

Social Media Project

The perception of LGBTQ influencers on Social Media

*Analysis: YouTube*

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## ***Introduction***

In the past few years, brands have started catching on to another type of endorser who possesses traits of both celebrities and peers: the social media celebrity (Booth & Matic, 2011). YouTube has 1.57 billion monthly active users, giving businesses the chance to share company content with daily active users who are likely to watch it (LYFE Marketing, 2018). Social media brand influencers are on the rise, especially those who promote lifestyle brands (Glucksman, 2017). Given that there is still stigma and discrimination associated with the LGBTQ community, it's important to analyze how people perceive and engage with the LGBTQ influencers. A comparative analysis was conducted between LGBTQ and heterosexual influencers to understand the credibility and perception of both communities, testing the source of credibility theory; it explains how communication's persuasiveness is affected by the perceived credibility of the source of the communication (Hovland et al, 1951).

## ***Methodology***

This study was conducted using netnography, this type of research is important to understand cultures and its presence on the Internet. Kovinetz (2015) defined netnography as specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational research practices where participant-observational approach manifest the data shared on the Internet. Netnography is really important to analyze social media because it allow us to understand different communities and their behavior towards specific topics. The field site for the data collection was the YouTube platform. Since YouTube is a constructed website, I proceed to set the boundaries on how I contextualized my data and what I consider data for this specific project. According to Kovinets (2015), data are considered to be information and they must contain evidence that they are real. On this study, I have archival data from the YouTube platform, comments of brand influencers on specific videos during the time frame from December

through February of 2018-2019. The LGBTQ influencers analyzed were Ingrid Nilsen, Bretman Rock, and Nikita Dragun. On the other hand, the heterosexual influencers analyzed were Nash Grier, Camila Coelho, and Marcus Butler.

Ingrid Nielsen videos didn't generate a great number of comments, I decided to code them all to have a better idea of the perception of this channel. In total, I coded 371 comments. Bretman Rock's videos generated 19,026 comments and after extracting the duplicates and filters were 16,432 comments. I coded the 10% of the comments, 1,600 comments exactly. This coding process was different from the other users due to the language used by the influencer. Nikita Dragun's videos generated 42,790 comments, after extracting the duplicates and applying the filters it left me with 13,961 comments. I coded 10% of the comments, 1400 comments. The videos of Nash Grier generated a total of 1094 comments and due to the amount, I decided to code 55% of the comments to have a better understanding of his community. In total, I coded 600 comments. Camila Coelho videos had a total of 118 comments, after generating the exact duplicates I had 114 comments to code. Due to the small number of comments, I decided to code them all. Marcus Butler's videos generated 589 comments, after extracting the duplicates and filters I end up having 561 comments to code.

### ***Procedure***

The comments were extracted from the YouTube platform with YouTube comment scrapper. This website allows you to extract information such as comment text, replies, username and date (Klostermann, 2015). After this process, I imported the data to the DiscoverText platform to began my coding process. This platform allows social network text analytics in data science software. According to Shulman (2018), text analytics are computer-assisted techniques to reach valid and reliable insights about a collection text. Once my data was imported, I proceed to extract the duplicates and I filtered by just

showing me comments that used English as a language. After the filter, I began coding my comments using binary coding. The binary code was invented by Leibniz (1689) and according to Computer Hope, it is a coding system that uses binary digits to represent letters, digits or other characters found in a computer. My codes were positive, negative and neutral.

I considered positive comments as texts that included feedback about the products, opinions about the videos quality and recommendations. Emotional, motivational and inspiring comments towards the influencer were considered positive. Another type of comments that were analyzed were the ones that just encountered emojis. Emojis have evolved into characters for a new millennial language (Khalaf, 2017). The negative comments are texts that present deceptive comments about the videos or the channel itself. Emojis were also analyzed but the most important thing was the presence of bullying comments and the perception users had towards the products and their prices. The neutral comments are texts that encounter a positive and negative context in the same sentence. Personal decisions and opinions, quoting part of the videos, minute references, and questions that weren't related to the video or the influencer were considered neutral.

After coding the comments, I generated a word cloud for each one of them focusing on the top twenty-five words found among the comments. Word clouds are a graphical representation of frequent words that offer a greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in a source text (Feinberg, 2013). Also, I exported my data and imported it to the Gephi platform. On this platform, I generated the graphics to see the connection between the users and the relevance of them within the network. The weight and degree of the different nodes and edges can be perceived through the change of colors they present.

## ***Sample***

Since my data are YouTube comments, I picked the two videos with more views of each influencer. Ingrid Nilsen represents the lesbian community and her videos are mostly based on beauty products. The videos I analyzed were “2018 Favorites: Makeup & SkinCare” and “What’s in my bathroom cabinet?”. In total, between the two videos, I collected 454 comments. To represent the gay community I chose Bretman Rock, he focuses on beauty products and sometimes dress like a drag queen. A drag queen is usually a gay-identified man that dresses as a woman and performs as an entertainer to caricature stereotypically vampish women (Webster, 1941). The videos analyzed were “Doing and reviewing my makeup litty - a mess” and “Bretman Rock x Colourpop wet and lit collection”, between the two videos 19,026 comments were collected. To represent the transgender community I chose Nikita Dragun, she usually focuses on make-up tutorials but tends to create videos sharing personal stories of her process as a self-identified transgender person. The videos analyzed were “I got kicked out for being transgender” and “Celebrity make up artist does my makeup”, between the two videos 42,790 comments were gathered.

On the other hand, the heterosexual influencers had different focuses. Nash Grier videos are more focused on life experiences he shares with his community. The videos analyzed were “We’re not pregnant” and “Donating my hair”, between the two videos 1,345 comments were collected. To represent beauty products, I chose Camila Coelho English version YouTube Channel. The videos analyzed were “Favorites of 2018” and “Top 5 matte foundations”, between the two videos 473 comments were collected. My last influencer is Marcus Butler, his videos are more focused on comedy than focusing on a specific brand itself. The videos analyzed were “Why my YouTube channel died?” and “Strip challenges”, between the two videos 656 comments were gathered.

## ***Results***

This comparative analysis of both communities focused on answering my research questions:

***RQ1:*** *What type of information is included in the videos posted by LGBTQ and heterosexual influencers on YouTube?*

***RQ2:*** *How do the users respond to content posted by beauty vloggers?*

***RQ3:*** *Does sexual orientation of the influencer impact engagement with their content?*

### ***LGBTQ Influencers***

*Ingrid Nielsen*

Between the two YouTube videos, 63% of the comments were positive, 30% were neutral and 7% were negative. This can be seen more specifically in Appendix 1, this pie chart represents the coding and the relevance for this study. The positive comments of this YouTube channel focused on users giving and requesting feedback of products, the quality of the video, supportive comments towards the channel and emotional comments such as “I love you” or “You inspire me”. The neutral comments focused more on questions about the clothes she was wearing and their stories about using the products she recommends. The negative comments focused on discussing changes in her appearance and the high cost of the products she recommended. In appendix 2, we can see that most of the words are positive ones which have a strong connection with the results and coding generated. The graph of this YouTube channel didn’t present a strong connection between the nodes and edges. It presented a network diameter of one and a density of 0.002. Also, it presented 34 connected components In appendix 3, we can see the connection between the community. The network diameter focuses on the distance between two network participants and the density focuses on the total of ties in a network (Hansen, 2010).

*Bretman Rock*

The influencer tends to use cursed words and LGBTQ terms that can be highly misinterpreted. A term often found among the comments was the word "bitch".

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "bitch" has been used to refer to a female dog since about 1000 AD and began to be used as a pejorative term for women in around the 15th Century. This word is considered a slang and had been appropriated by the LGBT community, it can be seen as fascinating and frustrating (Zeisler, 2016).

On this coding, the positive comments represented admiration towards the influencer and how proud they are of what he has achieved. The neutral comments focused more on users comments trying to generate conversations with other users or the influencer itself. The negative comments here focused more on bullying comments towards his sexual orientation. Terms like "faggot" and "you should die" were found. After coding the comments, the results were 70% positive, 27% neutral and 3% negative comments. In appendix 4, we can see the results more specific with the exact number of comments. I generated a word cloud for these comments and the words validate the results, this can be seen in appendix 5. The graph of this network presented more connections among the nodes meaning that this community has a good interaction among its users, this can be shown in Appendix 6. The diameter of this network is one and the density is 0.001. This graph showed 1560 connected components which can be perceived on the connection between the nodes.

### *Nikita Dragun*

Coding these comments was really interesting because it demonstrated more negative comments towards her appearance and sexual orientation. On this channel, the positive comments focused more on the make-up, motivational and supportive comments. On the neutral aspect, comments focused more on quoting parts of the video and questions among users. On the negative aspect, most of the comments were bullying ones, specifically hate comments about transgender people. The results of this coding were

53% positive, 43% neutral and 4% negative. Even though the negative comments have less percent, the words encountered is something to keep in mind. The results can be seen more specifically on appendix 7. Once I generated the word cloud, I could encounter the word “trans” or “transgender”, most of the comments used these words for negative comments (Appendix 8). When I imported my data on Gephi and created the graph I was impressed by the connections found on this network. This was the LGBTQ influencer that generated more connection between the nodes and more interaction between the edges, this can be seen on appendix 9. It presented a network diameter of one, a density of 0.001 and 3,421 connected components between the nodes.

### ***Heterosexual influencers***

#### ***Nash Grier***

On this specific YouTube channel, users focused more on the appearance of the influencer rather than the content of his videos. After coding them, 53% were positive, 44% were neutral and 3% were negative comments. The positive comments focused on supporting him and being grateful for the donation of his hair to a specific entity. The neutral comments focused more on his appearance with comments like “he is so gorgeous”. On the negative comments, were texts that often talked about how boring his content was getting. Also, since he had long hair, there were deceptive comments about his hair comparing it to a woman. A better view of these results can be shown on the pie chart on appendix 10. On the word cloud, we can find words more related to his appearance than the content itself (appendix 11). Even though the number of comments coded wasn't a big amount, the graph showed some connections between the nodes (appendix 12). This network showed a diameter of one, a density of 0.005 and 57 connected components.



### *Camila Coelho*

Most of the comments were regarding the products she recommended and her appearance. The positive comments focused on comments admiring her appearance and experiences about using the products she recommends. On the neutral comments, were mostly comments discussing what she was wearing. On the other hand, the negative comments focused on her credibility when she discussed the products. Comments like “you just talk about this because they pay you” and opinions about how she never looks directly to the camera, this is interesting because users felt she wasn’t engaging with them. Other comments discussed how the products she recommended were a total fail for the users. As a result, this channel had 55% positive, 34% neutral and 11% negative comments. This is the influencer with most negative comments, this can be shown in Appendix 13. Although negative comments were found, the word cloud showed more positive words. Also, some Portuguese words can be found, this is because most of the users made bilingual comments. These words were translated and it meant appreciation and comments like “I love you” on Portuguese (Appendix 14). The graphic of this network just presented three connection among the nodes which indicates a poor engagement among the network (Appendix 15). The network diameter is one and the density of the network is 0.007, also it presented 113 connected components among the chart.

### *Marcus Butler*

This YouTube channel had more comments based on a positive and negative perspective at the same time. The positive comments focused more on supporting the changes he is making on his channel. The neutral comments were focusing more on quoting him and specific minutes of the videos. On the other hand, the negative comments discussed how his content it's not attractive anymore and that he should quit being a YouTuber. After coding the comments, the results showed 64% positive, 29%

neutral and 7% negative comments (Appendix 16). When I generated the word cloud, I found words that validate the coding, word such as “content” that referred to his changes and the users' opinions about it (Appendix 17). The graph presented some connections between the nodes but also it showed how the edges connected different users comments among the network (Appendix 18). This graph presented a network diameter of one and a density of 0.001, 549 connected components were found.

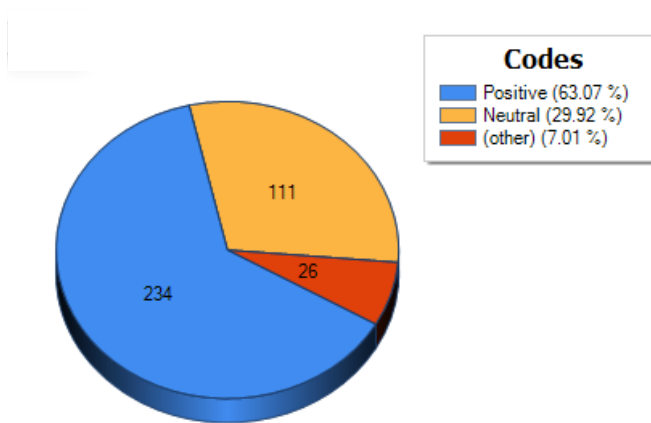
### ***Discussion***

The comments analyzed presented a variety of perception toward both communities. Discussing the LGBTQ community, even though there is still stigma and discrimination it isn't as representative as the positive comments. The community has a more positive connection than a negative one. On the other hand, the heterosexual community is more judged for their appearance than for their content itself. After coding both communities comments, I came to different conclusions that support my research questions. The users of the LGBTQ community have a positive perception towards them. Responding to my RQ1, users focus on supportive comments and motivational comments. Most of the users look towards the influencers as inspirations to love themselves, this means that the LGBTQ influencers have a good perception among social media.

After analyzing and comparing both communities, it showed that sexual orientation isn't an important factor when we talk about engagement. Users focus more on the content and quality of the videos rather their sexual orientation. The major difference found was the users of heterosexual communities focused more on the appearance of the YouTuber rather than the content itself. This response to my research questions RQ2 and RQ3. Sexual orientation doesn't determine the credibility of the users when discussing a product or creating content for social media. Discussing the differences, I

could notice a more engagement in comments on the LGBTQ community. For further discussion, we should analyze why the video with a great number of views doesn't generate the same amount of users comments. It would help to understand what are the motivations users have to comment on YouTube channels and why it isn't frequent as comments on other social platforms.

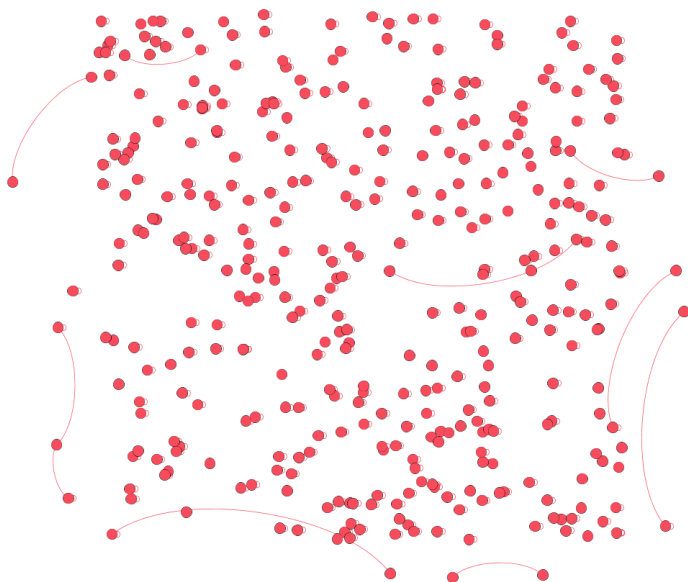
## Appendices



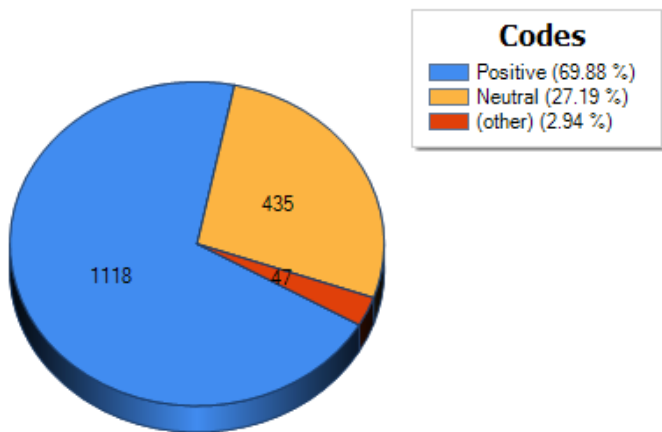
### Appendix 1

amazing cant cute excited graphics hair happy ingrid look love  
loved please products skin skincare sweater thank thanks try video  
videos vlogmas wait watching youre

### Appendix 2



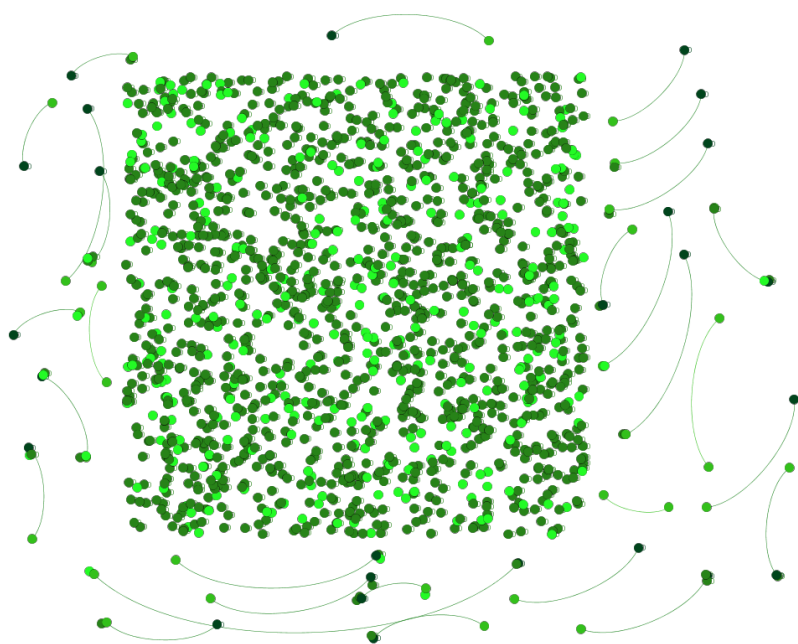
### Appendix 3



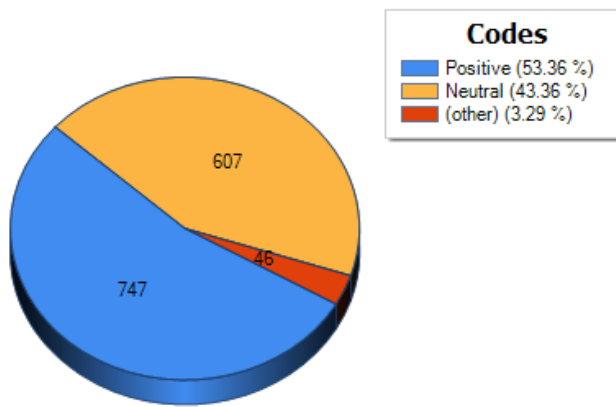
#### Appendix 4

amazing bad beautiful bitch bret **bretman** congrats cry crying  
deserve doing happy life **love** makeup omg person princess  
proud support thank video videos watching youre

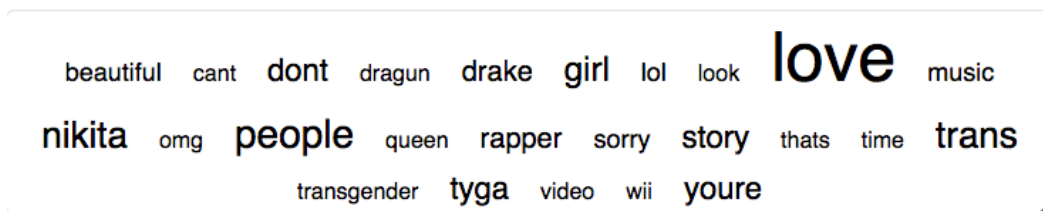
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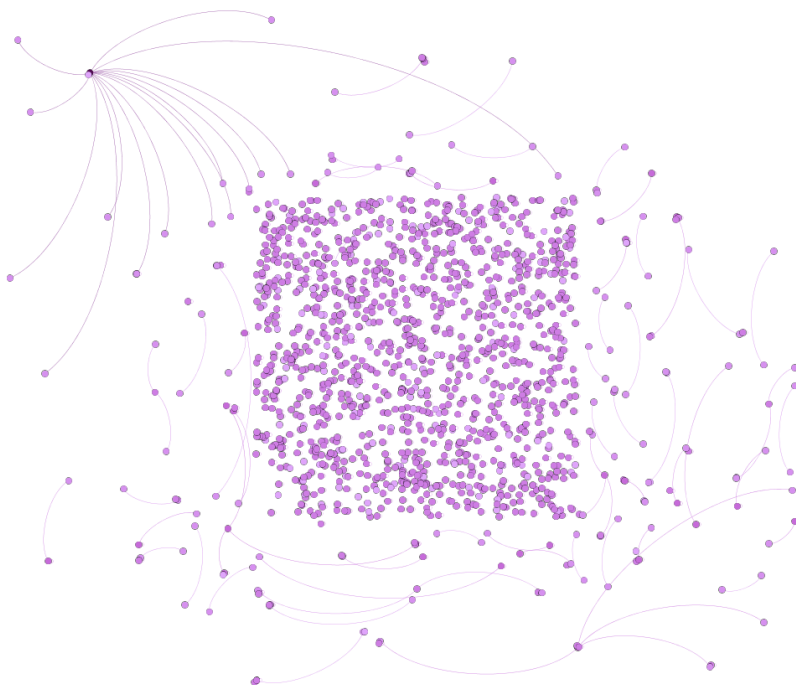
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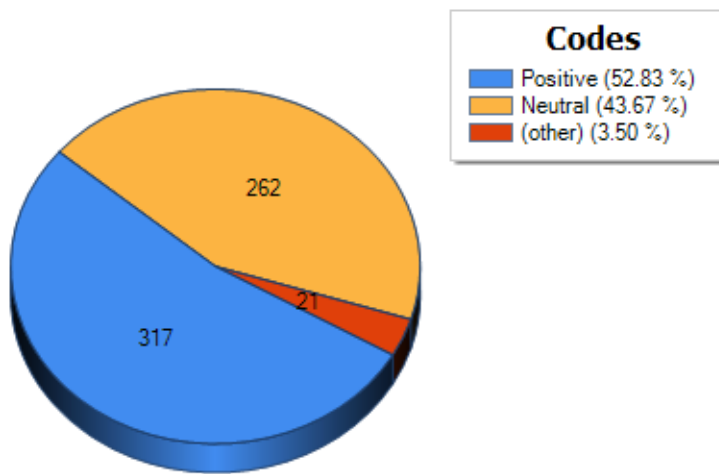
## Appendix 7



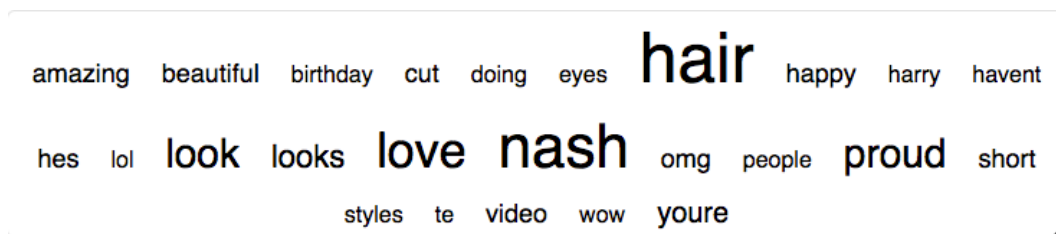
## Appendix 8



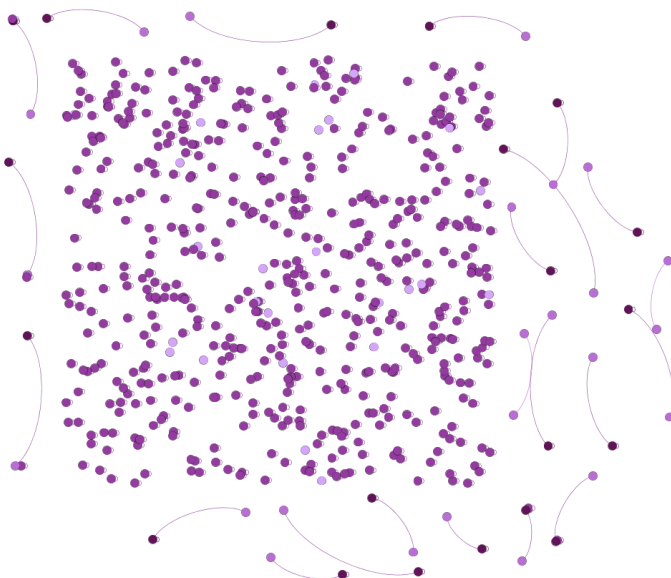
## Appendix 9



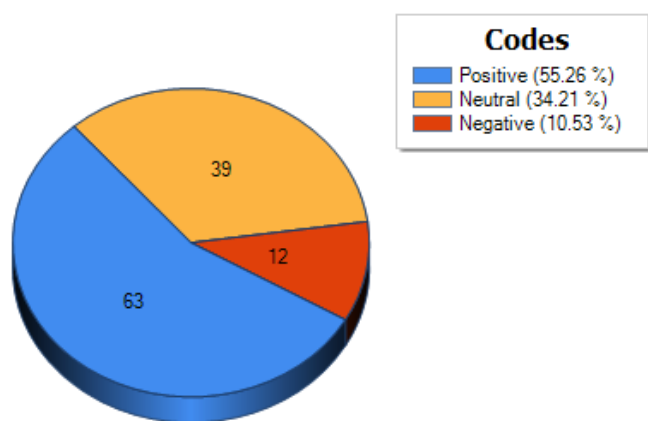
### Appendix 10



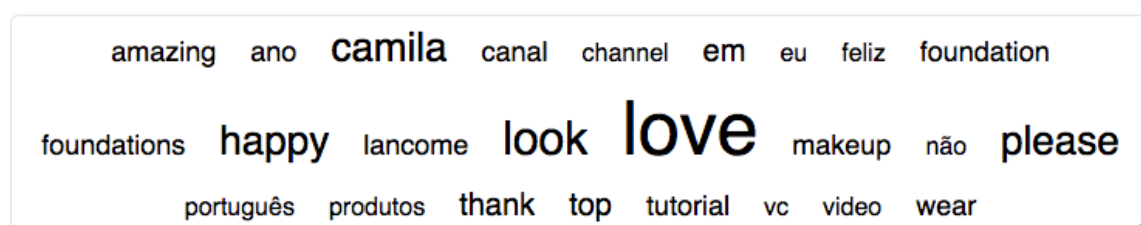
### Appendix 11



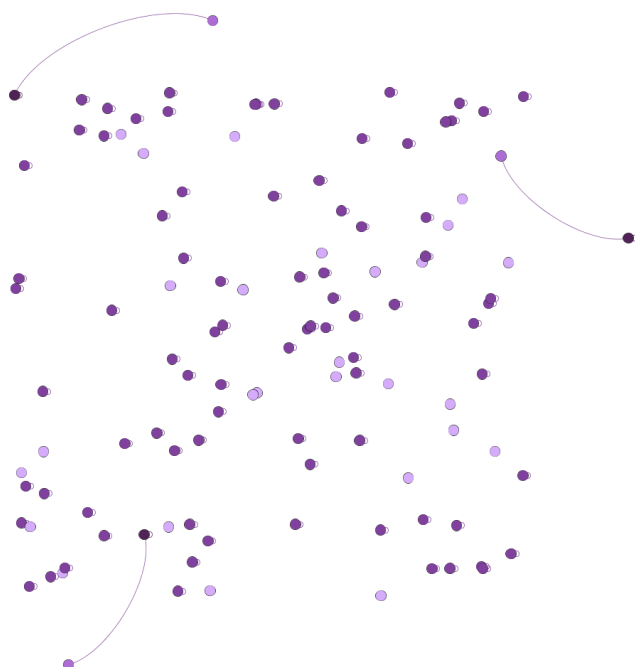
### Appendix 12



### Appendix 13

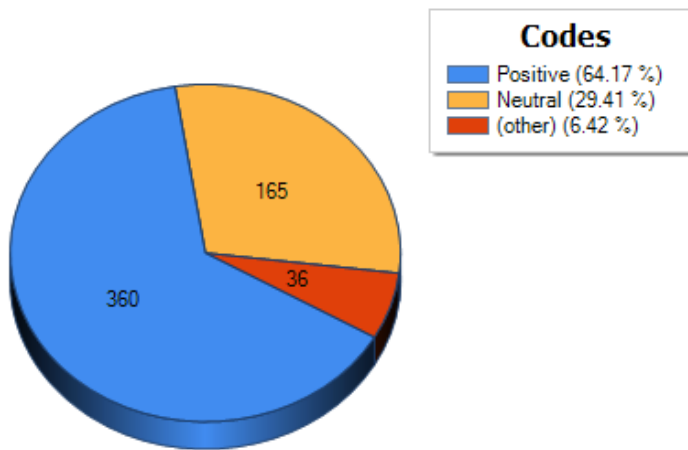


### Appendix 14



### Appendix 15

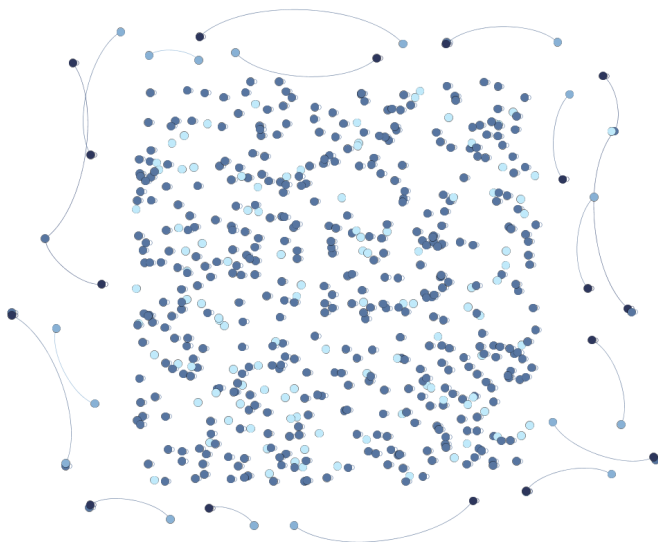




### Appendix 16

actually cant change channel content dont excited glad love  
 loved **marcus** message missed nice people steffi video  
 videos views watch watching welcome youre youtube youtubers

### Appendix 17



### Appendix 18

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