to its followers.

Regarding the type of content published, it depends on each platform. For instance, on LinkedIn and Facebook, the content is more informative. Michael Page usually shares in the newsfeed valuable articles that provide tips and advice concerning productivity at work or preparation for job interviews. The company also conduct Webinars hosted by industry experts who speak about relevant themes regarding the workplace and the job market. Regarding Instagram, Michael Page bets both on informative and entertaining content, conducting live streams that make possible more direct and spontaneous contact with its followers.

Michael Page has an account on Twitter where gives career and employer advice, industry insights, news, research, and the latest hiring trends. Besides, the company is aware of the importance of using video content as a marketing tool. In this context, Michael Page created a YouTube channel to upload interesting weekly rubrics like *What is like to work at Page Group*. With this rubric, Michael Page's followers can get to know the culture and brand personality since are shared perspectives and testimonials of people from every part of the world that work at the company. They also have a rubric named *Career Hacks*, which

gives some advice and tips to succeed in the job market, like creating a good CV, acting on Interviews, and developing personal skills.

4.4.2 Hays

Hays is a major leading global group known for being the specialist at recruiting professional and qualified people from all parts of the world. Compared to Michael Page, Hays also has a good presence across all social media channels, having 4.709.538 followers on LinkedIn, 5200 followers on Facebook, 928 followers on Instagram, 9800 followers on Twitter, and 3200 subscribers on YouTube.

Hays has in consideration the importance of frequently posting since they try to share content several times per week and spread posts between all social channels, giving its followers reasons to continue to return. Regarding its communication, Hays seems to be more approachable and relaxed when compared to Michael Page since they use a lot of emojis and hashtags in all social media networks. Looking at Hays's posts on social media, the company passes a brand image that they are socially responsible and concerned about diversity and equality in the job market, supporting social movements like the LGTB community and Women Empowerment.

On LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, the content is more informative and professional, where are shared career advice and workplace insights. Regarding Instagram, Hays tries to show its brand personality and stimulate interaction with its followers, posting several Instagram stories, testimonials of people who work in the company, and catchy videos about success, talent, and news challenges.

Hays has a Careers Blog and a monthly podcast named *Hays Worldwide- Careers Advice Podcast* that gives up-to-date career advice, like perfecting the CV, preparing for a job interview, creating the best personal brand, and standing out from the crowd. The company also has a Journal in which it updates the latest industry news and discusses topics about leadership and human resources. Hays creates video content on YouTube related to expert careers and hiring advice to help its subscribers to reach their goals. They have a series named *Hiring Series* where staff from Hays gives tips about how to attract talent and speaks about recruitment strategies.

4.4.3 Adecco

Adecco is very well known for being one of the leading-top providers of first-class HR solutions, connecting people with fulfilling opportunities that make the most of their skills now and enable them to develop new expertise for the future. Adecco also has a good performance on social media, having 1.286.571 followers on LinkedIn, 78.000 followers on Facebook, 9400 followers on Instagram, 17.000 followers on Twitter, and 2730 subscribers on YouTube. Adecco is perceived to be a company that appreciates and values the talent of its human resources, believing that everyone can be a CEO. Their communication strategy is very formal and simple.

Like Michael Page and Hays, Adecco is also very consistent regarding posting regularly across all social media channels. On Facebook and LinkedIn, the company usually shares tips, news, and workplace insights, proving once again the importance of these two social media channels as strategic tools to share information and data. Concerning Instagram, the company shares empowering quotes to motivate its followers and uses stories to give tips. Regarding the type of content published, Adecco shares articles in online magazines and has a blog that outlines relevant topics about the job market and objectives for professional careers.

Adecco usually participates in Events and Job Affairs and conducts Webinars about internships and job opportunities. Just like Michael Page and Hays, Adecco knows the importance of video content. The company also has a YouTube channel with testimonial videos about how it is to work in Hays.

Bellow, I created a table to analyze and compare what these three major players of the HR sector are doing online with Placement in Portugal practices. I decided to choose topics like the number of followers, type of content, number of posts, and communication strategy. Afterward, it will be possible to provide relevant insights and make pertinent recommendations to the company.

Company	Michael Page	Hays	Adecco	Placement in Portugal
Number of followers (to date)	LinkedIn: 4.709.538 Facebook: 8600 Instagram: 600 Twitter: 9830 YouTube: 3000	LinkedIn: 4.709.538 Facebook: 5200 Instagram: 928 Twitter: 9800 YouTube: 3200	LinkedIn: 1.286.571 Facebook: 78.000 Instagram: 9400 Twitter: 17.000 YouTube: 1200	LinkedIn: 1434 Facebook: 5300 Instagram: 409
Entertaining content	-Conducts live streams on Instagram (direct and spontaneous contact with its followers).	- Instagram stories, testimonials of company's employees and catchy videos about success and personal development); -Podcast (up-to-date career advice)	-Empowering quotes to motivate followers; -Instagram stories to give tips and stimulate engagement with followers.	-Instagram Stories ("True or False" and curiosities about Portugal); -Videos of Placement in Portugal's team members; - Memes.
Informative content	-Shares relevant articles (productivity; preparing for job interviews); -Conduct Webinars.	- Career Blog (advice and workplace insights); - Journal (latest industry news).	-Tips, news, and workplace insights; - Blog: relevant topics about the job market and objectives for professional career; -Webinars.	-Posts with internship offerings available; -Testimonial posts of students who got an internship with the company.
Video content	-YouTube channel that shows Michael Page's culture and brand personality (testimonials of Michael Page's employees).	-Hiring Series (tips about how to attract talent; recruitment strategies).	-YouTube Channel: Testimonial videos about how it is to work in Hays.	- Placement in Portugal does not invest a lot in video content and doesn't have a YouTube channel.

Number of posts per week	-Posts on a weekly basis: 3 posts per week.	-Shares content several times per week and spread posts between all social channels.	-Consistency: 1/2 posts per day	-Spreads content across all social media networks on a weekly basis.
Communication Strategy	-Formal: doesn't use emojis or hashtags; -Simple and corporate vocabulary.	-More approachable and relaxed (use of emojis and hashtags in all social media networks).	-Simple and professional; - Use of hashtags.	-Placement in Portugal communication is very friendly, funny; - Use of emojis and hashtags.

Table 1: Comparative table of HR companies practices on social media

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

This internship report enabled me to gain insights regarding the best marketing practices for HR companies on social media channels (namely on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn), and to understand how different social media practices can help HR companies in improving their brand image and foster customer engagement. By completing a six-month internship at Placement in Portugal, it was possible to draw conclusions and provide insightful managerial implications about the best HR practices that can be used by Placement Portugal.

This internship also allowed me to compare, analyze and synthesize the best HR practices by Placement Portugal. More specifically, I could compare the company's social media strategies with three very well-known HR firms. Furthermore, such activity allowed me to strengthen my understanding of how HR companies operate on social media.

I started this report outlining four relevant questions that I attempted to answer: 1) "Which type of content works better for each social media platform channel?"; 2) "Should Placement in Portugal social media content branding be more formal or informal?"; 3) "Should Placement in Portugal rely on informative or interactive content to boost customer engagement?"; and finally, 4) "Will the company's interaction style on social media affect its customers' perceptions of warmth and competence?".

This extensive experience enabled me to draw novel insight into how HR companies can engage potential customers' employees on social media. In the first stage, I could understand which type of content suits better in each social media channel. Findings suggest that interactive content works better in Instagram because when users are scrolling in their newsfeed, they want to see content that is attractive, like funny Instagram stories that allow gamification moments and catchy videos that show the brand personality. For example, as claimed by Canning (2021), Instagram stories stickers are a great way to encourage followers to chat and share their opinions and experiences with a brand which, in turn, will help create a loyal following that feels connected to a brand.

Otherwise, findings also proved that LinkedIn and Facebook are considered more professional platforms and efficient tools to communicate the organization's services, like sharing news about an important topic or promoting an internship vacancy. These findings could be supported by previous studies. For instance, according to Tramontana (2019),

LinkedIn's algorithm is set up to reward relevant, professional information sharing, so providing context to recent industry development, answering a frequently asked question, or sharing a relatable story are great ways to engage the target audience.

Secondly, I could understand which type of interaction style the company should follow to have a higher engagement rate. As I stated before, Placement in Portugal's audience is mainly young students looking for an internship experience in Portugal, so I assumed they are tech-savvy and love social media. For this reason, Placement in Portugal should continue to follow a friendly and informal approach when answering their messages and replying to their comments on posts, never forgetting to take advantage of the undeniable power of emojis and hashtags to reach more people.

As a branding ambassador of Placement in Portugal, I had to have a long-term mindset by planning and managing the elements of the company's visual identity, in this case, its social media channels. Branding is essential to enhance the perception of a company in the minds of consumers. In this context, I verified that Placement in Portugal's brand image was getting stronger every day since we shared its internship opportunities in several student groups on Facebook. By being part of Facebook communities, Placement in Portugal's mission reached many students from all parts of the world, that wanted to try their luck and had applied on the company's website.

Nevertheless, branding is a continuous and permanent process that is crucial for perfect business growth. As stated by Sharma (2017) knowing the needs of potential customers can help a company tailor its business strategies and mission statement most efficiently and effectively.

Placement in Portugal must know well its audience's needs and expectations to build a strong brand image. Thus, offering attractive and unmissable internship opportunities in renowned Portuguese companies that can help young students in their professional careers is an objective that the company should continue pursuing and never forget about it. Sharma (2017) reported in her article that it is important for a brand to be omnipresent, so if a company wants to stand out, it must build a good and consistent online presence, not try to please everyone, produce value, associate with other strong brands and create brand-building awareness. In this case, Placement in Portugal should be consistent across all social media channels and choose carefully its style, type of content, and the tone that is most appealing to its audience. This information is also supported by Robinson (2021), who claimed that cross-

channel consistency is the key, and beyond basics such as logos and cover images, a company should also maintain the same brand voice, tone, and visuals in its social communication so that the company's core branding is recognizable to customers, regardless of where they choose to engage.

Lastly, and still taking into account brand image strategies, Placement in Portugal's logo is very well-conceived because is memorable and has a balanced and colorful image that catches people's attention and relates to the company's name and mission. Maybe Placement in Portugal can consider creating a catchy tagline that goes along with the logo and sums up the company's purpose.

Considering what I experienced during my internship and the insights I obtained with the technique of benchmarking, and in order to be possible to present some recommendations to Placement in Portugal, I am going to develop in-depth what I mentioned in the first part of this section regarding the type of content and interaction style that the company should follow.

Currently, Instagram Reels is becoming a meaningful social media tool for many brands that want to keep their businesses relevant for their consumers. According to SocialMediaToday (2021), since reels are a new feature, Instagram's algorithm is favoring accounts that are regularly publishing and engaging with reels, so that's the reason why brands should use short videos to reach big audiences. Since Placement in Portugal does not have a YouTube Channel like Michael Page, Hays, and Adecco, the company could consider taking advantage of Reels to share its culture and brand personality. By creating catchy videos of the company's employees sharing their experiences, or even videos of behind the scenes of the recruitment process, Placement in Portugal could more easily catch its followers' attention and interest. Furthermore, as I also previously reported, there is a specific type of content that works better for each social media channel.

On the one hand, Placement in Portugal should continue to bet on funny and catchy content on Instagram such as memes, curiosities, and fun facts about Portugal, like places to visit and invest in Instagram Stories that allow gamification moments with its followers, like True or False Q&A's. On the other hand, Facebook and LinkedIn are the perfect social media channels to spread more informative posts. For this reason, the company should continue to use them as a strategic way to highlight its mission and service value. Afterward, it will be

possible to attract young, curious students and catch the attention of potential partnerships that search for the company's services online.

Placement in Portugal must communicate its value proposition efficiently and accurately, especially concerning the conditions of the internship offerings. According to Paikin (2021), a company should reinforce its value proposition, namely the value that it brings to other businesses or the differentiating aspects it offers to its customers. The use and divulgation of students' testimonials who got an internship thanks to the company is also a customer engagement strategy that Placement in Portugal should pursue since reviews and the "word of mouth" are essential tools that give credibility and trustworthiness to a brand. Besides, in order to become more attractive and serious to other businesses, it is also relevant that Placement in Portugal clarifies the financial and cultural benefits that the host companies could have by having Placement in Portugal as a partner.

During the internship, it was possible to verify that users want to see consistent and frequent content, but not too much in a row. Placement in Portugal should avoid over-posting because it may lead its followers to ignore the content or even unfollow its social media pages. As reported by Ay (2018), users prefer brands that post only one or two times a day, because they can easily become bored by seeing the same content over and over again. For this reason, having a timetable for each social media channel could be a good strategy to have correct social media management, making sure that the company is posting in the right way and at the right time.

According to what I mentioned before in the methodology section, the dimension of the social media channels of Placement in Portugal (number of followers and engagement rate) does not justify investing in sponsored content, at least for now. I encourage Placement Portugal to focus on creating authentic and organic content but never forget about the advantages of sponsorships. This point of view is supported by prior studies since, according to Santeralli (2021), sponsored content gets a company in front of people in places that they're already looking, being a natural fit for a platform, instead of an invasive advertisement. For this reason, if the company increases its volume of business in the future by achieving a significant number of partnerships and a higher number of internship offerings, Placement in Portugal's CEOs could study the possibility of using sponsored content as a vital marketing strategy to reach a wider audience.

Summing up, Placement in Portugal must continue to keep in mind how essential and strategic is for the company to showcase its people, its culture, and its work to succeed and grow as a brand in the HR and Recruitment sector. According to Kuligowski (2020), a huge driver of social media marketing's popularity is customer's desire for genuine interaction, that's the reason of why companies should participate in social media trends, chat with customers and share their human side. It is important that people relate, trust, and form a stronger connection with Placement in Portugal when visiting its website and social media channels, and believe in the message that the company's sells.

As a Lead Generator and Business Developer of Placement in Portugal I could also understand that by promoting and sharing high-quality content on social media, it is possible to improve lead generation. In 2020, Billson defined a lead generation as a marketing activity that results in acquiring information useful for building a list of potential clients. This marketing activity can help Placement in Portugal in finding potential customers and keeping in touch with them. Placement in Portugal's website is an example of an online channel of lead generation. Otherwise, the email marketing that the company uses to contact both students and partner companies is an example of an offline channel. Both of these channels provide relevant information about potential customers, and consequently, can help Placement in Portugal define the perfect marketing strategies to reach them.

Regarding social media communities, like Facebook groups and LinkedIn, Placement in Portugal must engage with its followers by asking and answering other people's questions. By following this line of reasoning, Placement in Portugal can understand better who they are and what they are looking for, then attract and convert strangers into potential customers.

Social media is a world full of opportunities for brands and companies. Hopefully, with the insights gained with this study, and all the recommendations mentioned in this section of the report, Placement in Portugal can continue to grow online and become more powerful.

5.2 ASSESSMENT AND CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE INTERNSHIP

In this part of my internship report, I decided to divide my evaluation into two parts. In the first part, I will consider the monthly feedback that I received from my manager during my internship. In the second stage, I will try to have an objective point of view with regard to my performance and contribution to the company.

After completing my internship with Placement in Portugal, my supervisor Ana Patrícia Nunes gave me her critical and sincere appraisal concerning my work performance. In general, she was very satisfied with my commitment and attitude throughout the time I was working at the company. In fact, before just finishing my internship, I was proposed to continue to work in the company, but in a different position than the one that I had as Lead Generator and Business Developer Trainee. This part-time job proposal as the Operations Manager was a great opportunity for me. It not only enabled me to get professional experience in a different area, but also helped me on focusing on the completion of my internship report. Since I continued to be involved in the company's environment for a while and got the possibility to continue to have access to its social media channels and its monthly results, I had the chance to get more truthful and long-term insights.

My supervisor also told me that she liked the fact that I was very proactive and autonomous concerning coming up with new ideas and creating new content for social media, which sometimes is not that easy. Besides, I was always available to help my colleagues, handling the tasks of their positions. As responsible for managing all the social media platforms and for creating the email marketing of the company, I had to create posts for Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook on a weekly basis. Furthermore, I also gave some suggestions concerning the company's branding, like some website improvements and social media feed appearance. Finding new potential partnerships for the company was another task that I carried out. Nevertheless, due to the current situation of Covid 19, many sectors of the economy have been affected, and many businesses closed, making it difficult to receive a positive answer from those companies regarding a potential partnership. However, fortunately, I was able to get a few important partner companies from different fields of study like technology, communication, and human resources, creating new opportunities for a lot of students that found in Placement in Portugal a chance to have their first internship experience abroad.

Having in consideration my assessment of my performance, I am confident and satisfied with my journey with Placement in Portugal, and I feel that I did justice to the expectations and objectives that the company defined for me at the beginning. Since it was my first experience working with social media and brand management, now I am aware of how important social media marketing can be for a brand.

Regarding the principal purpose of this study and internship report, hopefully, I will give some paramount feedback and pertinent insights to Placement in Portugal concerning the best practices to implement on social media, that can strengthen its brand image and improve its customer engagement levels.

6. LIMITATIONS

In general, my internship with Placement in Portugal was very positive and helpful since it allowed me to work with social media as one of the most relevant marketing tools for brands and organizations.

Concerning the limitations I had during the internship, I can affirm that one of the main ones was regarding my lack of experience with social media management at a professional and business level. For that reason, I had to learn by myself and conduct some research about the topic, to have a good performance during my internship. Furthermore, my experience with Placement in Portugal occurred mainly online because of Covid -19 restrictions, so I didn't get the chance to work with my team face-to-face every week, which sometimes can negatively impact my motivation and performance.

After spending the first few days taking a look at Placement in Portugal's performance in social media, I noticed that the company didn't have a significant and measurable engagement rate, namely regarding post reach, impressions, and reactions (likes, comments, and shares). In this context, I can say that it was a little bit difficult for me to analyze and measure its social media metrics performance, compare results over time, and understand whether there was a significant improvement and change with my internship or not. In addition, the fact that I only made a 6-month internship can be considered a time limitation in my work since I feel that I didn't have enough time to give a valuable and significant contribution concerning the number of new followers gained and audience reach.

Another limitation that I felt when developing this study was the lack of extensive knowledge about the best practices for HR and Recruitment companies on social media. In this context, I had to understand what could result or not in each social media channel by looking at older posts and comparing their engagement levels. Besides, I also had to consider what other companies in the recruitment sector were doing online. With this regard, I chose three of the best-known HR companies, highlighted what they were doing on social media, and compared their practices with Placement in Portugal to make relevant recommendations. Nevertheless, I had to keep in mind that those companies have a different purpose and have a larger dimension in terms of the number of followers and customer engagement levels. It means that the practices that result for the social media of Michael Page, Hays, and Adecco could not result when applying to the case of Placement in Portugal.

Overall, my internship experience and conducting its written report was very positive and pertinent, since it allowed me to draw conclusions and provide insightful managerial implications about the best HR practices that can be used by Placement Portugal.

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