

Digital Fame and Fortune in the age of Social Media: A Classification of social media influencers

Fama y fortuna digital en la era de las redes sociales: Una clasificación de los *influencers* en las redes sociales

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Throughout time, the concept of celebrity has evolved to include new forms of fame created with each new technology. In today's increasingly digital world, we are witnessing the explosive growth of this generation's new idols who owe their fame to social media and are better known as social media influencers. A number of terms are used to refer to all forms of fame on social media and even certain terms are often used interchangeably (micro-celebrity, instafamous, internet famous or influencer are some of these terms). A lack of consensus on terminology and the characteristics that define a social media celebrity or even who should be considered a social media influencer or a digital celebrity of any sort is widespread amongst both scholars and practitioners. This study reviews landmark scholarship on celebrities that will help get a better understanding of the dynamics behind the creation of fame, how attention is captured and sustained, as well as the practices that make monetization possible for social media content creators. A comprehensive hierarchical classification of the different types of social media influencers is provided with updated definitions and characteristics to give a better understanding of the growing range of digital content creators and their status. Furthermore, this study discusses the practices carried out by successful social media influencers and what sets them apart from ordinary fame-seekers in the context of scholar studies.

ABSTRACT

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El concepto de celebridad ha evolucionado con el paso del tiempo incluyendo nuevas versiones de famosos que se han creado con cada nuevo avance tecnológico. Hoy día, en un mundo cada vez más digital, estamos viendo un número creciente de ídolos nuevos que deben su fama a las redes sociales y que son conocidos como 'influencers'. Hay muchos términos para referirse a los nuevos famosos que surgen en redes sociales e incluso a menudo se utilizan algunas palabras de forma indistinta (micro-celebridad, 'instafamosos' o 'influencer'). Existe una amplia falta de consenso, tanto en el entorno académico como en el sector profesional acerca de cuál debe ser la terminología a utilizar, las características que definen a una celebridad en redes sociales o incluso quien debe ser considerado un 'influencer' o famoso de las redes sociales.

Este estudio lleva a cabo una revisión de la literatura de los trabajos más destacados sobre la fama que ayudará a entender mejor que hay detrás de la creación de famosos, como se consigue atraer la atención y mantenerla, así como las prácticas que permiten a los creadores de contenidos en redes sociales obtener una rentabilidad económica. Se incluye una clasificación jerárquica de los distintos tipos de 'influencers' en redes sociales con definiciones actualizadas y sus principales características para entender mejor la creciente diversidad de creadores de contenido digital. Este trabajo también analiza los motivos que hacen que los 'influencers' de éxito destaquen sobre el resto de las personas comunes que buscan la fama en las redes sociales, a través de la recopilación de diversos estudios académicos sobre esta materia.

1. Introduction

Celebrities have always generated fascination and admiration across cultures, thus it is no surprise that celebrity culture and fame have received widespread attention by scholars across disciplines (Turner, 2013). Advances in technology such as the big screen or TV have been known to create cultural shifts, and in turn, each has brought the creation of a new set of idols in larger numbers than before (Duffy, 2017). Each change in celebrity culture has sparked new interest amongst scholars to study each generation's idols from many different perspectives, and this is now the case with new forms of fame created on social media.

In today's increasingly digital world, we are witnessing the explosive growth of this generation's new idols who owe their fame to social media and are better known as social media influencers. For the first time in history, celebrity status and the financial rewards that are associated with fame, seem largely attainable to ordinary people like never before (Turner, 2006). This has resulted in an unprecedented number of fame-seekers using social media as the gateway to self-promotion (MacDonald, 2014) even if in reality, only a few get the kind of recognition that can be converted to money. Indeed, on social media, not all forms of attention lead to profit. Only users who build the right kind of social capital of interest for brands can monetize (Zulli, 2018).

At present, a lack of consensus exists for both scholars and practitioners on who should be considered and referred to as an influencer or a celebrity. A number of terms is used to refer to the wide range of users seeking attention and recognition. These users range from the wannabes and amateurs to well-established professional self-brands, who also vary in status. In academia, the term 'microcelebrity' is used extensively to refer to

social media influencers, whereas it is rarely used by practitioners who have completely different terminology. Agreeing on terminology, defining and categorizing all the different players into specific tiers is important to identify which content creators are indeed of value for brands (Booth & Matic, 2010). This ultimately determines which ones can monetize their efforts and helps brands distinguish amateurs from professionals.

The main objective of this study is to present a literature review of landmark scholarship of the different types of fame ranging from traditional mass media celebrities to social media influencers, with particular attention to the creation of fame for ordinary people on social media. This review will help understand where the real value of a celebrity lies to distinguish those who can potentially use their digital activity as a source of income from those who simply pretend to be famous or have an amateur approach. This study will classify different levels of recognition on social media and clarify the wide range of existing terms, suggesting unified terms.

This paper is structured as follows. First of all, this paper includes an overview of how fame is created with each technological advance. This is followed by definitions of new forms of fame on social media, distinguishing publicly recognized figures on social media from fame seekers. Then, this research provides a hierarchical classification of the different types of social media influencers with definitions of what sets them apart and presents the practices carried out by social media influencers to create and maintain the kind of status that allows monetization (considered the main driver of fame and attention). A discussion follows providing critical assessment of concepts reviewed herein. Finally, suggestions are provided to guide scholars in future lines of study in this field.

2. Historical overview of the creation of fame

Throughout time, the concept of celebrity is ever changing, as are the dynamics by which celebrities are created in each new era. To understand current forms of digital fame and the practices carried out to achieve and sustain fame, we must look at the historical context of established theories from the most referenced scholar authorities in celebrity studies, as these will provide the underpinnings of how fame is created and sustained.

2.1. The construct of celebrity from a traditional perspective

A celebrity is either someone who is famous, especially in entertainment or sports, or the state of being famous (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). The construct of celebrity, however, is far more complex than this simple definition. Traditional celebrities can include individuals, groups, or even pets, and are typically entertainers or athletes who have achieved mass media public attention and have risen to fame via their looks, wealth, special talent, skills, professional achievements,

or can be inherited from famous parents or relatives (Driessens, 2013). If we observe the previous definition, achieving public attention is considered one of the key aspects. Indeed, "the ability to attract and direct attention has constituted the very definition of celebrity from the earliest years" according to Hearn and Schoenhoff (2015. p.198). This ability to attract fame is also linked to how fame originates (Turner, 2006). This study will focus on the celebrification of individuals from ordinary people to celebrities, as defined by Driessens (2013).

The three part model of fame (Rojek, 2001) is considered one of the most interesting classifications of celebrity figures and how fame originates (Table 1). This model implies a hierarchy based on how fame is earned or attributed (Turner, 2004). According to this model, celebrities can be classified into three categories: ascribed (inherited from famous parents or relatives), achieved (those who become famous due to their talent, such as an athlete) and attributed, which are fabricated or staged by industry mediators or people who attract a lot of media attention or are associated with other celebrities.

Table 1 · Rojek's 3-part model of fame

Type of fame	Characteristic	Examples	Authors & Date
1) Ascribed	Fame inherited from famous parents or relatives	Royalty or the children of prominent people	Rojek, 2001
2) Achieved	Fame due to achievements or talents	Athletes, political figures, scientists	
3) Attributed	Fabricated or staged by industry mediators (public persona was created to fit certain interests)	Movie stars or TV stars	

Rojek (2001) acknowledged the limitations of his three part model of main categories and ad-

dressed this by recognizing other forms of celebrity who have different status with audiences (Table 2).

Table 2 · Other forms of fame not included in Rojek's 3 part model of fame

Type of fame	Definition	Examples	Authors & Date
Celetoid	Short-lived unpredictable lasting fame.	The winner of a TV quiz.	Rojek, 2001
Celeactor	Someone who behaves like a real celebrity in real life.	A wannabe that pretends to be famous.	
Infamous	People who attract attention for negative reasons.	A criminal that attracts media attention and may generate fans, followers or even copycats.	
Accidental celebrity	Someone who attracts attention inadvertently for reasons out of his control.	Someone who witnesses an event and might appear inadvertently on mass media gaining quick attention.	Turner, 2004
Subcultural celebrity	Mediated figures who are famous only by their fan audience.	Cult TV show actors, local newscasters, or small town politicians.	Hills, 2003; Marwick, 2015a; Ferris, 2010

This wider range of celebrity figures suggests that there are different levels of control each person may have or lack to maintain status as a public figure. The 'accidental celebrity' is someone who might attract attention inadvertently for reasons out of his control for a short time only and who will typically try to cash in as quickly as possible (Turner, 2004). 'Celetoid', is a term which Rojek coined for short-lived unpredictable lasting fame (quickly moving from maximum visibility back to complete obscurity), or the 'celeactor' (someone who behaves like a real celebrity in the public eye). Rojek also addressed infamous characters who attract attention for negative reasons, such as transgressive, notorious or criminal figures, who also generate fans, followers or even copycats. Subcultural celebrities are defined as "mediated figures who are famous only by and for their fan audiences" (Hills, 2003. p.60).

2.2. The creation of fame linked to technology

Scholars who have studied celebrity concur that the making of celebrities has been inevitably intertwined to media (Turner, 2006). In the 20th

century, celebrity culture was largely influenced by changes in media such as the big screen, and TV (Marshall, 1997) and now social media.

Big screen celebrities (movie stars)

Hollywood started producing celebrities for the big screen because they helped draw audiences to the movies and shortly after discovered they could also be used as aspirational endorsers of other commodities (Gamson, 2011). The value of celebrities was precisely the capacity to attract and mobilize attention, whether to a movie, a magazine cover or to products. These early Hollywood celebrities helped differentiate products and were produced as commodity actors to bring audiences. Their public personas were carefully crafted by studio press departments to fit the interests of the industry (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015).

Celebrities for the most part, had little control over their public persona. Gossip magazines were created to show a glimpse of the private lives of stars which audiences craved, but even these representations of celebrity 'real' life were predominantly staged (Gamson, 2011).

The value of these big screen celebrities is associated to box office results (the capacity to attract crowds to movies). For example high box office results of a movie attributed to an actor will increase salary for next movie. Some high profile actors might even get a percentage of box office earnings which further shows that economic value is tied to the ability to draw crowds.

TV celebrities

Similar to Hollywood's creation of traditional celebrities, TV also created another breed of celebrities: people appearing on TV as either presenters, contestants or participants of reality shows. It is important to note that none of the traditional mass media celebrities created the content or the audience. Traditional mass media creates content to attract an audience, and in principle, the better the content (or rather the bigger the interest in the content), the bigger the audience to show ads to. Thus, traditional media creates the content and provides the audience, and celebrities loan their image and play their part (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017).

The value of these new celebrities was also based on their ability to attract viewers (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015). Reality programs on TV were born for financial reasons as they were cheaper and quicker to produce at a time when channels and gossip magazines multiplied and the entertainment industry required a larger supply of content. According to Gamson (2011), TV shows turned contestants into recognizable and familiar brands that were commoditized and marketed following the example of the big screen industry, only on a larger scale. As a consequence, these shows made a large number of ordinary people famous (Turner, 2006; Gamson, 2011).

These new celebrities still depended on the industry gatekeepers who decided who was given

an opportunity in the spotlight (Driessens, 2013), although the ability to stay in the spotlight also required a certain degree of individual appeal to keep the audience interested (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015). In regards to what differentiated fame seekers, Fairchild (2007) notes that the most successful TV contestants are those who are able to build active relationships with their supporters. This highlights the role played by the contestant's personality and public representation of self in attracting an audience of followers and keeping their attention overtime.

The value of TV celebrities is linked to TV viewership (Nielsen rating points of estimated audience sizes). For example a TV anchor's salary depends on market size of broadcast. For other shows, someone who can draw viewers and is able to get high ratings for a program, gets a higher salary.

The do-it-yourself social media celebrity

Once again, the internet and social media in particular, is responsible for producing new forms of celebrity (Gamson 2011). Social media celebrities are individuals with no prior fame who become famous on one or several social media platforms (Marshall, 2010). Fame might transcend social media, but initial recognition originates in social media.

The biggest difference of social media's new celebrities and traditional celebrities is that users now provide both the content and the audience (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015), thus radically changing the rules of the game. This brought the do-it-yourself, self-made celebrity (Turner, 2006 & 2010; Gamson, 2011), who unlike celebrities in the past, no longer depends on industry gatekeepers to choose who is given a chance in the spotlight (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015).

These self-made celebrities are considered successful if their self-branding and content

capture the attention of viewers in a consistent manner, thus building social capital. Social capital always precedes economic capital and determines the value for potential brand endorsements (Zulli, 2018).

In Table 3, we can see a summary of the types of fame that have been generated with each new technical advance, the main characteristic that defines them, and what indicator is used to determine economic value.

Table 3 · Types of fame associated with technological advances

Type of fame	Creation of fame	Gateway to fame	Self-presentation	Economic capital is based on:	Authors & Date
Big screen celebrity (movie stars)	Celebrities are fabricated to mobilize attention first to movies and then to other products.	Must be chosen by Movie industry and placed in front of an audience.	Portrayal of star persona is predominantly staged by industry to fit a certain ideal.	Box office results	Marshall, 1997; Gamson, 2011; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015
TV celebrity	Presenters, contestants or participants of reality shows are fabricated and commoditized following big screen example.	Must be chosen by TV industry and placed in front of an audience.	Individual appeal and public representation of self keeps audience interested overtime in a regular TV show/contest.	TV ratings	Driessens, 2013; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015
Social media celebrity	Digital content creators who capture the attention of viewers through their own content.	User no longer depends on gatekeepers.	User must create their own digital identity.	Value of social capital	Zulli, 2018; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015

3. Fame in the age of social media

There are many definitions of what constitutes a publicly recognized figure on social media and different theories about the practices that lead to this status. On some occasions, the same term is used to refer to all forms of fame on social media, or certain terms are often used interchangeably (micro-celebrity, instafamous, internet famous or influencer are some of these terms). Some scholars for example, use the terms micro-celebrities and influencers indistinctly as seen in studies by Mavroudis & Milne (2016) or Zulli (2018). Moreover, the same terms are sometimes used for fame seekers who have not actually achieved any status of recognition and might not be able to monetize ever or even for those who have just

attracted attention inadvertently for a very short period of time.

Social media influencers (SMI), Youtubers, vloggers and Instafamous

Practitioners, popular media and general public use the term social media influencer to refer to those who have achieved recognition. In reality, anyone and everyone is a content producer according to Booth and Matic (2010). Indeed, both Youtube and Facebook, the leading platforms worldwide (Statista, 2018), use the term 'digital content creator' signaling the industry term that should be used for all users producing and posting content, regardless of results in capturing attention. Therefore, not all content creators are

influencers, but all influencers are content creators who get attention and build social capital.

Social media influencers who build social capital act as third party endorsers who can shape attitudes through the use of social media (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey and Freberg, 2010). For practitioners, the title of influencers is reserved for those who exert influence over their community of followers, and the term celebrity is used only for high profile influencers.

Social media influencers (SMIs) currently include many types of users who have achieved recognition on social media which implies that these content creators have created a community of followers that transcends well beyond friends and family (Booth & Matic, 2011). Recognition is achieved by cultivating a network through content and self-representation techniques. The term influencer is inspired by Katz, Lazarsfeld and Roper's (2017) concept of personal influence which was first introduced by these two authors back in 1955 and by Cialdini's idea of social influence (1988).

Influencers are do-it-yourself social media users that create their own digital persona, create their own content and build their own audience. They must be able to draw attention to themselves and to products and have a considerable following to be of use for brands. This requires a set of practices, including becoming a brand themselves, offering a distinctive unique selling proposition (Khamis et al., 2017) and adopting a professional approach in a consistent manner (Hou, 2018) with commercial intention (Abidin & Ots, 2016).

Youtubers are content creators that use Youtube as their main platform to launch their videos (Jerslev, 2016; Hou, 2018). Successful Youtube content creators are a strategic niche for Youtube's business model as they deliver curated audiences

for ads (Hou, 2018). They are considered the highest paid influencers with self-made millionaires appearing in public rankings (Forbes, 2018). These high profile social media influencers are considered social media celebrities (Hou, 2018).

Vloggers are considered social media influencers who are known mainly for using a specific format: vlogs. The word vlog derives from combining the terms video and blog. Just like any other social media influencer, vloggers cultivate a network through content and self-representation techniques, where storytelling, authenticity and intimacy play a key role. Video logs (vlogs) are a type of video content typically built around a topic. This format is highly in demand, and is particularly characterized by a raw, intimate confessional tone, where the host uses the first person and self-disclosure to help establish credibility and rapport with their network. The audience provides feedback via likes and comments which creates interaction opportunities and shapes future content. Much like a video diary, or a TV series, vloggers post video entries on a regular basis delivering episodes that might build on previous content. This allows vlogs to grow a sustainable base of viewers on which to leverage for commercial purposes (Hou, 2018). Even though vloggers are usually associated with Youtube, they are also growing on Instagram with the proliferation of the Stories format used by many content creators as a video diary (Amancio, 2017).

Instafamous, is commonly known as someone ordinary who becomes famous on Instagram using self-presentation strategies and images as a form to express themselves and capture large audiences (Marwick, 2015b).

4. Classifying social media influencers

Social media digital content creators who achieve recognition vary significantly in terms of status, audience size, influence and practices (all of

which determine if an account has any commercial value). This implies a hierarchy and key differences in recognition, status and monetization opportunities. There are many ways of classifying different types of influencers (Zulli, 2018).

Practitioners categorize influencers according to audience size, even if the number required to be in one tier or another differs depending on influencer platform. The term given to each category also depends on the source (Blomqvist & Järkemyr, 2018). The most popular classification is Micro influencers, Macro influencers and Mega influencers (Bullock, 2018). Market value of influencers depends to a large extent on whether they can deliver the kind and size of community that brands want. This implies that for digital content creators to be useful for brand collaborations in the form of paid endorsements they must first build a sizeable audience of potential consumers.

4.1. Micro-influencers, Macro Influencers and Mega influencers

Micro-influencers (not to be confused with micro-celebrities), is a vernacular industry term, and as such, it is necessary to draw from industry definitions and references. These content creators are influencers that form the largest group of content creators and have the smallest following. These smaller niche networks are valuable for brands seeking those specific demographics (Tilton, 2011). These influencers typically specialize in a particular area of interest and tend to be very knowledgeable or specialized in their subject and thus provide a more targeted follower base (Bernazzani, 2018).

In the world of practitioners the bar regarding the audience size of this type of influencer is set anywhere in the range of 5,000 to 50,000 followers and up to around 100,000 followers, but this

range is not standardized and depends on intermediary influencer platforms which have arbitrarily set these numbers based on brands' requirements for collaborations. As time passes, these figures raise to meet higher industry demands.

Youtube for example, sets the threshold for content creators at a minimum of 1,000 subscribers and 4,000 watch hours to qualify for the partner program that allows monetization. In Youtube's partner program, Silver status is awarded for users over 100,000 subscribers. Gold status is awarded for users with over 1 million subscribers and Diamond status is awarded for those with over 10 million subscribers (Youtube Creator Academy, 2018).

According to the influencer marketing platform Markerly (2015), which conducted a survey with two million social media influencers from Instagram, micro-influencers with following in the 10,000 to 100,000 range generated the best ratio of reach and engagement (i.e. interaction of audience with posted content measured by taking into account post reach and viewer response in the form of clicks, likes and comments). This same study shows that as influencers grow their audience, their engagement rate drops.

Arguably, as an audience grows into millions, it becomes more challenging to maintain the level of intimacy micro-influencers create with their smaller and more nurtured communities (Chen, 2016). Micro-influencers are generally perceived to be more authentic than well-known influencers with larger networks who tend to become less accessible as their popularity grows. It is precisely the portrayal of authenticity and accessibility that micro-influencers offer that connects with an audience (Hatton, 2018; Bernazzani, 2018). Individuals who have around 100,000 to 200,000 followers are considered 'power middle influencers' (Chen, 2013) but some categorize them also as

Macro influencers. Top Macro-influencer might have over 500,000 followers. This massive following can be attributed to turning their digital activity into a full time professional endeavor using a business approach. At this level, these influencers have a strong digital presence in more than one platform. They use different platforms effectively to cross promote and be more valuable for brands. Finally, the top elite of social media influencers are the mega-influencers.

The different types of social media influencers are classified (Table 4) by audience size. The classification differentiates mega influencers into gold category (over one million followers) or diamond

(over 10 million followers), using the standard of the Youtube partner program for content creators (Youtube Creator Academy, 2018). Mega influencers embody the epitome of the ability to capture attention. They provide reach that might exceed the audience of mass media (Hou, 2018) and are used in large awareness campaigns. Users in this category include high profile accounts like Youtuber millionaires mentioned earlier or other high profile accounts in other platforms. Mega influencers are the A-listers of social media fame and considered and treated like big traditional celebrities. These elite social media influencers are the real social media celebrities.

Table 4 · Social media influencers classified using practioner terms

Influencers that use specific platform or formats			Size of audience
Youtubers	Influencer that uses Youtube	Value classified according to Youtube partner program (Silver, Gold, Diamond)	Varying number of followers. (See below)
Vloggers	Influencers that uses Vlog format	Vloggers typically use Youtube and/ or Instagram (Hou, 2018)	
Instafamous	Influencers who uses Instagram	It implies capturing a large audience (Marwick, 2015b).	
Classification of influencer status based on size, regardless of platform used or format (Hatton, 2018; Bernazzani, 2018, Bullock, 2018)			Size of audience
Micro influencers	The largest group of influencers	They are considered to have the highest engagement with followers (Markerly, 2015)	Up to 99K
Macro influencers	Silver (Youtube)	Also called Power middle users (Chen, 2013)	From 100K to 500K followers
	Macro (advanced level)	Must be very professional and consistent (Booth & Matic, 2011)	Over 500 followers and up to 1 Million
Mega influencers	Gold (Youtube Creator Academy, 2018)	They have become extremely well-recognized authorities in a certain topic through strategic self-branding	Over 1 million
Considered Social Media Celebrities A-listers	Diamond (Youtube Creator Academy, 2018)	Elite of social media influencers that can command mass media size audiences (Hou, 2018)	Over 10 million

4.2. Other terms used for fame seekers
Micro-celebrity

Micro-celebrity is repeatedly used by scholars to refer to influencers. It is worth examining its origins to understand whether this term is appropriate or not. The term is coined in 2001 by Theresa M. Senft when she was first researching for her book on camgirls published in 2008 (Senft, 2013). Her ethnographic study described the set of practices camgirls carried out to sustain a relationship with viewers, with particular attention to their own perception as a self-brand and their theatrical performance of authenticity in front of the camera as part of their attempts to portray the perception of intimacy (Senft, 2008).

Further to her original definition, Senft (2013) later provided examples of micro-celebrity practices such as carefully selecting images to post, deleting or untagging unflattering images shared by others online, or differentiating content to post based on platform and audience, all of which manifest a staged performance of one's self, regardless if content is viewed by only 15 people or even an imaginary audience. In other words, acting like someone is watching and playing a role to maintain an identity one wishes to portray. It is important to point out that these micro-celebrity practices do not imply in any way that people

might actually pay attention as there is no audience required.

Marwick considers micro-celebrity a mindset and set of practices that include crafting a digital persona for public consumption to capture the interest of an audience by revealing information selected strategically to maintain popularity, as well as treating and managing viewers as a fan base (2010; Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Marwick (2015a) stated that it is something one does, rather than something one is. Once again this updated definition does not contemplate the ability to attract attention or build an audience to leverage on for commercial purposes (Table 5).

According to the online Collins dictionary, micro-celebrity is a noun meaning 'a celebrity whose fame is relatively narrow in scope and likely to be transient' (Collins Dictionary, 2018), indicating that an audience is required, therefore making the capacity to attract attention (even if it is short-lasting) an intrinsic part of the definition. The dictionary's definition is consistent with Hearn and Schoenhoff's (2015) rationale discussed earlier, who contend that the ability to draw attention is at the heart of any definition of celebrity, something which is lacking in Senft's (2008 & 2013) definition of micro-celebrity.

Table 5 · Micro celebrity definition and practices (monetization is not specified as a key driver nor practices lead to it)

Definition	Practices	Authors & Date
Theatrical performance of one's self to portray the perception of authenticity & intimacy.	1) carefully selecting images to post 2) deleting or untagging unflattering images shared by others online 3) differentiating content to post based on platform and audience.	Senft, 2008 Senft, 2013
A mindset and set of practices that include crafting a digital persona for public consumption. It is something one does rather than something one is.	Revealing information selected strategically to maintain popularity. Treating and managing viewers as a fan base.	Marwick 2010 Marwick & Boyd, 2011 Marwick 2015a

Accidental internet celebrities, satellites and wannabes

Accidental internet celebrities are the same as traditional media accidental celebrities discussed earlier (Turner, 2004). It is short lived fame that might originate inadvertently, like someone appearing on a meme or other content that goes viral. A meme might run freely without creating any fan base for the person appearing in the content.

Satellite or parasite celebrities is a term we propose in this study. The name is inspired on social media users who live off the fame of others (typically a friend or someone who dates a celebrity, creating content about the celebrity or even creating fake accounts on social media that impersonate celebrities or focus on them). Their fame is linked to the celebrity's fame and can be considered a form of ascribed fame based on Rojek's 3 part model (Rojek, 2001).

Wannabe influencers are amateur digital content creators who might try to copy the practices of successful influencers in their quest for attention, but who have not achieved the kind of recognition or built a valuable audience that can be leveraged on for brand endorsements. They

lack key skills or the professional approach that successful influencers have and tend to focus on short term results. These users might try to increase exposure by tagging other prominent accounts, adding excessive hashtags (in the case of Instagram) or imitating viral content that has captured attention for others.

This study argues that none of these social media users who act like celebrities to imaginary audiences or to a small group of friends or followers can be considered influencers. They are similar to 'celeactors' mentioned before (Rojek, 2001) who pretend to be famous. Their digital activity does not build the kind of social capital that can be converted into economic capital and even if they might achieve a certain degree of attention, it is unlikely that they can turn their efforts into sustainable attention or into a steady source of income.

The following classification (Table 6) shows content creators who follow practices where monetization is not clear. Audience size is not defined and some might not even build a community of followers or achieve significant public attention in the long run.

Table 6 · Different types of Social Media users where size of audience is not factored into definition (the majority cannot monetize)

Terms	Definition	Size of audience
Micro celebrity	People who carry out a set of practices to sustain a relationship with viewers (Senft, 2008).	Size of followers is not factored into any scholar definition
Accidental internet celebrities	Short lived fame and accidental (people appearing on a meme or other content that goes viral). Adapted from (Turner, 2004).	Varying number of followers
Satellite or parasite social media celebrity	Someone who owes fame to having a relationship or being related to someone famous. Form of ascribed fame (Rojek, 2001).	
Wannabe influencer	Amateur who tries to copy the practices of successful influencers in their quest for attention.	

5. Standing out in the Attention Economy and being able to monetize

According to Fairchild (2007) we are living in a media and information saturated world, which has given rise to a marketing perspective prevalent today which Fairchild defined as the *attention economy*, where attention has become the most valuable commodity. To make things even more complicated, social media sites such as Instagram are designed to promote and facilitate only a quick glance of content, making attention even harder to achieve. Indeed, glancing large amounts of content in a short period of time, without fixating on one specific image has become the dominant form of consuming content on social media (Zulli, 2018).

In this scenario, capturing attention presents increasing challenges for all content creators all of which want their posts to be noticed. The capacity to attract eyeballs has therefore become of critical importance and only those who are successful in capturing attention can trade on it (Abidin, 2014).

Just like the capacity to draw and mobilize attention for traditional celebrities emanates from a celebrity's personality and portrayal of a star persona, capturing attention is the essence of real value that can be commercialized and is also something which emanates from the celebrity's identity, personality and portrayal of a star-persona. Celebrity culture is a commodity system, an industry, and a narrative, as well as a participatory culture, in which the commodity at stake is embodied attention (Gamson, 2011).

5.1. Practices to capture and sustain attention long term

In order to achieve prominence in the attention economy, people must turn into self-brands (Van Dijck, 2013). Similarly to how brands are

constructed, people must offer a unique selling proposition (USP) that distinguishes them from the mass of other fame-seekers. Social media content creators must either create a distinctive self-brand 'or die', implying that without a self-brand any public recognition is not sustainable long term (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017).

Potential social media influencers must develop their own authentic 'personal brand' by investing the same amount of dedication, time and effort that successful brands devote to building theirs. Even though some of the dynamics may change in building a self-brand vs. a regular brand. In both cases a target audience must be defined so that the unique selling proposition and the narrative match the intended audience (Khamis et al., 2017). In this sense, for both brands and individuals, the biggest challenge is to build and maintain a specific type of audience that remains interested over time.

Self-branding or personal branding on social media pivots on creating a digital identity that draws the attention of a specific audience through a narrative (inspirational, relatable, instructing, cautionary, aspirational or just plain entertaining) (Brody, 2001). On that account, self-branding is 'essentially an attention-getting device to achieve competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace' (Shepherd, 2005, p.597), or to put it in other words, it differentiates users making it possible to project distinctive character (Chen, 2013). Self-branding therefore builds brand equity. For celebrities their equity is fans that are loyal to their brand (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015). Extrapolating to social media, investing in creating a self-brand builds a loyal audience of followers or subscribers.

To sum up, the key factors necessary to achieve and sustain long term public recognition include: personality (having strong storytelling skills, being

relatable, portraying authenticity), providing compelling and distinct content (becoming an authentic credible voice in a specific field relevant to the interests of an intended audience), reach (gathering a community of followers) and generating meaningful engagement (Tilton, 2011; Khamis et al., 2017).

Tilton (2011) contends that not everyone is gifted with communication skills and the ability to express oneself or even the kind of personality that connects with an audience. Subjective criteria is at play in making some people more likeable than others. 'Likeability' or being graced with the approval and recognition of a crowd is frequently based on subjective criteria hard to define or measure and is similar to what traditional media called having 'star quality' which turned certain people into movie stars (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Crafting a brand persona in social media implies aspects such as certain looks and projecting a distinct style coherent with the content topic where the content creator wants to position himself as a credible source for marketing purposes. The perceived image of an endorser must have a correlation with the product (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1998). However, the image and credibility of the endorser also depends on subjective factors that may vary significantly with different age groups, gender, and geographic location (Ohanian, 1990).

5.2. The value of celebrities, the key to Monetization and Brand collaborations

Past studies on social media influencers such as Jerslev (2016) or Marwick (2013; 2015a; 2015b) have centered mostly on the practices of self-representation carried out by content creators to draw attention to themselves. However, getting attention and making money are completely different. As important as these behaviors might be

in building and maintaining a community of followers, adopting business practices is considered critical to create the kind of social media presence that can be commercialized and turned into a steady source of income (Hou, 2018).

Capturing attention is therefore only the first step for many fame seekers. Even though social media has made fame seem attainable for ordinary people, we must not forget that the real driver behind fame has always been to gain some significant advantage and ultimately make money (Page, 2012). The truth is brands are only interested in users who can deliver the right kind of eyeballs and attention. This means, that marketability depends on whether a content creator not only becomes a trusted source of information, but also cultivates a lasting relationship with a curated fan base that meets specific demographics that appeal to brands in one or several niches (Hou, 2018; Choi & Lewallen, 2018).

Furthermore the influencer must provide an engaged audience that is potentially receptive to being influenced by the content creator in a subject field of interest to practitioners (Tilton, 2011; Booth & Matic, 2011). The number of eyeballs is also important, since specific audience sizes are required by brands looking for collaborators. Therefore, building a sizeable audience is indispensable for monetization since advertisers demand reach and visibility (Youtube Partner Program, 2018). The ability to deliver a desirable audience becomes the bargaining power to trade on.

Social media platforms also increasingly demand professional content creators who can deliver audiences. Youtube, for example, has become a platform of professionally generated content that implements measures to imitate the role of TV (Hou, 2018). In this business model, only content creators who can bring audiences,

can monetize (Youtube partner program, 2018). Youtube's partner program was created under the large assumption that content creators want a big audience and economic rewards for successfully bringing in viewers.

The level of professionalization of successful content creators can be observed through indicators such as: defining a strategy based on audience segmentation and interests, creating content themes and using a consistent visual identity. In addition, content must be posted regularly at optimal times and be SEO friendly (favoring search engine optimization) to be found when users conduct searches for that particular type of content. Advanced users also cross-promote using other platforms to increase exposure.

Technology has often been considered as one of the reasons so many people have access to fame in the digital age, but in reality, technology is just a facilitator. Even if technology makes fame seem accessible, only a select few attract attention

overtime. Technical affordances must be used efficiently and tools must be used to track and measure results, but a strategy and a business implementation plan are far more important.

Content creators must understand what works with an intended audience and be responsive to their needs just like any brand must do with customers. Furthermore, influencers should not over endorse brands to maintain credibility and engagement levels (measured through user interactions such as clicks, views, likes and comments) and of course, avoid losing followers. In other words, influencers need to become a brand and adopt business practices to gain revenue. Only users who create content with a consistent professional approach rise to the top and eventually become publicly recognized influencers that can monetize their efforts (Hou, 2018).

Scholar findings regarding the practices behind the creation of fame that can be monetized are summarized on Table 7.

Table 7 · Practices that lead to the monetization of social influencers based on scholar studies

	Practices to build an audience and sustain fame	Authors & Date
Ability to draw attention in the Attention Economy	Only those who are successful in capturing attention can trade on it.	Fairchild, 2007
	Glancing content makes it harder to capture attention	Zulli, 2018
	Many of the same traditional fame drivers (looks, wealth, talent, skills...) apply for digital celebrities	Marwick, 2015b
	Attention is the most valuable resource of our time and a set of practices are required to keep viewers interested	Senft, 2013
	3 key factors to reach public recognition: 1) Personality 2) Content 3) Reach	Tilton, 2011
	The ability to draw and mobilize attention is the essence of real value that can be commercialized	Gamson, 2011

	Practices to build an audience and sustain fame	Authors & Date
Establishing Self-branding (Or personal branding)	Self-branding: an "attention getting device to achieve competitive advantage in a crowded market place"	Shepherd, 2005
	People must turn into self-brands and offer a unique USP. A digital identity must be carefully crafted to match an audience	Shepherd, 2005
	Self branding differentiates users	Chen, 2013
	Compelling and distinctive narrative is required	Brody, 2001
	Not everybody has communication skills or is likeable	Tilton, 2011
	Creating a brand: draws the attention of a specific audience	Khamis et al., 2017
Self-Presentation Theory and practicing self representation	Every day behavior is like a theatrical performance with front and back stage behavior	Goffman, 1956
	Practices of self-representation: staging authenticity and interacting with followers are necessary to connect with an audience.	Jerslev, 2016 Marwick, 2013; Zulli, 2018
	Staged intimacy (backstage) helps gain emotional connection	Abidin, 2017
	Portrayal of authenticity establishes credibility	
Business Approach	Credibility: becoming a trusted source of information	Tilton, 2011; Booth & Matic, 2011
	Professionalization is required to be a successful influencer	Zulli, 2018
	Technology is a facilitator only. However technical affordances must be used efficiently.	Hou, 2018 Zulli, 2018

6. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this article is to review literature regarding the different types of fame from traditional to social media celebrities to understand where the real value of a celebrity lies. This paper identifies the dynamics behind the creation of digital fame and the practices carried out by social media content creators to achieve long term attention and ultimately turn their efforts into monetizable opportunities. The practices to draw attention over time on social media combine distinctive self-branding, self-presentation skills and a business approach, all of which are necessary to build social capital that can be turned into economic

capital. Not all forms of attention on social media lead to profit because they do not build the kind of social capital than can be traded on, thereby distinguishing amateur digital content creators or wannabes from influencers.

Considering the significant differences that exist amongst all content creators, this work classifies social media content creators and influencers using terminology used by practitioners with improvements such as defining each category more clearly and indicating the practices behind successful influencers based on scholar studies. For scholars and practitioners to work together, it is convenient to use the same nomenclature and to

have a common understanding of the different types of digital content creators on social media. Furthermore, as brands face the daunting task of having to choose collaborators for brand endorsements, it is becoming increasingly important to be able to differentiate users that actually provide value to brands.

To recap on the highlights of the concepts discussed herein, social media has produced new forms of celebrity, but just like previous forms of celebrities, they still need the capacity to attract, mobilize attention and build an audience overtime to be considered a celebrity of any sort. Therefore any term or practices regarding social media influencers or celebrities must factor the ability to draw and maintain attention.

As social media platforms continue to grow and social media influencers professionalize, it is more evident that the definition for this breed of celebrities must include the ability to attract and direct attention just as it is an intrinsic and key part of what defines any celebrity. Content creators must adopt business strategies and follow work ethics to take advantage of a user's ability, talent, charisma or special skills. Even though a user might initially capture attention, this interest needs to be sustained overtime to turn someone ordinary into a publicly recognized figure on social media that can generate income.

We take particular issue with the term micro-celebrity currently being used by scholars to refer to influencers, mainly because the original term was not meant to refer to users. Micro-celebrity definitions do not specify that users must be able to attract attention or even have an audience of followers. These last two requisites form part of the very essence of the definition of any form of celebrity, including an influencer. Furthermore, the practices used for public recognition on social media are far more complex than the set

of practices described in the original definition of micro-celebrity or subsequent updates. These definitions do not factor in a business approach which sets professionals apart from the wannabes.

This paper suggests that the term micro-celebrity should be discarded from scholar work in favor of using the preferred practitioner term 'digital content creator' used by platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Youtube. Micro-celebrity should not be used as a synonym of social media influencer as they are not the same even if they might share a few practices in common. The term influencer should be reserved for those who can shape or persuade consumer buyer intentions or opinions.

In order to further assess the term micro-celebrity, we must go back in time to 1956 to the book 'The presentation of Self in Everyday Life', where Erving Goffman (1956) proposes what later became known as the self-presentation theory (Marder, Joinson & Shankar, 2012). In Goffman's book, every day behavior is framed as a theatrical performance where people carefully choose certain acts and costumes to project a desired impression, thus 'certain conducts are displayed in the front stage, whereas others are reserved for backstage', adjusting behavior in each situation (Goffman, 1956. p.8). To recapitulate on this theory, depending on the situation we face, venue or with whom we have an encounter with, we adjust the role we play.

On this note, it could be argued that the micro-celebrity practices described earlier in which users broadcast a staged version of themselves to keep the audience's interest, have become mainstream digital behavior for millions of ordinary social media users across the world who broadcast their staged auto-mediated lives through social media. Social media users carefully choose or even digitally enhance images and not only expect their content to be seen, but also hope that viewers will be interested and show

their appreciation through likes and comments to boost popularity or simply feed their egos via social validation (Zulli, 2018).

In essence, our digital behavior on social media is just part of our everyday theatrical staged performance as described by Goffman (1956). Consistent with this, Thompson (2007), asks 'haven't our lives always been a little bit public and stage-managed?' implying that this behavior is part of the social skills we develop to conduct ourselves publicly. In other words, the set of practices which in essence define micro-celebrity, are nothing out of the ordinary, nor do they make ordinary people a celebrity or an influencer of any sort.

In social media, front stage behavior (representation of digital identity in front stage) draws the audience initially. The portrayal of authenticity (helps establish credibility) and performing staged intimacy (backstage behavior) creates engagement and an emotional connection with an audience and generates loyalty to content creator (Abidin, 2014). Backstage behavior provides the perception of access to a glimpse of personal life through staged intimacy (Abidin, 2017).

Any celebrity definition must include the ability to capture the attention of an audience, because arguably, without an audience, a user is nothing more than a celebrity-wannabe. Therefore, ordinary social media users who dream of monetizing their digital activity, must first be able to build social capital by attracting a sizeable audience of followers and sustain their interest overtime, and this is precisely where the challenge lies.

To conclude, even though the gates to celebrity status may now seem wide open thanks to advances in technology, the democratization of fame is a myth (Tuner, 2006; Driessens, 2013). In reality, very few achieve their aspirations of monetizing their efforts and even fewer can make a living from creating content on social

media (Choi & Lewallen, 2018). Most users will never reach the level of attention to become an influencer, thus social media has really only democratized the potential of social recognition.

Although traditional celebrities have been extensively researched, there is a lack of scholar research on studies on Instagram. Indeed, one of the most important limitations found in this research is that scholar studies on Instagram are in its infancy (Amancio, 2018; Zulli, 2018) and it is precisely this platform where influencer marketing is thriving and where the majority of ordinary people perceive that fame is more attainable (Harrison, 2018).

Most scholar studies on high profile social media influencers take place on Youtube, and even though many of the same practices can be extrapolated, Instagram has other formats and dynamics that have not been studied by scholars. These practices need to be further explored along with specific practices carried out by ordinary fame seekers that take place on Instagram, such as using young children as a ticket to fame or commercial gain. The number of children rising to fame has sparked ordinary parents to try to launch their small children to fame (Choi & Lewallen, 2018).

7. Future lines of study

Further research is required to shed light on the powerful influencer industry on social media and the players who form part of it. From the practitioner side, there is a need to extend knowledge of the ever-changing number of people who get attention and claim to be influencers. With this purpose in mind, scholars can provide useful research. The following research agenda provides suggestions of future lines of study that derive from this review. These suggestions are classified into three main topics:

Choosing the right influencer

Brands need help from researchers to help them understand which content creators provide the best value for endorsements (Booth & Matic, 2011). Given the different types of influencers, which ones should they choose? How should practitioners analyze and evaluate collaborators to work with? How to determine the value of the community of followers built by each content creator? To what extent do brands really benefit from influencer endorsements when the influencer has a very large community with very diverse demographics? How do influencers progress from one tier of influence to another and reach audiences with millions of followers? Do they need the help of mass media to jump to this elite level?

Optimizing brand endorsements

As more brands shift their advertising budgets to invest on social media influencers to try to reach audiences (Harrison, 2018), a number of questions arise. If influencers are used for their perceived authenticity, what kind of brand endorsement is more persuasive? What kind of endorsement frequency makes them lose credibility and engagement with their audiences? How many brands can an influencer work with at the same time without reducing credibility? At what point does an influencer become a 'sell-out' in the eyes of his audience? When does over-endorsing occur? How can an influencer maintain

trust and engagement with his audience? What sort of demographics respond better to influencer marketing and in what terms?

Practices to capture attention using children

As mentioned before, some fame seekers attempt to get attention at any cost, including using their own young children (Abidin, 2015). This topic presents a number of questions such as: Are the practices to launch fame for children on social media different than for adults? Is it easier for children to become famous on social media than for adults? Do children influencers have higher levels of engagement on their content? What happens when children are used for brand endorsements on social media? Does engagement remain the same or does it drop? Does paid content need to resemble organic content when using kids? Are the practices used to launch children to fame different across platforms? How many platforms does a content creator need to use to cross promote and amplify exposure?

Finally, as an ending note, practitioners and scholars need to work closer together to further investigate the landscape of social media influencers and the dynamics behind the creation of fame. As seen in this study, practitioners can provide the terminology to work with, but scholars are needed to provide academic rigor by conducting observational studies and field experiments to extend knowledge of the ever-changing world of digital celebrities.

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