

Perceptions of Instagram Followers of Salvador City Hall on Posts and Recommendations about the Pandemic

Percepções dos Seguidores do Instagram da Prefeitura Municipal de Salvador sobre as Postagens e Recomendações sobre a Pandemia

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the pandemic, communication becomes fundamental for individuals to understand the seriousness of the Covid-19 situation. It has been used by public entities to inform the population about the necessary measures to be taken. Instagram is one of the fastest growing networks in recent years, a fact that has also been observed especially in this pandemic period. The research problem guiding this article was: What is the perception of Instagram followers of the Municipality of Salvador in relation to the persuasiveness of the messages published in this social media about the actions to be taken during the pandemic and the degree of attitude of the followers in relation to these actions? The main objective of the article is to understand the perception of the followers of Salvador City Hall on Instagram in relation to the persuasiveness of the information released in this period of pandemic and to understand the degree of attitude of the followers in relation to these actions. This research follows a quantitative approach, using the survey as a data collection technique. The instrument used was a structured questionnaire, with demographic questions, in addition to questions aimed at knowing the perception of Salvador City Hall Instagram users, built on the scale of Nunes (2016). The survey had 278 validly answered

questionnaires, collected via Google Forms in May 2021. The data analysis method was basic descriptive statistics. It was noticed that the level of quality of the argument used was perceived as high in general, but with regard to the attractiveness of the source, the indicator is lower in relation to the others. It was concluded that most of the Salvador City Hall Instagram followers claimed to follow the recommendations made by the city hall during the pandemic.

Keywords: *Persuasive Message Capacity, Attitude, Instagram, Pandemic, Salvador City Hall.*

RESUMO

No contexto da pandemia, a comunicação torna-se fundamental para a compreensão dos indivíduos a respeito da gravidade da situação do Covid-19. Ela tem sido utilizada pelos entes públicos para informar à população sobre as medidas devidas a serem tomadas. O Instagram é uma das redes que mais cresceu nos últimos anos, fato também observado principalmente nesse período de pandemia. O problema de pesquisa norteador deste artigo foi: Qual é a percepção dos seguidores do Instagram da Prefeitura Municipal de Salvador em relação à capacidade de persuasão das mensagens publicadas nesta mídia social sobre as ações a serem adotadas durante a pandemia e o grau de atitude dos seguidores em relação a estas ações? O artigo tem o objetivo principal de entender qual a percepção dos seguidores da Prefeitura Municipal de Salvador no Instagram em relação à capacidade de persuasão das informações divulgadas nesse período de pandemia e entender o grau de atitude dos seguidores em relação à estas ações. Esta pesquisa segue abordagem quantitativa, utilizando como técnica de coleta de dados o survey. O instrumento utilizado foi um questionário estruturado, com questões demográficas, além de questões voltadas para conhecer a percepção dos usuários do Instagram da Prefeitura Municipal de Salvador, construídas com base na escala de Nunes (2016). A pesquisa teve 278 questionários respondidos válidos, coletados via Google Forms em maio de 2021. O método de análise de dados foi a estatística descritiva básica. Percebeu-se que o nível da qualidade do argumento utilizado foi percebido como alto de uma forma geral, mas no que tange à atratividade da fonte, o indicador é mais baixo relacionado aos demais. Concluiu-se que a maior parte dos seguidores do Instagram da Prefeitura Municipal de Salvador afirmaram seguir as recomendações feitas pela prefeitura durante a pandemia.

Palavras-chave: Capacidade Persuasiva da Mensagem, Atitude, Instagram, Pandemia, Prefeitura Municipal de Salvador



INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus was globally known when Chinese authorities related to the World Health Organization (WHO) the disease that devastated the port city of Wuham, in late December 2019, so-called the “coronavirus disease of 2019”, abbreviated as COVID-19. Among the measures taken by the Chinese authorities to reduce the spread rate and deaths, social distance was used (Grant *et al.*, 2020; Zheng, 2020; Farias *et al.*, 2020).

The virus responsible for COVID-19 infects people orally, affecting the respiratory track or may cause damages to the immune system's response. It has as drastic consequence the death of the contaminated patient due to pneumonia, mainly in elderly, with age above 65 and children up to 5 years old and that have low immunity (Grant *et al.*, 2020; Farias *et al.*, 2020).

In this pandemic context, communication has become an essential tool for the comprehension of individuals regarding the gravity of the situation of such disease. Communication has been used by public agents to inform the population about the due measures. Beyond the present scenery, communication may help the citizen to verify the actions of public agents that affect one's citizenship, in addition to allow to be seen how the State is conducting and what the unfoldment for collectivity are.

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), social media are a group of internet apps that allow the creation and exchange of content generated by users. They serve to increase and construct new connections, or to maintain those already existing (Gnipper, 2018). The most known social media and with more number of connected people are the Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram. It is estimated that there are over 3 billion people connected in the world of social media, according to a reported produced by We Are Social and Hootsuite in January 2021 and disclosed by the digital magazine Istoé Dinheiro (2021).



Instagram is one of the social media that has most grown in the last years, fact also observed mainly during this pandemic period, due to its functionalities and for attracting a younger population (Pérez-Escoda *et al.*, 2020). Instagram allows the sharing of photos and daily moments and also serves to share enterprises, in addition to generate visibility to those who expose their products and/or services.

Public and private organizations use the social media to take a stand and to inform the users about their services or products regarding news and their everyday life. In the context of city halls, communications on social media about the pandemic aimed at giving guidelines to fight and reduce the number of infected individuals and the number of deaths.

In the Instagram of Salvador City Hall (SCH), for example, posts are published with awareness campaigns to practice non-pharmacological measurements such as hygiene, use of masks and mainly social distance. It is also shown what entities should function within this period and what are those considered essential, guiding about non-presential and virtual classes, communicating about the vaccine's application, the location for vaccination, the target-public for a certain day and available time, among other information.

Within such context, the problem of the research in this article was: What is the perception of Instagram followers from Salvador City Hall regarding the messages/recommendations published in this social media on the actions to be adopted during the pandemic and the degree of attitude of followers regarding such actions? Therefore, the present study has the goal to understand what the perception of the followers of the SCH regarding the information disclosed on the Instagram in the pandemic period is and to understand the degree of attitude of the followers regarding such actions. To understand how efficient the information posted on Instagram of the SCH for the population are is what motivated the elaboration of such article.



The article presents as specific purposes to verify, in the perception of followers: (a) the level of quality of argument of the posts published on the Instagram of SCH related to the pandemic; (b) the level of credibility of the source of the posts published on Instagram of the SCH related to the pandemic; (c) the level of attractiveness of the source of posts published on Instagram of the SCH related to the pandemic; (d) the level of perception on the source of posts; (e) the level of acceptance of the information published on SCH's Instagram, and (f) the level of attitude regarding the suggested actions.

The theme has shown to be important both for the public as well as for the city hall, aiming at knowing how much such information published on the city hall's social media has relevance in the citizen's life and whether there is comprehension by the population of the recommendations of this context in the pandemic. For Silveira, Pereira & Limberger (2021), due to the dynamic of the distribution and search for online information, it has become essential the act of the public power to disseminate the public communication to promote the articulation among the several social actors.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Social media and Instagram

Currently, it is visible that the insertion of internet in the everyday life of users has affected the way that people live, whether in their behavior and their relation, or in their social or professional environment. The social media correspond to "a category of online media, in which the content is created by their audience, through the participation and sharing of the content generated by users on the web" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

On the other hand, the social media regards the relationship existing between individuals with the purpose of strengthening the bonds of friendship and making people with common interest closer, so that they can interact and share their vision of the world with other individuals. Such concept of



social network has always existed, but with the advent of the internet, it has spread the possibility of people maintaining and amplifying their horizons, using for this the digital space (Marques, 1999; Marteleto, 2001; Soares, 2018).

It is observed that social network are an integrated part of social media, which serve as tool for disclosure, production and sharing of ideas and content. Social network consists in a platform in which the user interacts and exchanges information with other people belonging to their network. The difference between social media and social network is that the former is a macro-structure meanwhile the latter is a micro-structure being of a part of a whole (Torres, 2009; Rocha Neto; Barreto; Souza, 2015; Clementi *et al.*, 2017).

One of the most famous social network is currently Instagram, which appeared in 2010, created by Kevin Systrom and by the Brazilian Mike Krieger, both graduated by Stanford University (Rezer, Knoll & Ghisleni, 2018). Instagram is a social network that enables the transmission and storage of multimedia content, live with photos, videos, *stories* (short format videos) and *lives*, enabling the reach of users with access to internet (Alves, Costa & Perinotto, 2017; Amaral & Melo, 2016).

Instagram has over 1 billion users, being the 5^o most used social media in the world (Portal G1, 2020), with daily adhesion of thousands of new users and posts published every second. Its coverage is global, but not homogeneous, with daily acting, being less intense during the early morning, with peaks of activity during lunch and dinner time and higher intensity on the weekend (Silva *et al.*, 2017). Instagram has become an ally in the pandemic scenery, due to the number of active users and at the same time the time of use has raise in such period, according to data disclosed by *Época Negócios* (2020), may being an instrument of awareness of the population in the fight against coronavirus.

Theory of Acceptance of Information



According to Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn (2008), the acceptance of information happens when a person receives an information and uses it. Nunes (2016) proposed in the doctorate thesis a theoretical model constructed based on theories of acceptance of information. Such theoretical model has received contributions of theories such as the *Dual-Process Theory* (DPT), from Deutsch & Gerard (1955), and the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM), from Petty & Cacioppo (1984).

The Dual-Process Theory (DPT) is a theory regarding the social influences on the people's judgment (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). According to these authors, individuals may suffer two types of influence that affect their decisions: the normative influences and the informational influences. The normative influence correspond to the that searches the individual to act according to other people's expectations. On the other hand, the informational influence regards the one transmitted as evidences of reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Nunes, 2016).

Another theory of acceptance of information is the ELM, which believes that the individual depends on the situations that are presented to process the received messages. Which means, it determines the level of depth of evaluation of the messages by people (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Nunes, 2016). In the theoretical model proposed by Nunes (2016), the author considers that the ability of persuasion of the message has direct relation with the acceptance of information, the attitude and the intention of purchase.

For Nunes (2016), the quality of argument, the credibility, the attractiveness and the perception of source are characteristics that increase the chances of acceptance and propagation of the message to the receptor. Being so, in the vision of the author, such characteristics constitute the persuasion capacity of the transmitted message. In the present article, the messages to be analyzed will be online, mainly the recommendations of the Salvador City Hall on how people should act facing the pandemic, as



well as the actions of the own City Hall itself regarding the fight against the coronavirus.

It is verified that the perception of the recipient on the information credibility is a determinant factor to either awake or not the user's trust (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). Which means, whether people identify the messages as reliable, they tend to accept the only information easier.

Sussman & Siegal (2003) state that, when people accept the information and believe their content, they use it to help the decision-making process. However, it is unlikely that the messages judged as non-reliable be used and accepted in the decision-making process of the receptor, being, however, essential attributes for the generation of content, whether they are recommendations, disclosure of preventive campaigns or information.

Capacity of persuasion of the message

According to previously approached, Nunes (2016) believes that the capacity of persuasion of the message is supported by some elements. Quality of argument, Credibility of the source, Attractiveness of the source and Perception regarding the source.

Quality of the argument

The quality of the argument in marketing may be shown when the receptor of the message captures the information and evaluates whether one will use it or not (Citrin, 2001). However, it is known that each individual captures and decodes the information in a singular form. Due to such factor, it is necessary to take into account the point of view from the user regarding the quality of the argument, since it is the user that will classify whether the argument is appropriate or not for its use (Wang & Strong, 1996).

The quality of the argument is also associate to the power of the influence of the information contained in that speech (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). It is based on the speech that the users will define whether the message is convincing or not to defend one's point of view (Cheung *et al.*,



2009). Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn (2008) emphasize that the arguments should be contemporary, precise, assertive and detailed.

The present article will consider the construct quality of the argument also in the perspective of Teng *et al.* (2014) in which the quality of the argument will be composed by completeness, accuracy, actuality, relevance and strength of the argument.

Completeness regards until what point the message is being clear and accessible, regarding its amplitude and understanding of what the message wishes to transmit (Teng *et al.*, 2014). Which means, the quantitative of people that will receive and understand a major part of the information contained in that message. Accuracy represents the opinion of the individual, who will decode the message, who will either accept or deny certain information based on one's convictions, ideas, livingness and judgments of value (Wixom & Todd, 2005).

Actuality is associated to how contemporary and current the message is, which means, whether the arguments are used based on new data (Wixom & Todd, 2005). Relevance is associated to the easiness of the user to find relevant information, to which it desires to have no difficulties in accessing it (Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn, 2008). At last, the strength of the argument is the capacity of the information's issuer in influencing the receptor of the message (Teng *et al.*, 2014; Cheung *et al.*, 2009).

Credibility of the source

The credibility of the source corresponds to the degree of acceptance of individuals, which means, how much the users classifies the received information as trustworthy, entirety and complete (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Its application has three focus: knowledge (*expertise*), reliability and previous experience (Teng *et al.*, 2014).

Knowledge or *expertise* refers to how much the user already knows/dominates a subject, whether through previous researches or through



the mastering of the subject (Wu & Shaffer, 1987; Wu & Wang, 2011). Reliability refers to the level of security that the receptor of the message has regarding its issuer. There are several factors that will increase the level of reliability such as, for example, the use of argument of authority, scientific methods verified by regulation agencies, scientific researches, among others (Wu & Wang, 2011).

At last, the previous experience is the living of the user that will receive the information on the raised subject. This is, the intimacy on what is being discussed, based on something which one has already lived or had already contact with somehow. (Teng *et al.* 2014). The transmitted information by sources considered reliable have high credibility and may be accepted easier (Cheung *et al.*, 2009).

Attractiveness of the source

The attractiveness of the source may be defined by the degree of interest of the receptor regarding the information received and involves some characteristics such as similarities, familiarity and sympathy (Teng *et al.*, 2014). An analysis is done on what is said and what the receiver believed, with the purpose of making the content more interesting (Nunes, 2016; Nunes *et al.*, 2018)

Users tend to either accept or consider the source as true in case the information transmitted by the issuer is aligned with their expectations, beliefs and previous references. They tend to repel or not accept information that goes against their beliefs and expectations, which means, it is necessary compliance between the receptor of the message and the issuer (Cheung *et al.*, 2009; Teng *et al.*, 2014; Nunes, 2016; Nunes *et al.*, 2018).

Perception on the source

People accept information disseminated in the virtual spaces coming from certain referential groups and expect that the content of the message may be transformed into something useful in their everyday life (Hsu *et al.*,



2013). For authors such as Hsu *et al.* (2013), sources considered as reliable influence and increase the perception of reliability of an information by the receptor's part, believing it as an element capable of providing a relevant impact on one's perception on the fact described in the message.

In social media, messages are instantaneous. They have a high scalability and promote interaction among their users. This makes them a powerful tool and that has the power to influence people in the decision-making process. It is a valuable element to disseminate ideas, generate knowledge, to commerce goods, interact with other people with the same ideals and social bonds (Nunes, 2016; Nunes *et al.*, 2018)

Social bonds have the power to form the identity of an individual leaving the influence exerted in a spontaneous way or imperative by the message's transmitters (Darós, 2016). The strength of social bonds, depending on the existing bonds between its members, may be weak or strong. Family and friends tend to strengthen such bonds, since they are small groups, Meanwhile, the acquaintances in social networks and strangers have weak bonds, since they are large, non-homogeneous groups.

The acceptance of the context of the message occurs more intensely in similar social groups, in addition to suffering influence of individuals with physical proximity and demographic similarity (Yoo *et al.*, 2014; Liu-Thompkins, 2012; Reingen *et al.*, 1984). The efficiency of the sources regards the existing relationship between the people who are part of the group and the utility perceived by its users.

Attitude

According to Peter & Olson (2009), attitude may be defined as an analysis of a concept or theme by an individual based on one's beliefs, meanings and previous knowledge. Posteriorly to the analysis, which is based on personal interest, an evaluation of one's positioning is performed, whether favorable or not to a certain concept (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In addition, Peter & Olson (2009) point out that the attitudes are kept in the memory, in a



way that when another stimulation on the same theme appears, there is no need for a new interpretation, once there is already a pre-conceived regarding that subject.

The attitudes are related to specific theme, whether in the theory, physical, political or social dimension (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). This way, each person may have a certain attitude regarding a theme, brand, product, publicity campaign or even instructions, for example, the recommendations for fighting COVID-19 available on the Instagram of SCH.

Such attitudes may be classified as negative, neutral or positives, not always assertive or extreme, but may influence one's behavior. Which means, an individual who receives a stimulation of a favorable attitude will not always induce a favorable behavior towards the object, which means, the attitude is not the decisive factor and not the only factor linked to the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

The social psychologists for a long time have been worrying about the issues of attitude, since it is known that such condition influences the behavior of individuals. The researchers and theories on the subject have grown between the 1920 and 1960 decades and, from such period, there has been an increase of the community in studying them (Petty; Cacioppo, 1986; Rydell *et al.*, 2012).

Krech & Crutchfield (1976, p. 369) define attitude as "a longing organization of perceptual, motivational, emotional procedures of adaptation which is centered in an object of one's personal world". This, for Lambert & Lambert (1972, p. 78), "an attitude is an organized and coherent way of thinking, feeling and reacting to people, groups, social problems or, in a more general way, to any happening in the environment".

People's attitude is related to what they like or not like in their beliefs and conviction regarding the received message, which will enable one's behavior, once there is a reciprocal relation between them. It also acts as a



regulator by social rules, the environment one lives and one's desires and motivations (Rydell *et al.*, 2012).

Information, of public character, should be well-elaborated and compelling so that they can influence their target-public, creating the conditions and favorable environment so that their content can be evaluated as important and essential for the daily life, leading the person to follow the recommendations in the information transmitted by any vehicle or any information vehicle. Another factor that also influences the decision-making is the context and the emotional state of the receiver of the message (Zerger *et al.*, 2017). The knowledge on a certain subject transmitted also moulds one's attitude and the previous behavior of the information's user.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The research may be characterized as descriptive, since its goal was to identify the level of perception of the respondents regarding specific variables (Gil, 2010). The study followed a quantitative approach, with the use of a survey as technique to data gathering. The survey corresponds to a tool to collect data, employing as parameter the characteristics and opinions generated by a specific group, which is the object of study, representing a population that can be extrapolated to the studied universe (Freitas *et al.*, 2000).

The instrument of data gathering used in the present study was a structured questionnaire with demographic questions and items focused on knowing the perception of the SCH Instagram users. The questionnaire used the scale *likert* with five points, varying from totally disagree (1) to fully agree (5).

The questionnaire was divided into two distinct parts. The first part refers to the characterization of the respondent and the second part regards the perception of the SCH Instagram followers as to the persuasion capacity of the message (quality of the argument, credibility of the source, attractiveness



of the source and perception of the source) and the acceptance of information and attitude. Table 1 shows the second part of the questionnaire referred to the construct mentioned.

Table 1

Measured issues

Operationalization of the Variables		
Construct	Items of the questionnaire	Sources
Quality of the Argument	QA1. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are informative.	Teng <i>et al.</i> (2014); Nunes (2016)
	QA2. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are deep enough.	
	QA3. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall attend my need for information.	
	QA4. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are true to reality	
	QA5. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are correct.	
	QA6. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are reliable	
	QA7. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are opportune.	
	QA8. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall reflect the World Health Organization guidelines.	
	QA9. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are relevant.	
	QA10. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are applicable in my life.	
	QA11. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are compelling.	



	QA12. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are persuasive.	
	QA13. Recommendations made on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are compatible with comments I hear outside the virtual environment.	Teng <i>et al.</i> (2014); Nunes (2016)
Credibility of the Source	CR1. I believe that the Instagram page of Salvador City Hall is very informative.	Wu & Shaffer (1987); Wu & Wang (2011); Teng <i>et al.</i> (2014) Nunes (2016)
	CR2. I believe that the recommendations on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are reliable.	
	CR3. I believe that Salvador City Hall has expertise on what it recommends.	
Attractiveness of the source	AT1. I believe that the recommendations on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are more attractive when my opinions on the pandemic agree with the City Hall's.	Teng <i>et al.</i> (2014) Nunes (2016)
	AT2. I believe that the recommendations on the Instagram of Salvador City Hall are more attractive when I am already used to other opinions on the matter.	
Perception about the Source	PC1. The recommendations/actions for fighting COVID-19 on SCH Instagram are useful.	Hsu <i>et al.</i> (2013) Teng <i>et al.</i> (2014) Nunes (2016)
	PC2. The recommendations/actions for fighting COVID-19 on SCH Instagram help me obtain important information.	
Acceptance of the information	AC1. I am willing to accept the recommendations to fight COVID-19 posted on Salvador City Hall Instagram.	Cheung & Thadani (2012); Teng <i>et al.</i> (2014); Wu & Wang 2011
	AC2. I am influenced by the recommendations to fight COVID-19 posted on Salvador City Hall Instagram	
	AT1. I like to follow the recommendations of Salvador City Hall Instagram.	
	AT2. I see with good eyes who follows the recommendations that were posted on Salvador City	



Attitude	Hall Instagram.	Petty & Cacioppo(1984); Hsu <i>et al.</i> (2013) Nunes (2016)
	AT3. I am in favor of following the recommendations that were posted on Salvador City Hall Instagram.	

Note. Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

The samples was characterized by non-probable by convenience. The chosen universe of the research was formed by individuals who access or who as followers of Salvador City Hall Instagram. In the description of the sample, it was relevant to expose it in terms of social-demographic conditions, related to specific information regarding the researched theme.

The total population of Instagram followers is of 454 thousand followers. The software *G*Power* was used to perform the calculus of the minimum size of the sample. Ringle, Silva & Bido (2014) observed that the software *G*Power* has two parameters for calculus of the size of the sample: the power of the test ($Power = 1 - \beta$ erro prob. II) and the effect of the size (f^2). The authors highlight that Hair *et al.* (2014) recommend the use of the power of the test as 0.80 and median f^2 as 0.15 (Santos, 2021). To realize such calculus, the *G*Power* for the calculus of the minimum sample of this research, it was obtained the number of 272 respondents that surpassed the first filter.

The data gathering procedure was performed through *Google Forms*. The application of the questionnaire occurred in the month of May, 2021. It was sent through the social media platforms and answered by 278 people. After the data gathering, the descriptive basic statistical analysis was performed in the data through the software Excel. Initially, a social-economy panorama was designed of the respondents, bringing data such as gender, age and income. Posteriorly, the descriptive analysis of the indicators and the constructs, which consists in observing and describing the phenomenon based on the issues of the questions, was performed.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS



Analysis of the people's profile, who follow the Salvador City Hall Instagram/followers

Youngsters between 16 and 30 years old represent 85.24% of the respondents of the questionnaire, which is coherent with the age rate of the people who access and use social media to receive and to send information. However, the over 31 years old respondent represented only 13.67%. The respondents were majoritarian identified with the female gender, since it represented 184 participants and the male gender 94.

The respondents of the research, in its majority, had incomplete graduation which is compatible with the age rate, since they are up to 22 years old youngsters. They represent 47.64% and are found still in university period. The higher amount of the research's respondents was of people who made one to three minimum wages, representing 27.08%, and followed by people who made up to one minimum wage (24.91%), which together represent nearly 52% of the total of the sample.

In the characterization of the sample, people who used the social media to be informed or to interact with other individuals or groups with affinities spend nearly 2 to 5 hours per day, representing 53.43% of the total. The researched individuals, in majority, 35.38%, access weekly SCH Instagram, followed by 28.88% who access daily.

Analysis of the perception of the persuasion capacity of the message

Nunes (2016) states that the persuasion capacity of the message is composed by the quality of the argument, credibility of the source, attractiveness of the source and perception of the source. As follows, the results referring to each one of such dimensions will be presented, since the specific purposes of this work include to verify the level of perception of the SCH Instagram followers, regarding the quality of the argument, credibility of the source, attractiveness of the source and perception of the source.

Quality of the argument



The quality of the argument corresponds to a dimension, according to Citrin (2001), which may be demonstrated when the receptor of the message captures the information and evaluates whether one will follow it or not. Such concept is formed, according to Teng *et al.* (2014), by aspects such as completeness, precision, up-to-dateness, relevance and force of the argument. Regarding the level of perception of the quality of argument in the posts of the SCH Instagram by part of the researched, the results of the 13 items belonging to the construct were analyzed to evaluate such level. .

Table 2 was analyzed in the following way: respondents who agree (scale from 4 to 5), who do not agree, neither disagree (scale 3) and who do not agree (scale from 1 to 2) with the statement of each item.

Table 2

Descriptive statistic of the dimension Quality of the Argument

Construct	Item	Average	Standard Deviation	Agreement (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagreement (%)
Quality of the argument	QA1	4,535	0,141	91,73%	7,91%	0,36%
	QA2	3,866	0,122	66,91%	25,90%	7,19%
	QA3	4,086	0,128	76,98%	18,70%	4,32%
	QA4	4,017	0,120	73,38%	18,71%	7,91%
	QA5	4,424	0,133	85,25%	16,31%	1,44%
	QA6	4,622	0,141	91,73%	7,19%	1,08%
	QA7	4,108	0,120	75,54%	16,18%	8,27%
	QA8	4,521	0,136	89,57%	7,54%	2,88%
	QA9	4,597	0,142	92,09%	6,47%	1,44%



QA1	4,446	0,136	89,57%	8,63%	1,80%
QA1	4,183	0,130	76,26%	20,50%	3,24%
QA1	3,870	0,118	64,75%	25,90%	9,35%
QA1	3,949	0,123	67,99%	25,53%	6,47%

Note. Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

It is perceived that all the items related to the Quality of the Argument had positive levels, with high values of agreement by part of the respondents, which means that the people from the sample consider the argument from the posts of the SCH Instagram gifted with quality. This means, they have completeness, precision, up-to-dateness, relevance and strength in the argument. Completeness regards up to which point the message is being clear and accessible to the individual exposed to it, as shown in Table 2 through the items QA1 to QA4. In those items, it can be noticed that the first evaluated item has high degree of acceptance, 91.73%, but, however, this is not kept in the following questions. In QA2, there is a drop to 66.91%. It grows again in QA3 and QA4.

On the other hand, precision represents the opinion of the individual who will decode the message, whether one will accept it or not. Regarding the precision, questions QA5 and QA6 exposed in Table 2 show that they have high degree of agreement, being, respectively, 82.25% and 91.73%. This means that the research was able to identify that the SCH Instagram followers, normally, accept/understand that the information which are disclosed in this platform are pertinent to be applied. However, this is not enough to state that, in fact, the users put into practice the recommendations, which means, generate an attitude (Teng *et al.*, 2014; Wixom & Todd, 2005).



The up-to-dateness is associated to whether how contemporaneous and current the message is. The relevance is associated to the easiness of the user in finding relevant information, which one wishes to have no difficulties in accessing it (QA7 a, QA9). A significant part of the respondents, around 75.54%, believe that the recommendations posted by the SCH on Instagram are appropriate, but for 8.27% they are not. On the other hand, the items QA8 and QA9 which also have as purpose to measure the up-to-dateness and relevance had higher percentages of 89.57% and 92.09% of agreement. Therefore, based on the literature and the results found, the posts of the city hall are considered current and relevant for the respondents.

The strength of the argument is the capacity of the information's issuer to influence the receptor of the message, was represented by the items QA10 to QA13. The research shows that around 89.57% of the respondents believe that the information posted on the SCH Instagram are applicable in their daily lives, however, 1.80% do not believe that they are useful (QA10). To the great majority of the respondents of the research, around 76.26%, the recommendations on Instagram of SCH regarding the COVID-19 are compelling, but for 3.24%, they are not (QA11).

The respondents, in majority, around 64.75%, believe that the information posted by SCH on Instagram are persuasive. However, for 9.35% they are not (QA12). At last, the great majority of the respondents of the research believe that the information posted by SCH are compatible with the information obtained in other media, being the level of agreement found of 67.99% (QA13).

Following the line of thought of Teng *et al.* (2014), it is observed that, in general, most part of the respondents agree or totally agree with the assertive, which means, they judge that the quality of the argument is either good or great. The analyzed questions, in majority, has an average above 4, which demonstrates that most part of the interviewed considered themselves satisfied regarding the quality of the argument of SCH Instagram. It is also



found a standard deviation with little dispersion, which means, the amount of answers do not represent a high level of divergence.

Credibility of the Source

The credibility of the source corresponds to the degree of acceptance of individuals, which means how much the user classifies the received information as trustworthy, upstanding and complete (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Its application has three focuses: knowledge (*expertise*), reliability and previous experience (Teng *et al.*, 2014). Knowledge ou *expertise* refers to how much the user already knows/dominates such subject and reliability refers to the level of security that the receiver of the message has regarding the issuer. Table 3 shows the perception of the followers of SCH regarding the credibility of the source of the content generated in the pandemic period.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of the dimension Credibility of the source

Construct	Item	Average	Standard Deviation	Agreement (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagreement (%)
Credibility of the source	CR1	4.42	0.1331	85.61%	12.59%	1.79%
	CR2	4.58	0.1412	91.01%	7.55%	1.44%
	CR3	4.31	0.1281	84.53%	11.15%	4.31%

Note. Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

Regarding the dimension credibility of the source, the averages obtained were relatively high: “4.42” in the issue informative, “4.58” reliable, and the lowest average, “4.31” regarding the expertise on what is recommended. Such dimensions show that the recommendations posted are perceived by the followers as positive and reliable as exposed in the



percentage of agreement, having the higher degree in reliability (91.01% totally or partially agree) from the followers regarding the Instagram page.

Attractiveness of the source

The attractiveness of the source may be defined by the degree of interest of the receptor regarding the received information and involves some characteristics such as similarity, familiarity and sympathy (Teng *et al.*, 2014). Users tend to accept or consider the source as true in case the information transmitted by the issuer is aligned with their expectations, and to refuse whether it is not.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of the dimension Attractiveness of the source

Construct	Item	Average	Standard Deviation	Agreement (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
Attractiveness of the source	AT1	3.737	0.10295	64.75%	27%	8.23%
	AT2	3.971	0.11589	71.58%	21.94%	6.47%

Note. Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

Such dimension presented lower averages such as 3.73 and 3.91, respectively from the items AT1 and AT2. Despite presenting inferior averages regarding the already analyzed construct, the attractiveness of the source is related to expectations, wills and desires from the users, and in the current context of the pandemic, it is necessary strictness and seriousness in the positioning of fighting the COVID-19, even if this is not aligned with the user's expectations. Which means, it is necessary to establish safety protocols,



“curfews”, closing business, among other measurements that need to be disclosed in the SCH Instagram page.

Perception about the source

People are influenced and accept information coming from certain referential groups that are disseminated in the virtual spaces, in which the content of the message is hoped to be transformed in something tangible (Hsu *et al.*, 2013). For authors like Hsu *et al.* (2013), sources considered trustworthy influence and increase the perception of reliability of an information by the receiver, accepting it as an element capable of providing a relevant impact on the perception of the fact described in the message.

The perception about the source had positive results from Instagram followers, with a degree of agreement (totally or partially agree) of 92.08% of the interviewed and the average of answers of 4.61 and 4.35 respectively.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics of the dimension Perception about the source

Construct	Item	Average	Standard Deviation	Agreement (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagreement (%)
Perception about the source	PC1	4.61	0.14201	92.08%	7.55%	0.36%
	PC2	4.35	0.13028	81.65%	15.10%	3.23%

Note. Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

According to Darós (2016), the social bonds have the power of forming identities and consequently, influencing in certain way the permanence or entry of new users in a group. Such bond may influence the perception about the source, making the acceptance more intense in similar social groups.

In the research, it can be perceived a “homogeneous” profile of respondents of the study, as brought by the topic “Analysis of the profile of people who follow Salvador City Hall Instagram/followers”. Such topic has shown that the majority of the respondents were young and university



students. The results presented in Table 5 also indicated that the perception about the source was well accepted, as shown by the low degree of disagreement 0.36% and 3.23%.

Analysis of the perception about the Acceptance of Information

The acceptance of information is associated to the level of persuasion that the message is able to transmit. According to Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn (2008), the acceptance of information happens when a person receives an information and uses it. Table 6 brings the results gathered on the perception about the source of the SCH Instagram users.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics of the Construct Acceptance of Information

Construct	Item	Average	Standard Deviation	Agreement (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagreement (%)
Acceptance of the information	AC1	4,450	0,1312	86,69%	10,43%	2,88%
	AC2	4,104	0,1224	73,74%	20,50%	5,76%

Note. Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

Analyzing both items to measure the acceptance of information, it is identified that the average was of 4.45 and 4.10 respectively (AC1 e AC2), with degree of agreement of 86.69% and 73.74%. It was perceived that the item which measures the normative influence, the one that says that the social relations influence the behavior, presented higher average 4.45 and higher level of agreement, 86,69%. Meanwhile, the item that measure the informational influence which regards the one transmitted as evidences of reality, had lower average, 4.10 and level of agreement also lower, 73.74%.

Analysis of the perception about the Attitude

According to Peter & Olson (2009), an attitude may be conceptualized as an analysis of a concept of theme made by an individual based on one's



beliefs, meanings and previous knowledge. Posteriorly to the personal interest, an evaluation is performed and the individual chooses by either being favorable or not to a certain concept, theme or subjects in general. Such attitudes may be classified as negative, neutral or positive, not always assertive or extreme, but may influence the behavior.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of the Construct Attitude

Construct	Item	Average	Standard Deviation	Agreement (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagreement (%)
Attitude	AT1	4,259	0,1317	77,34%	20,50%	2,16%
	AT2	4,482	0,1319	87,05%	11,15%	1,80%
	AT3	4,460	0,131727	85,97%	11,87%	2,16%

Note. Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

Analyzing the dimension attitude, it is verified that the agreement rates are high. The question that aims at measuring whether people like to follow the recommendations of the SCH Instagram had an acceptance of 77.34% and an average of 4.25, having only 2.16% of disagreement. The second question measures whether the follower sees as positive the recommendations and had around 87.05% of agreement, with an average of 4.48 and only 1.80% of disagreement. On the other hand, the third question, which measured whether the followers were in favor of following the recommendations had 85.97% of agreement, average of 4.46 and only 2.16% of disagreement.

Therefore, we may say based on the respondents of the research that the SCH Instagram followers had positive attitudes related to the disclosed recommendations.



Final Considerations

This article had as general purpose to verify the perception that the SCH Instagram followers have regarding the messages, publications and recommendations posted on this social media during the pandemic and to understand the degree of attitude of the followers regarding the recommendations posted. For this, a descriptive research was performed, with a quantitative approach.

Regarding the first specific purpose of measuring the quality of the argument, the study reached its goal and verified that the level of agreement was high. It was perceived that the arguments used on the city hall Instagram are seen as of good quality in general.

However, it was noticed that the construct with lower evaluation regarding the others was the attractiveness of the source, which corresponds to the alignment of the users' expectations to the recommendations of the page. Since the posts deal with measures that were regulated by the WHO with the need to be followed, a suggestion is the way that such content is transmitted, regarding such dimension of the attractiveness, may be re-structured, so that the content may be perceived in a more "intimate" way with its public.

Another important points to be noticed are the dimensions Acceptance of the information and Attitude. The acceptance of the information may be classified as normative or informational. It is perceived that, in the research, the questions that have normative information, as a social bias highlighted, are more acceptable than those who have only the information, without connection with the environment, and living of the respondent. Which means, the recommendations and news, with appeal which involves the social, the collective and more specifically, the immerse social group, have higher probability to generate an attitude and,



consequently, the action. Such as, for example, the disclosure of the number of deaths by COVID-19, makes it more feasible/tangible, when people who have already lost a relative are brought to speak about or someone they loved who died from the virus, instead of speaking just about “numbers”.

The present article has as main management contribution the proposal of a questionnaire to measure the persuasion capacity of the messages posted on social media such as Instagram of public people (for example the case of Salvador City Hall), the acceptance of information and the degree of attitude from the public in face of the posts. Public people such as city halls may use it to verify how the public has received the messages/posts in their social medias.

The results from this study have brought several management insights to the Salvador City Hall, including in the sense of perceiving a high level of agreement to the persuasion capacity of the communication messages indicating that the team of communication has followed a well-received line by the sample of the study.

The participation of the users generate return to the information spreaders, which serves as an instrument for improvement in the services and/or products with suggestions. However, careful must be taken with *fake news*, and information without scientific level, whether of measures or action to fight the virus with medications that do not have its value proven. This may harm the users of the information, being up to the users before spreading information, managing and qualifying its content. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was the need to generate information to the public in a general way, with the purpose of avoiding the spread of the disease and generating useful ways to avoid the contamination of people with the virus.

In the performed research, the respondents qualified the information posted by Salvador City Hall as pertinent and of great credibility to avoid the spread and the contamination of the disease, in addition to follow the recommendations. Which means, in the analyzed sample, a great part of the



interviewed claimed to be satisfied with the quality of the arguments used. This includes the credibility of the source, the attractiveness of the source and the perception about the source. It was noticed a high level of acceptance of the information disclosed by the Instagram platform by the SCH.

This study presents as a limitation the fact that a non-probabilistic sample was used by convenience which means that the results of the study may not be generalized and also the small number of the sample compared to the total population. Another limitation of the study was that it could have had a first qualitative step with deep interviews with SCH Instagram followers, and not only using basic descriptive statistical analysis as a method of analysis in the study.

As suggestions for future studies, it is proposed to perform studies of qualitative nature regarding perceptions of followers or Instagram consumers regarding the post, both for public organs, as city halls, as for companies.

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