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Article

Digital Influencers, Food and Tourism—A New Model of Open Innovation for Businesses in the Ho.Re.Ca. Sector

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Abstract: The choice of influencer marketing as an endorser for promoting products and services is becoming a more and more effective communication strategy of open innovation. Their use of social media platforms, such as Instagram, allows them to be reached by millions of followers all over the world. As a response to the economic crisis that affected Italy after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chiara Ferragni, one of the most endorsed influencers worldwide, started a communication campaign with the aim to promote Italian food and tourist destinations (cities of art, seaside, ski and countryside locations, thermal baths, museums, galleries, hotels, etc.). This study analyses Chiara Ferragni's activity and the dynamic of communication she used via her Instagram (IG) profile to enhance Italian tourist destinations and "local food & wine". Specifically, it measured the contribution of local food used as an evocative factor in the appreciation of a tourist destination and its power in different contexts. Hundreds of posts on the influencer's IG profile were observed using the netnographic analysis. Subsequently, the AGIL model (Adaption, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latent pattern maintenance) was applied to measure the main dimensions of this communication campaign and its effectiveness to relaunch touristic catering sectors. The study offers a new model of open innovation for advertising and promoting food and catering businesses.

Keywords: social media; digital marketing; social commerce; local food; typical food; communication; promotion; advertising; Netnography; AGIL method



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1. Introduction

Over the last decade, due to the progressive increase in the use of social media platforms (e.g., Instagram and Facebook), people's daily attitudes have changed significantly. Thanks to the diffusion of smartphones, people are able to search the web for all information and news needed: from choosing a touristic destination to selecting a restaurant, from food to fashion, from religion to ethical issues. Technological changes have familiarized people with searching for online information when they make purchase decisions of any type. Today, technology has totally changed consumers' purchase behavior. Through social media, everyone plays both a passive role receiving all kinds of information, and an active role sharing recommendations and advice with each other, acting as influencers themselves. Hence, consumers have changed their role from passive subjects (exclusive receivers of information) to active subjects (giving advice and information to others), making user-generated content (the expression "user-generated" indicates the role of Internet participants who actively communicate and share their opinions online) that is going to be more predominant than branded contents). The growth of social media became exponential thanks to the advent of the second stage of the Internet: the so-called Web 2.0. This new Internet stage was called participative or social web because it was characterized by the transition from the static webpages of Web 1.0 to dynamic user-generated content (UGC:

online contents created and diffused directly by users who are not necessarily expert professionals) and by the interoperability between systems and devices. Social media totally changed the flow of information and provided users the opportunity to become online opinion leaders [1]. Above all, it advanced the new phenomenon of celebrity endorsement, influencer marketing, and digital influencer, namely people that share and give information about a service or a product to their followers.

Influencer marketing deals with a form of marketing that involves activities aimed at identifying and building relationships with influencers by their capacity to influence their followers. Investment in traditional marketing strategies is becoming too expensive, and their effectiveness is decreasing compared with a decade ago. In fact, customers are becoming more expert, selective, and resistant to traditional marketing strategies. Through influencer marketing, businesses try to increase the return on their marketing investments. The target of a blog is small but more focused; therefore, the firm is more likely to reach its own target, so that the blogger is considered a credible and authentic brand's endorser. In addition, relying on bloggers is less expensive, so that even with a limited budget, a firm can opt for a blogger campaign that allows it to use several different bloggers, thus reaching the different specific targets. In short, influencer marketing is emerging as a cost-effective marketing instrument and in some fields, such as the fashion industry, influencers are considered the key actors in the diffusion of new trends. The boom of influencer marketing is clearly described by the data published in the "LINQIA" annual report [2]: "The State of Influencer Marketing 2017". According to this report, during 2017, "influencer marketing" grew by 198%; 1.5 million posts with a hashtag were published on Instagram (twice the number of posts in 2016), so that many companies started using this type of marketing activity, with almost 90% of the sponsored posts receiving up to 1000 "likes" each [1].

Social media influencers were integrated as an essential component to drive brand communication, promotion, and campaigns. Marketers have embraced those influencers as spokespersons for their brands, and advertisers are investing large budgets on influencer endorsements. Influencers attract millions of followers by sharing content curated from their daily lives on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, evolving around one domain of interest. Social media influencers spread online information and recommendations through online channels, and in this way, they are able to influence the judgements and opinions of their followers, and ultimately their decisions [3]. They are individuals who greatly influence attitudes, behaviors, and the decision making of others. Researchers have defined influencer marketing as "a type of native advertising, branded entertainment, or highly credible electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM), because the commercial posts usually are woven seamlessly into the daily narratives that social-media influencers share with their followers" [4]. They often open discussions and eWoM [4].

A growing body of academic research is investigating the merits of influencer marketing and the processes playing a role in influencer effects on brand responses and consumer purchase intentions [5,6]. Online influencers create their reputation through their active participation in online communities, through which they develop their role as social connectors. It is possible to identify some traits of social media influencers based on the well-established notion of opinion leadership in interpersonal communication [7]. In previous research on the phenomenon of the Wine Influencer [8], the communication dimensions used by these particular influencers were studied, highlighting a communication model of open innovation (OI) that may be useful for wineries and wine producers to communicate their wines and the story of their winery and of the territory of production [8].

Nevertheless, no studies have been carried out on the influence of these individuals and their followers on the judgements and opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and the purchasing decisions of people with regard to food and tourism.

The aim of this paper is to deepen the analysis of the influence of one of the most endorsed influencers worldwide, Chiara Ferragni, to enhance Italian food and tourist destinations after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (spring 2020). Her communication strategy, named "the Ferragnez *Grand Tour*", conducted via her Instagram (IG)

profile to promote Italian food and cultural–artistic–leisure tourist destinations (cities of art, seashores, ski and countryside locations, thermal baths, museums, galleries, hotels, etc.), was analyzed. Specifically, this study measured the contribution of “local food & wine” as an evocative factor in the appreciation of a tourist destination and its importance in promoting a territory. The main dimensions of the communication strategy used by Chiara Ferragni through her IG profile to relaunch touristic destinations and local food products were highlighted. From this analysis, a new advertising model of communication that can be used by food and catering enterprises as open innovation was designed (OI).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Influencers vs. Celebrities in the Social Media Era

Today, the connectivity of people is one of the top online relationships, being even the greatest means of information sharing around the world. In 2020, social media users were about 3.6 billion and they are projected to reach 4.4 billion by 2025. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) is the main aspect of social media sharing data in several aspects (e.g., social network, forum, and blog) through different actions (e.g., searching for, giving, and communicating) on any subjects. Social media makes patterns in society change more and more dynamically by people expressing thoughts, opinions, feelings, and emotions.

Among people, someone stands out by taking the role of influencer, which is considered as a source of information recognized by the public as an opinion leader since he or she gives advice able to greatly influence other people’s purchasing decisions.

In the case of tourism, travel opinion leaders take this role, a phenomenon very important for destination marketers to understand and incorporate in their destination promotional strategies [9]. Similarly, in the food industry, food and wine influencers are becoming more and more important for consumers to have and exchange information [8].

The effectiveness of using influencer endorsements as compared with traditional celebrity endorsements on advertising is a fine line moderated by product–endorser fit [10]. This process is based on the idea that, in consumer society, which is organized around culture, celebrities have a shared cultural significance in the eyes of consumers. McCracken defines this transfer as the translation of the meaning of celebrity to a product or brand, for example, in advertisements with celebrity spokespersons. Endorsement is effective when an individual who buys and consumes the product appropriates the meaning associated with the celebrity, which has been transferred to the product [11]. Heckler and Childers (1992) were among the first scientists who analyzed the congruence between visual and verbal elements in advertisements [12]. Nowadays, the term “congruence” is used in several research areas, particularly sponsoring and endorsement, recently also in the marketing of food products. The aim is to assess the fit (congruence) between a brand and another entity (a territory, an event, or an experience) [13].

Celebrity endorsement happens when a person lends her/his image to brands. The better suited, more relevant, or congruent the celebrity/brand pair is perceived to be, the greater the positive response to advertising in terms of attitude or even purchasing intent [10]. Celebrities make an impression on consumers’ memories to trigger any purchases, but beyond this objective of differentiation, they also give brands an opportunity to focus their positioning on consumers’ minds. Sometimes, celebrity endorsements also give a brand considerable exposure on social media, which are more likely to report on events concerning the brand if the celebrities are present. Existing research on endorsement marketing has identified two major processes that may underlie the effect of brand endorsement on advertising effectiveness: identification with the endorser and perceived endorser credibility. When consumers believe that they share certain interests, values, or characteristics with an endorser, they are more likely to adopt their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors [5]. In the case of celebrity endorsements, identification mostly arises from wishful identification, or an individual’s aspiration to emulate that celebrity.

Celebrities and influencers have a huge following on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, and many companies use them for promoting their products through these

platforms. Differently to celebrities, social influencers are perceived as more relatable and approachable, such as a long-distance friend [7]. The main difference between celebrity and influencer is that celebrities become famous through traditional channels such as television, radio, and magazines while influencers become famous through social media platforms. Influencers tend to directly address their followers in their posts, which connotes a certain closeness and makes followers see them as peers [14]. The ability to comment on influencers' posts and the possibility for interaction may strengthen the feeling that the influencer is similar to oneself. In sum, unlike celebrities, influencers present themselves as "ordinary", approachable, and authentic personalities, which could make people feel more similar to them.

The influencer's power is usually measured by quantitative parameters, such as the number of fans, followers, posts, likes, comments, and shares on their social network personal profile. Generally, influencers that enjoy higher numbers on interesting posts, as well as those that are consistent in publishing content and keeping up interactions with followers, are considered more powerful. Influencer marketing has established credibility in a specific domain such as fashion and beauty, travel and food and beverage, etc. Influencers generate regular social media updates in their specialist areas, wherein they disseminate essentially persuasive messages to their followers, containing both informational and entertainment value. In addition, influencers mark their posts with personal aesthetic touches and personality twists, which usually create an enjoyable experience (entertainment value) for their followers [15]. They deliver informative and enjoyable content to their followers on a regular basis, including information about alternative brands or products, offering informative and entertainment content value that positively influences followers' brand awareness and consequently drive sales [16].

Whether or not influencers choose to publish sponsored branded posts to their followers, the perceived informative and entertainment value of their content, in general, may shape how followers react to specific branded posts. So, in that way, they affect consumers' trust in their advertised branded posts.

2.2. Credibility, Value Perception, and Purchase Intentions

Credibility and value perception refers to "a consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions on what is received and what is given" which often predicts consumer behavior. Credibility is an important factor in influencer's persuasiveness [3]. Influencers embody in advertisements the effectiveness role of persuasive messages, in which expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are determinant. Expertise implies competence or qualification, including the knowledge or skills to make certain claims relating to a certain subject or topic [8]. At the same time, attractiveness refers to physical attractiveness or likeability. Trustworthiness concerns the receivers' perception of a source as honest, sincere, or truthful. Moreover, brand awareness denotes whether consumers know about a certain brand and whether they can recall or distinguish it to be more included in consumers' consideration when making purchase decisions.

Sheth (1991) proposed a five-dimensional classification of value perceptions to describe the acquired benefits of consumption choices [17]: emotional, social, functional, and conditional. These dimensions of values were applied to a variety of situations and topics, including the value of the Internet as a retailing platform, the value of travel destinations, the value of information and entertainment mobile services, and the value of foods [18,19]. Emotional value refers to feelings or affective states associated with a consumption choice in function to satisfy consumers' entertainment needs. Social value refers to "the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's association with one or more specific social groups", such as popularity or likeability from one's social network [3,16]. Functional value is defined as the perceived utility obtained from a consumption choice's utilitarian or physical performance, it can capture how well brands' social media platforms or owned media can serve as reliable information sources [16,20]. Finally, conditional value describes "the perceived utility acquired by an alternative as a result of the specific situation or set of

circumstances facing the choice maker”, meaning that the value of a consumption choice largely depends on the situation, for instance, products used in certain situations (e.g., engagement ring for marriage) [20].

Besides value perception, several authors studied purchase intentions for different products and services widely. Purchase intention is an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand. Some studies on influencer marketing demonstrated that eWoM and brand awareness affect consumers’ attitudes toward ads, brands, and their purchase intentions [3]. Moreover, endorsers’ characteristics (e.g., expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) exert positive effects on consumers’ purchase intentions, as even trust in them that comprises cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, may influence the willingness to act on ad-conveyed information [21].

As is known, the SOR paradigm [19], Stimulus (S), Organism (O), and Response (R), elucidated how effects of an individual’s surrounding can affect behavior. This model describes how individuals respond to external stimuli. In social commerce contexts, stimulus factors include content, network, and interaction characteristics. It refers to the individual’s internal cognitions and emotions state, such as value perception, social/relational-oriented perception, affection, and their responses. Responses include factors such as search, evaluation and purchase. The SOR model, first, explores consumers’ behavior in online environments. Secondly, it provides a structural manner to explore the impact of interpersonal interaction factors and customer experiences on purchase intention. The paradigm intends to analyze the connections between the physical stimuli (S) and the individuals’, or as stated above, organisms’ evoked emotions (O), which result in responses (R). The “S” stimulus refers to the interpersonal interaction factors as environmental stimuli. The “O” organism is the influence of the reference group as customer internal states. It is believed that people realize their social status by comparing themselves to reference groups and that recognition and judgment are two different attitudes within them. Reference groups refers to virtual individuals or collective ones that influence the standards for individual evaluations, aspirations, and behaviors. The “R” response describes the purchase intention as response. In social commerce contexts, a customer is exposed to various interpersonal interaction factors and influence, such as perceived similarity, perceived familiarity, perceived expertise, informational influence, and normative influence. These factors stimulate consumers to purchase. In social commerce, an environment made of interpersonal interactive factors (S) and influences of reference groups (O), customers tend to interact more with “familiar” members. The result is that group members tend to be influenced more by the norms and values of familiar members than by unfamiliar ones, perceived as closer and more affiliate to them [20].

2.3. Social Media and Destination Image

The tourist and Ho.Re.Ca. sectors could not help but be positively influenced by the spread of the use of social media and online platforms for booking, communicating with sellers, and the exchange of opinions between digital users on places, prices, and much more. The development of social media facilitated the spread of information about tourist destinations and local food. Travelers use social networks growingly. At each stage of the travel experience, travelers trust online reviews by other travelers more than tourist operators, and eWoM is more important than in some other sectors—based on the intangible nature of the tourist services [3,15]. In this setting, the use of reviews and images (photographs or pictures) is extremely relevant to the success of a tourist destination or a tourism service [18]. With regard to food and wine, the same phenomenon occurs for restaurants and lounge bars in general [8]. A real-world example of this is the growing use of travel platforms that browse hundreds of millions of reviews and opinions from travelers (and non-travelers) about tourist destinations, accommodations, restaurants, and other venues for dining or drinking a good glass of wine.

During recent years, Instagram has emerged as an active platform used for tourism and food [18], as a visual image is a powerful tool that leads behaviors of potential clients.

For this reason, destination images is one of the topics of interest among researchers of tourism and food marketing [21]. It is considered as one of the main criteria of travel intention, and several studies analyzed the effects of online platforms (such as blogs, social networking sites, official tourism websites, etc.) on destination image formation. Moreover, with regard to food, previous studies demonstrated that images showing the territory of origin of a food or wine helps to have information about the product and generate positive emotions, increasing purchasing intention, particularly with regard to the local and typical food and wine of a particular region [13,22,23]. Apart from presenting the main characteristics of a region, destination image is often related to branding and identification of a territory [24]. Particularly, the main thrust of digital marketing campaigns has a direct impact on tourists' perceptions towards the destination, as it influences peoples' intentions to visit a place. Other studies have stated that destination image plays a crucial role in pre-trip online search behaviors (e.g., destination choice) and post-trip behaviors (e.g., revisit intentions) [24]. The aesthetic aspect has been largely overlooked both in tourism and food literature. People evaluate aesthetics based on some dimensions, such as intensity of color, degree of crowdedness, and spatial characteristics [25].

In contemporary tourism contexts, color influences website design, brand identity, and destination image, increasing curiosity and purchase probability [26]. Color and pictures can be influential in conveying tourism experiences and inspiring travel, especially travel photography, which goes beyond capturing the beauty of destinations, offering an emotional journey [27] by evoking feelings and promoting a certain lifestyle. Based on brand-post popularity and color theories, the findings of recent studies show that pictures presented on Instagram unconsciously affect tourists' rational thinking, behaviors, and purchase intentions [28].

Color also plays an important role for food and restaurants (or other venues) [19], and pictures that show food in the websites or on Instagram are very relevant to influence customer behavior. Several studies demonstrated that sight and color are the first and most important sensory characteristics [13,29] for sensorial experiences. For tourist destinations and food/wine brands, a website with beautiful colors and design influences users' perceived trustworthiness towards sellers and enhances loyalty and satisfaction [30–32]. Recently, Yu et al. (2021) classified Instagram travel pictures of China into eight different categories: e.g., food, cityscape, hand-made attractions, etc. [26]. Several studies investigated the visual elements of tourism pictures and the links between "local food" and art-cultural-natural heritage of a territory [10]. For instance, Kim and Stepchenkova (2015) [18] identified several attributes, such as natural landscape and architecture, for which architectural heritage-related pictures seemed to strengthen tourists' intentions and desire to visit Russia.

2.4. Experience of "Local"/"Typical" and Social Media

The term "local" is linked to the idea of place, people, and products as a combination of setting, interactions, and resources [33]. It is an adjective commonly used to qualify and brand products, places, and people, and refers to associated memories of experiences and emotions, which can be recalled even later, back home [33].

The "experience", instead, is characterized by complex interactions between people and places, subjectively produced as each individual understands and interprets experiences differently. Tourist behavior shifts from a product-based attitude of "buying local and to eat local products" towards an experience based on "sharing with locals" and "experience the local atmosphere" made of local products, food, art, heritage, and traditions [33].

With regard to food, in addition to this concept, "Country of Origin" (CO) and "Made in" have strongly influenced the food industry. Over the years, the knowledge of countries, regions, and areas of origin of a food product became variables capable of influencing the decision-making processes of consumers during the purchase phase [33]. For example, in the EU, the concept of brand identity for a food product is linked to quality and quality certifications, referring both to the company and to a territory (designation of origin) [34,35]. Thanks to increasingly refined research methodologies, the CO variable was correlated

to a multiplicity of factors that contribute to the consumer buying decisions. For some countries, for e.g., Italy, CO and “Made in . . .” represent the stereotype that traders, producers, and consumers associate with quality of agro-food products [36,37]. Local food is considered “typical food” when it is produced using traditional processes or it is cooked using traditional recipes linked to the history and tradition of a certain territory (belonging to culinary traditions of a population or an area of the world) [38,39]. Furthermore, the link between a “typical” food product and a specific territory, rich in symbolic values and connotations, allows the product to be associated with a distinctive meaning able to enhance the brand image even in foreign markets. This happens as with monuments, highly symbolic sites, or artworks unquestionably linked to a country. For many destinations, food-making as well as winemaking represent an integral part of their history and identity and have become the key element in a nation’s brand image. Therefore, for these reasons, Italian “local” and “typical” food is a real tourist attraction for those who choose to visit the country. Gastronomy and wine tourism represents an opportunity to revitalize and diversify tourism, promote local economic development, involve many different professional sectors, and bring new uses to the primary sector [10].

Social media affects tourists’ emotions, experiences, and overall, their behavior [40]. Recent studies demonstrated that perceived enjoyment is greater for tourism [1] and food consumed in a pleasant and emotionally satisfying contexts [19]—such as restaurants, hotels, or particularly evocative places (boats, wineries, natural parks, etc.)—than for cultural experiences wherein, conversely, perceived content quality is higher. Other authors found that a follower’s intention to adopt travel suggestions provided by bloggers depended significantly on the perceptions of both the blogger’s trustworthiness and the quality of information the blogger provided [1]. Despite the prevalence of social media, only a few academic works have contributed to the analysis of “local experiences” in the social media environment [39]. Some authors found that tourists tend to post user generated content in areas close to the destination center and major tourist attractions, while residents rather post in the destination outskirts, overlapping only in limited shared areas. They showed that tourists and residents, posting and sharing data on Instagram, are constantly co-creating and reshaping the meaning of “local”.

In recent years, storytelling has become an important content creative strategy in communications, with brands being promoted by means of stories which are created and distributed by marketers, in a one-to-many traditional approach (e.g., advertising campaigns). In dissimilarity to storytelling, which is broadcast mind-set driven, story-making allows a two-way participatory approach, leveraged by social media platforms and new technologies [41]. Story-making has evolved with brands’ audiences integration into the content creation process as storytellers. Social media plays a major role in brand story-making, empowering consumers to participate [41].

2.5. Instagram and Influencers

Instagram has grown enormously over the years, it was estimated to have 1.074 billion users worldwide in 2021, a big milestone for the photo-sharing network. This is 73.5 million more than its number of users in 2020, which crossed the one-billion mark for the very first time. In total, 71% of the billion monthly active users on the Instagram app are under the age of 35. This statistic provides information on the distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of January 2019. The single most popular age range is users between the age of 25–34, followed by users between the age of 18–24 [42]. The latest Instagram statistics show that an average Instagram post contains as many as 10.7 mln hashtags [43]. The trend of influencers publishing sponsored content on Instagram continues to grow with no signs of letting up. Over the course of the year, from February 2018 to February 2019, the number of Instagram influencers using the #ad hashtag grew by 133 percent. In fact, in the first quarter of 2019, nearly 25,000 Instagram accounts published with the #ad hashtag. In August 2016, Instagram launched Instagram stories. This game-changing feature allows users to take photos or videos which disappear after 24 h. After launching this feature,

people started sharing a lot more on Instagram. A total of 500 million Instagram accounts use Instagram Stories every day [43,44].

Influencer marketing plays a huge role in influencing these purchase decisions too, so if your brand is not including Instagram to your social media marketing, you are missing out on a huge opportunity, especially if your business is targeting millennials. Influencer marketing grew to be a USD 8 billion business in 2019 and is expected to reach USD 15 billion in 2022 [45].

Despite the increasing importance of social media and Instagram, to the best of our knowledge, few studies have explored the characteristics of texts and images which provoke viewers' responsive behavior with regard to food and enogastronomy, and the power of digital influencers and followers to promote and advertise local food and catering services in a tourist context.

Chiara Ferragni is one of the most famous and endorsed influencers worldwide. As a response to the economic crisis that affected Italy after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chiara Ferragni (C.F.) started a communication campaign named "*Grand Tour*" aiming to promote Italian tourist destinations (cities of art, seashores, ski and countryside locations, thermal baths, museums, galleries, hotels, etc.) and local (typical) food. Therefore, driven by an interest in filling the existing gap in the literature of considerable importance to researchers and entrepreneurs in the food industry, this study analyses Chiara Ferragni's communication activity and dynamics used with her followers via her Instagram (IG) profile to enhance Italian tourist destinations and "local food & wine" businesses. It analyzed the contribution of "local food & wine" as an evocative factor for appreciation of a tourist destination in different contexts observed through the influencer's IG profile. The ultimate objective was to develop a model of open innovation (OI) available and applicable by small and medium-sized companies operating in the Ho.Re.Ca. and enogastronomy sector for promotion and advertising activities having at their center typical and quality food.

2.6. The Chiara Ferragni Case

Chiara Ferragni (C.F.), a 34-year-old entrepreneur, is founder of theblondesalad.com, a fashion blog that has turned into a global retail business, with 24 million followers on Instagram (nearly the equivalent to the population of Beijing) [46]. The capital of her world is Milan, where Ferragni grew up and where she first started taking photographs of herself outside fashion shows and sharing them with friends. It has been more than 10 years since Ferragni started writing her blog "*The Blonde Salad*", in Italian and English, while studying international law at Milan's Bocconi University [46,47]. *The Blonde Salad* began as an irreverent take on fashion. It was all about mixing it up, as one does a salad, and playing on the cliché of the dumb blonde-haired person. She never finished her degree as her fame in Italy grew fast enough to earn her a decent living. She quit studying just three exams short of graduation. She moved to Los Angeles in 2013 since the Milan stage had become "too small". She wanted to internationalize herself, learn English, and lose her Italian accent. Soon after, Forbes named her in its "30 under 30" list of power brokers and Spanish Vogue put her on its cover [46,47]. Harvard Business School used her as a "case study" in how to monetize the dual streams of a blog and a personal brand as a business [48]. She returned to Italy in 2016 as the world's most followed fashion blogger with the international recognition she wanted and endorsement deals worth thousands of dollars [46,47]. Three quarters of her followers are in Europe, first in Italy, followed by France, Russia, and Spain. Another 15 per cent are in Asia and the rest are in the U.S.. The clothing and accessories line that she launched in 2010 sells on her own websites, in flagship stores in Milan, Paris, and Shanghai, in pop-up stores, such as in Selfridges and Le Bon Marché, and on Alibaba's Tmall and JD.com in China [46]. Via the talent agency, she books herself out to brands such as Lancôme, Dior, and Intimissimi. One of her latest projects is an online beauty masterclass called Beauty Bites, and this year she became chief executive of all her companies. Furthermore, she has been named ambassador of the LVMH Prize for young fashion designers (LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, commonly known as LVMH, is a French holding multinational corporation and conglomerate specializing in

luxury goods). She is very much focused on business. Her business plan is a blend of tech entrepreneurship and good old-fashioned Italian business sense. Ferragni gradually introduced her family members to work for her talent agency: her younger sisters Valentina (who has 3.9 mln Instagram followers) and Francesca (1.2 mln followers), and her mother Marina (604 m followers), have all secured brand-sponsored deals to show their lives as well-heeled Milanese [47]. Ego is the root of Ferragni's existence. Chiara speaks directly to the digital generation, not only about her "Ferragni" brand and her handbags, but also about current issues. Her recent marriage with the Italian rapper Fedez, in September 2018, has made her a super-brand. They have their own hashtag, #Ferragnez, which became one of the most famous internationally [47]. Chiara Ferragni insists that she does not have a social media strategy. She says she posts instinctively: "if I feel I want to do something, I do it. This is a strength in this world where to be authentic wins" [47,48]. She posts about six times a day and, similar to other influencers who are predominantly women, she prizes being able to do many things at once.

Ferragni ascended to a new level of fame as the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic hit Italy extremely hard in the Lombardy region and her hometown of Milan [46]. At the beginning of March, she dedicated a crowdfunding to fund the purchase of equipment needed to increase the number of intensive care beds in the San Raffaele hospital, near Milan [46]. In the first few days, the dedicated "GoFundMe" campaign collected over EUR 4.4 million, which was added to a EUR 100,000 donation directly from Ferragni and her husband, Fedez [46]. However, Ferragni's efforts did not stop at financial support. Her ability to create a strong connection with her followers reinforced her position as an influencer not just for fashion but also for health and safety measures during the pandemic. She shared best practices to protect against COVID-19 infection and she participated (and filmed) the daily applause session from balconies around Italy. Her influence was so prolific that Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte recruited Chiara Ferragni and Fedez to support the government's campaign for limiting infections [46]. In March 2020, following the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy and the health emergency in the country, she and her husband launched a fundraiser for the "San Raffaele" hospital to increase the number of intensive care beds and support numerous associations and volunteer organizations to sustain the emergency [49]. Chiara Ferragni was awarded the "Ambrogino d'Oro" for her contributions to the city of Milan during unprecedented challenges [46]. On 9 April 2021, entrepreneur Diego Della Valle announced that C.F. would join Tod's Board of Directors [46]. In the summer of the same year, she launched her own jewelry line [46]. As her popularity has grown, influencer marketing has positioned her as an approachable icon, fashionable and friendly. Her journey is one of innovation and entrepreneurship, of reinvention and transformation. She has developed professional credibility and a digital presence that served as a template for a generation of influencers. Finally, it appears useful to cite the influencer's collaboration with the Uffizi Gallery aimed at promoting, also through social media, visits to one of the most important museums in the world. This happened in a period where the Italian tourism and museum sector suffered a bad crisis after the COVID-19 pandemic, and this operation contributed to an increase of 27% in the reservations of young visitors [50]. The entrepreneur, in order to boost tourism in Italy following the hard blow suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent prevention measures imposed for several months in various countries around the world, embarked on a campaign to promote the most beautiful places in Italy through the storytelling of her travels around Italy. This tour, which she named the "Ferragnez Grand Tour", started in the summer of 2020 and has not stopped yet. C.F. constantly posted her travels that took place exclusively in the national territory, showing seaside and cultural places in Italy. She travelled to Puglia for the Dior fashion show, which led her to the discovery of some of the most beautiful places in the region and later a beach holiday in "Forte dei Marmi", Tuscany, with the whole family. Then, she visited the fabulous Sardinia and Sicily islands. Particularly, Sicily (Southern Italy) is one of the dreamiest destinations for summer holidays all over the world,

a location selected by C.F. for her wedding in Noto (Ragusa) and by Dolce e Gabbana (D&G) for their parade in “Valle dei Templi” (Agrigento).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Netnographic Analysis

This study relies on the netnographic analysis in order to better explore in which manner social media information is perceived and managed by followers, and above all, how communication affects their attitudes and decision processes before purchasing a product or a service. In 1995, Robert V. Kozinets coined the term “Netnography”, which refers to ethnographic research about people’s online interactions. It is a specific methodology to identify patterns and communication behavior into groups and subgroups of online cultures and communities [51–53]. The neologism “Netnography” derives from the combination of “Internet” (that distinguished the XX century for the increase of its utilization) and “Ethnography” (that concerns investigations of non-European cultures, races, and tribes in the XIX century). In the 1990s, people started creating online communities, so that the Internet became a virtual place attended by people as: members of forums, podcasts, social networking sites, video-casting, blogs, photo-sharing communities, and the like [8]. With the increase in people’s use of social media, netnography has spread to marketing and business and management sectors. Kozinets developed this method within the fields of “Tribal Marketing” and “Consumer culture theory”, therefore arranging netnography as a qualitative–quantitative research method. It was helpful both for sociological and marketing objectives because it appeared very suitable for the study of online consumer culture. Nowadays, social media companies, as for instance Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, are becoming more and more of a valuable marketing source of public information. In this context, Netnography aims to reduce the limits of traditional social research because of a social community constantly in evolution [8]. In 2018, Kozinets established four typologies of Netnography: “autonetnography”, “symbolic Netnography”, “digital Netnography”, and “humanistic Netnography” [48]. The first one, autonetnography, focused on autobiographical aspects (e.g., personal thoughts when participating social networks conversations with a critical insight). The symbolic Netnography derived from the need of Netnography to provide subsidies to managers’ decisions. It aims to decode the characteristics of people’s behaviors in the marketing area with the aim to identify consumers [8,51]. Digital Netnography performs thanks to some analytical techniques of statistical data. It focuses on incorporating a range of huge social media data to identify patterns and chemistries about members’ cultural elements. The fourth and last typology is humanistic Netnography. It is centered on critical research and critical theory, guided by social issues of great importance. For this reason, social media data are used to promote a discussion and solution to social impact problems [8,51]. In this regard, for Kozinets (2018), one of the relevant and emerging discussions from this method consists in the changing nature of human social existence in the face of globalization and advanced technological change, which requires a systemic view of social media [8,53].

3.2. AGIL Method

The AGIL method (originated from Talcott Parsons, 1951) [54] is a model used to figure out and interpret the dimensions of “communication”, one of the principal phenomena of social interactions and relationships [55]. In this study, the idea was to discover in which manner Chiara Ferragni’s communication strategy, using Instagram, is strong enough to influence the psychological process of her followers’ brand preferences, especially, based on the touristic destination or a restaurant choice. In other words, to understand which exactly are those consumption and purchasing characteristics and in what way they are strictly related to Chiara’s brand personality. AGIL analysis is a very successful multidimensional method that can be used to investigate complex subjects such as communication and to measure its different aspects. Parsons (1965) suggested this qualitative–quantitative model, adapting it for each type of society and its system, and nowadays it is frequently

applied for the rapidity of obtaining results but also for its relatively low cost [23]. This multidimensional methodology being so flexible, it was also used for other types of research in the marketing field. Since it improved recently, and it was also applied to some food product studies, it was considered appropriate for the touristic case study about Chiara Ferragni as well [8,23,55]. As the original Parsons scheme, the four dimensions suggested by the acronym AGIL were identified: Adaption (A); Goal attainment (G); Integration (I); and Latent pattern maintenance (L) [54,55]. In detail, the “Adaption” (A) dimension follows the principle of optimizing resources and means. It has a persuasive function through which communication finds itself operating in social structures (market, mass media, digital media, and institutions) and satisfying multiple and different objectives. The “Goal attainment” (G) dimension indicates the cognitive dimension that operates through the distribution function of disseminating information; it follows the principle of realization of the dissemination action. The “Integration” (I) dimension concerns the norms of community in which the communication is carried out and follows the principle of compliance with tradition and notions shared by the group. Here, instead, communication is considered from the point of view of the relevance of participation in community events. The last one is the “Latent patterns maintenance” (L) dimension, which relates to communication as an expressive form of the identity of the individual or collective social actors [54]. Essentially, the scheme consists of a quadrant divided into four sectors that must be read following a path that is articulated starting from the maximum “symbolic complexity” and the maximum “contingency of action” to the minimum “symbolic complexity” and the minimum “contingency of action.” At the same time, the scheme should be read counter clockwise from the top right quadrant of the adaption dimension, followed by goal attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance, in a system of Cartesian axes that express social phenomenon, e.g., the “contingency of action” and “symbolic complexity” (Figure 1) [8,53].

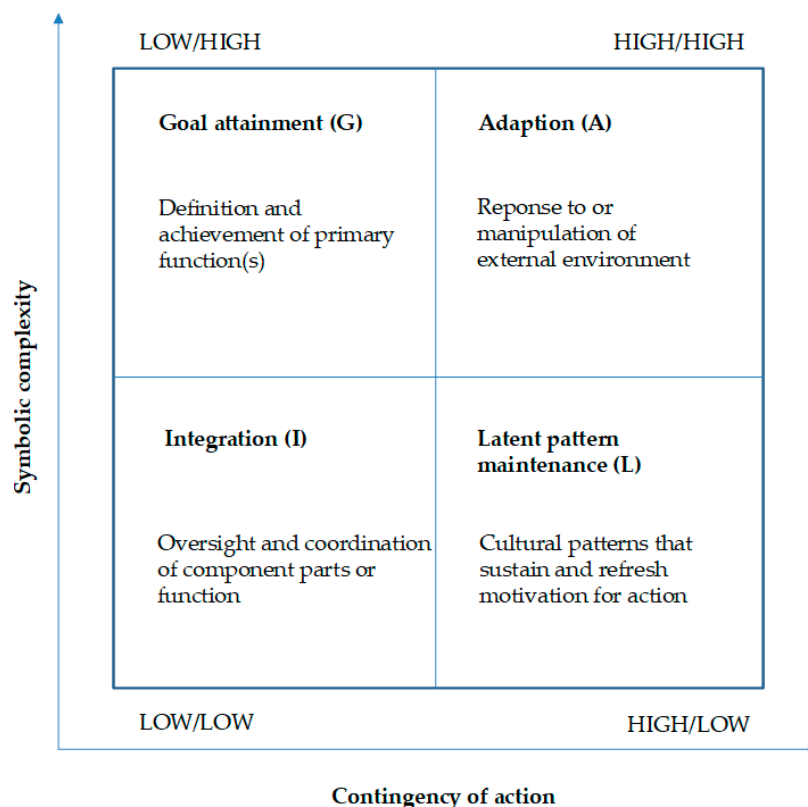


Figure 1. Authors’ adaption of the AGIL scheme from T. Parsons’ model, with four quadrants corresponding to the four dimensions of the scheme.

The AGIL method resulted in a very helpful and valid methodology to analyze and re-interpret the key findings resulted by the netnographic analysis, focusing especially on the more frequent reliability and dependability of people's communication through Instagram [8]. Moreover, by applying this method, it was possible to design a new OI of advertising and promotion for the catering businesses.

3.3. Data Collection

Following the netnographic approach, deep research concerning Chiara Ferragni's contents posted on her Instagram profile was carried out. It was noticed that the influencer posts a daily average of six pictures. These pictures are generally about her fashion wear style of dress, her sisters, her children, her advertised items, her husband, and her parents. All these subjects are "told" under three main backgrounds: her home, at the restaurant, while on holiday in some hotels, or while visiting different touristic places.

From a careful examination of more than 15 thousand posts, all possible subject areas were identified before starting the observation. Thanks to the netnographic analysis, it was possible to highlight some macro "areas of discussion" or "topic categories", eligible as "key-findings". From this overall observation, a precise selection of pictures and topics was made to carry out the study. Following the netnographic qualitative approach, a total amount of 450 posts were selected and analyzed from C.F.'s Instagram's personal profile from May 2020 to December 2021.

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Netnographic Analysis

- Data from these posts were stored using the Airtable software to create a hybrid spreadsheet–database. In the database, each row was one post extracted from C.F.'s account, and the columns were all data considered (relevant information) for the in-depth examination. Specifically, for each single post the following data were extracted:
- Publishing date;
- Place showed (by geolocation);
- Number of "like";
- Comments;
- Photo caption;
- "hashtag" or "tag" (to other people or referred to the visited place);
- Number of pictures in the post (from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 10 photos in total);
- Link associated to the original post.

3.4.2. AGIL Analysis

As the AGIL model suggests [54], and based on previous studies that improved the original method [55] and adapted it to combine with the netnographic method [8], two sub-dimensions for each dimension were identified. Each sub-dimension declines the meaning of the communication dimension developed in the discussions between C.F. and her followers or among her followers about the topics observed. For each sub-dimension, it a pattern of *indicators* and *variables* necessary to make calculations and measure the power/effectiveness of each dimension were defined. This step allowed designing a new OI communication model for advertising and promotion available to gastronomy and catering enterprises.

With regard to the adaption dimension, the related sub-dimensions were decided to be "brand recognition" and "promotion and advertising" (Figure 2). These dimensions measure the effectiveness of persuasiveness in the communication process from the influencer to the followers (sender–message–receiver–feedback). Moreover, it measures the persuasiveness of the influencer (C.F.) with regard to local food products and tourist destinations chosen. Finally, this dimension also measured the ability of C.F. to increase the value of every location visited and the food eaten. Essentially, the adaption dimension in this study

helps to better describe Chiara Ferragni’s personality as an Instagram influencer of touristic destinations and local food products, besides her regular fashion influence. The brand recognition indicator concerns the number of “like” over the total amount of posts for each category. It has been measured considering a range of the average of the minimum and the maximum number of “like” per every single picture. The promotion and advertising indicator, instead, is about the relative frequency of the total number of posts and IG stories that also involve other people (e.g., her family members). Additionally, it also considers the relative frequency of the number of “hashtag” or simply “tag” added in the captions of the influencer’s posts (e.g., #supplied, #adv, and @ifexperience) to highlight a particular person or place visited (always for all the six categories). Table 1 shows the weight of this dimension considering all the categories of topics discussed (key factors all together).

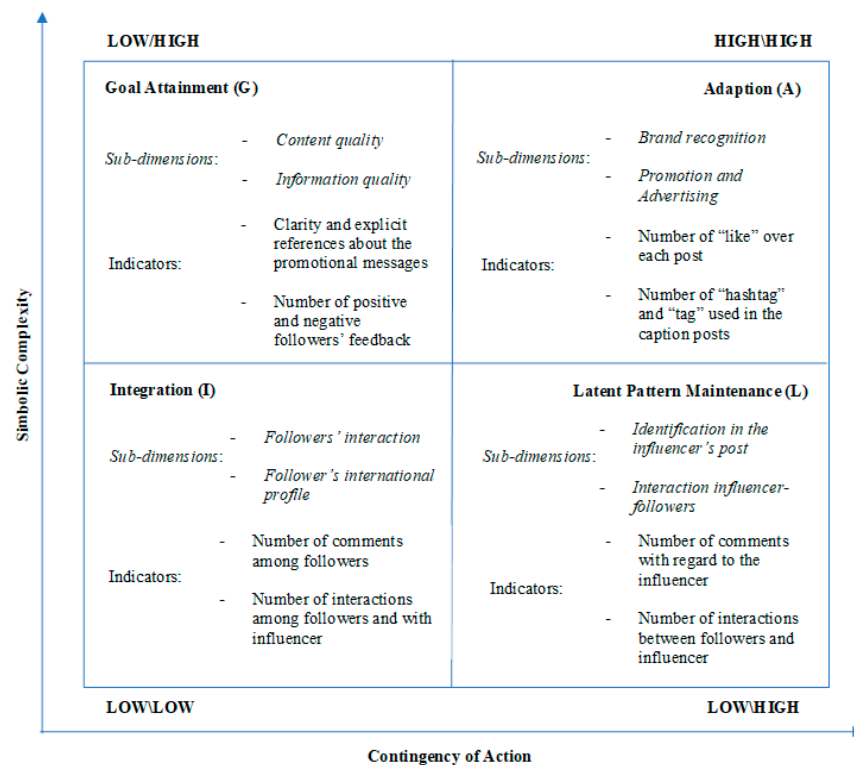


Figure 2. Authors’ presentation of the AGIL scheme with indicators observed in the IG profile of Chiara Ferragni by the netnographic analysis.

The goal attainment dimension was associated with the “content quality” and “information quantity” sub-dimensions. Content quality refers to the amount of quality pictures posted by the influencer, in the sense of its clarity and explicit references to its touristic destination or typical local food promotion message, even if not directly mentioned in the caption (through the “hashtag” or any “tag”). Meanwhile, information quantity is linked with the number of followers’ positive and negative feedbacks (using “emoji” or relative comments to the influencer’s posts), as proof that the promotional message has been correctly received.

Integration measures all “followers’ interactions” and “followers’ international profiles” that are the two sub-dimensions identified as appropriate to the meaning of this dimension, according to previous studies [8]. Followers’ interactions are clarifications, detailed information, suggestions, and advice for future holiday “wish list”, or general advice. Conversely, followers’ international profiles refer to a more detailed investigation that aims to identify how often international people interact among them in comparison with Italian people.

Table 1. AGIL dimensions, sub-dimensions, indicators and values of indexes of Dimension Effectiveness (DEmax and DEΣ).

AGIL Dimension	Meaning of AGIL Dimensions	Sub-Dimension	Indicator	DEmax ¹	DEΣ ²
Dimension A ADAPTION	Persuasion (ability of the influencer to persuade followers and change preferences and behaviors)	Brand recognition	Number of “like” over each post	76.67%	27.71%
	Value added to touristic destination and typical local food	Promotion and advertising	Number of “hashtag” and “tag” used in the caption post		
Dimension G GOAL ATTAINMENT	Advertising and Promotion (information about product/service)	Content quality	Clarity and explicit references about promotional messages	85.00%	30.72%
	Feedback about information on touristic destination and typical local food provided	Information quality	Number of positive and negative followers’ feedback		
Dimension I INTEGRATION	Power of Community	Interactions and bonds among followers	Number of followers’ interactions	55.00%	19.88%
	Interaction and bonding among followers	Interactions and bonds among followers worldwide (international profiles)	Number of interactions among followers of different countries (not only Italian followers)		
Dimension L LATENT PATTERN MAINTENANCE	Identification of followers with the Influencer	Identification with the influencer’s post/situation published	Number of comments with regard to the influencer	60.00%	21.69%
	Peer-to-peer recommendations on tourist destination and typical local food	Interaction between the influencer and her followers	Number of influencer interactions with regard to her followers		

Note: ¹ For all the topics considered together, DEmax was calculated as the SUM scores assigned to each dimension divided by the maximum score assignable to each dimension, (max. 5 pts for 2 indicators multiplied by 6 key findings observed = 60). ² For all the topics considered together, DEΣ was calculated as the SUM scores assigned to each dimension divided by the sum of scores assigned to all dimensions.

For the latent pattern dimension, the “identification in the influencer’s posts published” and the “interaction between the influencer and her followers” are the sub-dimensions applied. The number of reactions, comments, and recognitions (e.g., “I married in that place” or “we ate at that restaurant”, “I would like to go there, too”, etc.) given by followers, for each previously selected picture from Chiara Ferragni’s Instagram profile, has been taken into consideration. Consequently, the influencer–follower interactions were evaluated calculating the number of comments, answers, or “emoji” reactions by Chiara Ferragni to her followers’ comments on the post singled out.

In order to measure each AGIL dimension and thus explain the relation between the influencer and her followers when discussing the topics observed (key findings), quantitative variables were identified for each indicator. Variables were categorized for each indicator in order to measure the weight of dimensions. The most important variables used were (illustrative but not comprehensive):

- Number of posts/stories (also with other involved people such mother, sisters, husband, children, and friends), caption, and use of special tags to identify tour operators or brands of facilities visited (how many times does it show to do unconcealed advertising);
- Number of posts for all categories and number of hashtags with #supplied and @ifexperience tags, @destination tags, @food tags, @restaurant tags, etc. (for calculation out of total posts published over the weekend to measure the relative frequency);
- Number of feedback (positive/negative) for each post;
- Number of comments (positive/negative) between influencer and followers, from followers to influencer, among followers, and number of comments in the English language;
- Number of posts containing precise information on the characteristics of the product/service presented (information) and relative feedback (n. of emoji and comments such as positive/negative “feedback” that shows that the user has understood the mes-

sage (about the product/service proposed), number of informational posts provided to followers for each type of topic observed;

- Number of comments of appreciation such as “me too” and appreciations about the place/product of a sharing type of latent content to the post published by the influencer (e.g., “I’ve been there”, “I got married there”, “I’d like to go there”, “I’ve been there too”, etc.).

Subsequently, the weight of each key finding and the weight of each dimension were calculated. Quantitative variables allowed to assign a score to each indicator and perform calculations. The score was assigned after having established, for each variable, a range of variation suitable for its measurement and for assigning a qualified score on a 1–5 scale. A 5-pt rating scale (1 = min, 5 = max) was used.

The effectiveness of each topic, alias Topic Effectiveness (TE), which is the communicativeness and involvement of each key finding, was calculated as follows. This index allows to measure the most effective topic based on scores obtained by all AGIL dimensions.

1. For each topic, the total score assigned to all dimensions of the AGIL scheme was divided by the maximum score assignable all dimensions (tot. max.) (10 pts for each dimension multiplied by 4 dimensions, which is equal to 40 pts) indicated as TE_{max} .

$$\% TE_{max} = \left(\frac{\text{Sum of scores assigned to one topic}}{\text{Max score assignable to all dimensions}} \right) \times 100$$

$$10 \times 4 = 40$$

The effectiveness of each dimension, alias Dimension Effectiveness (DE), that is the communicativeness and involvement of each AGIL dimension, was calculated using 4 indexes as follows.

2. For all the topics considered together, DE_{max} was calculated as the SUM scores assigned to each dimension divided by the maximum score (max,) assignable to each dimension, (max. 5 pts for 2 indicators multiplied by the n° of key-findings observed).

$$\% DE_{max} = \left(\frac{\text{Sum of score assigned to one dimension}}{\text{Max score assignable to each dimension}} \right) \times 100.$$

$$10 \times n^{\circ} \text{ of topics}$$

3. For all the topics considered together, $DE\Sigma$ was calculated as the SUM scores assigned to each dimension divided by the sum of scores assigned to all dimensions

$$\% DE\Sigma = \left(\frac{\text{Sum of score assigned to one dimension}}{\text{Sum of scores assigned to all dimensions of all topics}} \right) \times 100.$$

4. For each topic, DE_{max} was calculated as the total score assigned to each dimension of the AGIL scheme divided by the maximum score assignable to each dimension (5 pt \times 2 = 10 pt)

$$\% DE_{max} = \left(\frac{\text{Sum of score assigned to one dimension}}{\text{Max score assignable to each dimension}} \right) \times 100.$$

$$10$$

5. For each topic, $DE\Sigma$ was calculated as the total score assigned to each dimension of the AGIL scheme divided by the SUM of scores assigned to all dimensions (of the same topic)

$$\% DE\Sigma = \left(\frac{\text{Sum of score assigned to one dimension}}{\text{Sum of scores assigned to all dimensions one topic}} \right) \times 100.$$

4. Results

4.1. Results of the Netnographic Analysis

By netnographic analysis, six main topics or categories of topics “used” by Chiara Ferragni to discuss food and tourism with her followers were identified and defined as “key-findings” (KF) as in previous studies [8]. These topics were also discussed among C.F.’s followers in the influencer IG profile (peer-to-peer communication).

The key findings are:

(KF 1) Chiara Ferragni in Italian touristic destinations

This category shows C.F. during her holidays or even just an outdoor weekend while visiting some Italian touristic destinations (e.g., Uffizi in Florence, Giardino dei Tarocchi in Capabio, Courmayeur Mont Blanc, etc.). In fact, as it is possible to see, she always spends her free time travelling with or without her family. Thanks to those posts, she not only plays the role of Italian destination promoter, but above all, she suggests to her followers which amazing and stunning places they can add to their travel wish list. Lately, all places are available, even in such a difficult moment as the COVID-19 pandemic.

(KF 2) Chiara Ferragni in Italian touristic accommodations

When travelling, C.F. always stays in luxurious accommodations located in breath-taking places (e.g., Gran Hotel di Mezzo in Lake of Como, Auberge la Maison in Courmayeur, Belmond Hotel in Portofino, etc.). Some hotels are regularly visited, such as those in Lake Como, one of the sought-after destinations when she is also accompanied by her children, often visited during mid-season periods. Others, instead, are just one-visit accommodations. Most of them are not affordable to everybody, but through this category, C.F. takes the role of making her followers dream of beautiful and relaxing experiences just from looking at a picture.

(KF 3) Chiara Ferragni eating typical local food in Italian restaurants

In this category, it is more possible that people can relate to C.F., in fact, it concerns the influencer eating in Italian restaurants, affordable to everyone because they can be more or less famous places (such as Cracco Bistrot or Marchesi 1824). However, here, what is relevant is the typical food she eats: “pasta all’Amatriciana”, “risotto alla Milanese”, and “pizza Margherita”. All Italian meals by which Italy and its inhabitants are labelled, especially abroad. In addition, this is an easier category in which her followers can identify themselves since they sometimes have already been to eat in those restaurants, or they wish to go.

(KF 4) Chiara Ferragni eating typical local food in Italian touristic destinations

Here, there are the most striking examples of C.F.’s promotional role. Indeed, pictures collected in this category show the influencer, often accompanied by her husband Fedez, eating some typical Italian food in touristic destinations, such as “pasticciato salentino” in Salento (through a Dior shoot organized by Vogue Hong Kong) or “arancine siciliane” while in Val di Noto for their wedding period. In this way, those posts uphold and affirm some Italian stereotypes known worldwide.

(KF 5) Chiara Ferragni eating typical local food while in Italian touristic accommodations

This is the section showing a typical and perfect Italian holiday, usually she shows her wake up or her lunch, having meals in front of the sea or any stunning landscapes (e.g., Lake Como, Portofino, Mont Blanc, etc.) while sitting in a little but comfortable balcony, by the swimming pool, or even close to the fireplace.

What she is able to convey to her followers is a sense of tranquility and peace, as well her ability to have a work–life balanced routine. Actually, she always shows herself always happy while sharing an important conviviality moment for Italian people such as the meal’s hour, staying with her family and friends, and eating colorful but healthy Italian food that gives a sense of wellbeing, too.

(KF 6) Chiara Ferragni showing her fashion accessories while in an Italian touristic accommodation, and/or destination, and/or at the restaurant

This last section revealed the most important and effective one. It combines all the main elements for which C.F. famous: beauty, travel, and especially fashion. From that, it is

evident that she promotes touristic destinations, restaurants or accommodations; C.F. never fails to show off her touch of style thanks to branded accessories (e.g., a pair of sunglasses, a handbag, or a dress). These are the most successful and attractive posts because they mix in one picture the essence of her influence. People are extremely interested in browsing every single moment, followers are curious to investigate the way such a famous, fascinating, and interesting person as C.F. leads her life. In addition, this is the best example of her ability to catch the eye even if of those people not very involved in fashion.

Observing the selected posts (IG stories and pictures) over time and by the use of NVivo software, it was possible to understand that she followed a communication routine:

- C.F. on the road to visit a touristic destination (one-day trip or weekend trip, rarely for more than 3 days);
- Presentation of landscapes during travel and of final destination;
- Presentation of the accommodation where C.F. is staying as a comfortable, stunning, and unique place to stay;
- Presentation of C.F.'s room, usually with something impressive (e.g., panoramic view from the window, luxurious bathroom, etc.);
- Presentation of food C.F. is eating at the hotel during breakfast or lunch;
- Storytelling of tourist visits at locations of interest in the selected destination, sometimes with a tourist guide (e.g., City, Museums, sites of historical, architectural, cultural or natural interest);
- C.F. at a traditional restaurant of the visited location eating local food prepared following typical local recipes;
- C.F. back in Milan, seated at a typical or traditional restaurant, often expensive (e.g., Marchesi 1824, in Milan) eating Italian food (very often pizza or pasta).

During this publication routine, more frequently referable on the weekend, Chiara Ferragni is used to involving her family (e.g., children, husband, mother, and sisters), and of course, her branded accessories (especially sunglasses and handbags) must not be lacking. To conclude the tour, she also posts about her “outfit of the week”, products she sponsors (e.g., lately the #NespressoXChiaraFerragni), and pictures about the “best of these days” (e.g., her dresses or hair style, current news such as being part of Tod’s Administration, participation in social events, etc.).

C.F. generally promotes branded and luxurious items, not always affordable by all her millions of followers. Nevertheless, the food is certainly affordable and achievable by every social class. Everyone, most of the time, especially when travelling is looking to experience typical food to have a complete experience of the local culture. Moreover, it was particularly evident in C.F.'s posts showing herself in restaurants, accommodations, or touristic destinations with food, that she highlighted “conviviality”, a very important trait that identifies and distinguishes Italian people.

Moreover, it was observed that despite the different categories of topics selected, all pictures including food were united by similar comments such as expressions of curiosity, mainly from foreigner people (e.g., “what is the name of this typical food?”) or even from local ones (e.g., “where is located this place? I never thought about this place before”). Moreover, results show that followers usually take inspiration to decide the restaurant they wish to go to for their future culinary experience (e.g., “I must go there, too”, “wow! This place is unique”). Another important result is that very often followers tag close friends or relatives they would like to go to the same restaurants or hotels that C.F. shows during her trips with, or they suggest the “picture-perfect place”. These posts about food are also useful inputs to suggest what kind of local food they are willing to try when visiting the same touristic destination (e.g., “next time I go there, I want to try it”).

4.2. Results of AGIL Scheme

Results of the AGIL analysis are the following.

Adaption (A): “persuasive dimension”—aptitude for adding value to a product/service or brand

This dimension is relevant because the value of total relative frequency is 76.67% (Table 1) over the total score assignable to the dimension (5 pt × 2 dimensions × 6 topics = 60 pts) and 27.72% over the total score obtained by all the dimensions of the AGIL scheme (summed together, 166 pts, data not shown).

Goal Attainment (G): cognitive dimension that operates through the distribution function of disseminating information converting them into real action

Goal attainment is the management function of communication. It is explained by the effectiveness of providing some useful and interesting information concerning a particular subject. In this case, Chiara Ferragni gives her followers advice and details about the touristic destinations she visited and about places where to eat high-quality local food and wine. Thanks to this activity, she provides information, increases the knowledge of her followers, and creates a reciprocity in sharing information between herself and the followers.

This dimension shows the level of effectiveness of the influencer in doing her job, her professional level, communication skills, her ability to add value to every kind of tangible or intangible good, and topics she covers in her conversations. The results show that goal attainment received the highest score with regard to the maximum score obtainable (60 pts). Particularly, the dimension resulted as very relevant, obtaining a percentage value of 85% over the total relative frequency of the dimension and a percentage of 30.72 over the total score of all the dimensions (data not shown) of the AGIL scheme together (Table 1).

Integration (I): dimension that emphasize people integration in an environment where are interconnected individual and social relationship are interconnected

Integration dimension measures the effectiveness of the influencer to create a “community”. Going through Chiara Ferragni’s posts, it was possible to collect data demonstrating any creation of bonds among peers, regardless of nationality or language spoken (in her IG profile, Chiara Ferragni writes posts in Italian but mainly in English). Moreover, thanks to the NVivo software, it was possible to observe the intensity of these bonds and the influence of the community’s opinion on followers (single user) with regard to the topic discovered. Ultimately, the results highlight “the power of followers’ community” to influence behaviors with regard to food and destination: restaurant, hotel, etc. Compared with the previous dimensions, integration shows the lowest percentage of 55.00% over the total score obtainable (60 pts) and over the total score of all the dimensions of the AGIL scheme together 19.88% (Table 1).

Latent pattern maintenance (L): dimension characterized by followers’ identification in the influencer lifestyle

Dimension L is the lowest with a total relative frequency of 60.00% over the total score obtainable and 21.69% over the total of the AGIL matrix (Table 1). This dimension appears to be weak, but rather, it is very relevant, as well. In fact, in this way, peers themselves are the communicators that value the touristic destinations or typical local food when sharing Chiara Ferragni’s communication information about those topics. Moreover, this dimension measures any identification of followers with their influencer. Followers think C.F. is sharing her experience with her peers and this obviously influences their behavior, prompting them to act similarly to her.

4.3. AGIL Dimensions in Each Key Factor

The key factors highlighted by the netnographic analysis were subsequently analyzed based on the dimensions of communication AGIL.

(KF 1) Chiara Ferragni in Italian touristic destinations

This category involves pictures of stunning landscapes and panoramas about the destinations C.F. usually visits on holiday or on weekends (e.g., Portofino, Cinque Terre, Firenze, Roma, Sardinia, etc.). Being that those places are accessible to everyone, the highest dimensions are “L” (identity) and “G” (advertising) with 29% each (Table 2). Emphasizing those locations as the best place to have a dream holiday, “Goal Attainment” makes one notice how strong her advertising strategy is (e.g., “Where is this place? I would like to

go there, too’). In addition, it is confirmed, then, by the “Latent Pattern Maintenance” dimension, since it is one of the few categories including more interactions between Chiara Ferragni and her followers’ comments using an answer or an “emoji” reaction to them. The “L” dimension is also high because of the number of comments of people sharing their previous experiences (e.g., “I’ve visited it too” or “I got married there”) in there. In contrast with the other categories, in here, it is more possible that someone has already visited the location, in fact, despite the comfortable Chiara Ferragni general lifestyle; the touristic destinations she displays are achievable to everyone. This is a reason why followers’ identification with the influencer is surely more possible (even without staying in a resort). Then, the “Adaption” (persuasion) dimension, with its 26% (Table 2), expresses the ability to convince people to visit a location, in fact, below the posts, comments are full of approvals and positive “emoji”. Instead, “Integration” (community power) results as the lowest dimension with its partial percentage of 16% (Table 2), despite there being various comments about the destination’s beauty, suggestions, and recommendations (e.g., “Uffizi Museum is wonderful, but also “Palazzo Pitti” is great to visit!”). Here international people’s interest is limited, and it is why the “I” score falls.

Table 2. Topics (key factors) and values of indexes of Topic overall Effectiveness (TE_{max}) and Dimension Effectiveness (DE_{max} and DEΣ) for each topic observed.

Topic	TE _{max} ¹	Dimension Effectiveness				Tot.
		A	G	I	L	
Posts of Touristic Destinations	78%	26% ²	29% ²	16% ²	29% ²	100%
		80% ³	90% ³	50% ³	90% ³	-
Posts of Typical Food in Accommodations	70%	25% ²	29% ²	29% ²	18% ²	100%
		70% ³	80% ³	80% ³	50% ³	-
Posts of Touristic Accommodations	68%	33% ²	33% ²	15% ²	19% ²	100%
		90% ³	90% ³	40% ³	50% ³	-
Posts of Typical Local Food	65%	23% ²	35% ²	19% ²	23% ²	100%
		60% ³	90% ³	50% ³	60% ³	-
Posts of Typical Food in a Touristic Destination	60%	29% ²	25% ²	25% ²	21% ²	100%
		70% ³	60% ³	60% ³	50% ³	-
Posts of Accessories exhibition with a Touristic Background	75%	30% ²	33% ²	17% ²	20% ²	100%
		90% ³	100% ³	50% ³	60% ³	-

Note. ¹ For each topic, TE_{max} was calculated as the total score assigned to all dimensions of the AGIL scheme and was divided by the maximum score assignable to all dimensions (5 × 2 = 10 pts for each dimension multiplied by four dimensions = 40 pts). ² For each topic, DEΣ was calculated as the total score assigned to each dimension of the AGIL scheme divided by the SUM of scores assigned to all dimensions (for the same topic). ³ For each topic, DE_{max} was calculated as the total score assigned to each dimension of the AGIL scheme divided by the maximum score assignable to each dimension (5 pt × 2 = 10 pt).

(KF 2) Chiara Ferragni in Italian touristic accommodations

In this key factor, some pictures of Chiara Ferragni staying in a hotel, resort, or relais on holidays or on weekends are posted and discussed (e.g., Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Grand Hotel a Villa Feltrinelli, Relais San Maurizio, etc.). With regard to this topic, the results show that the AGIL dimensions split into two parts. On one hand, “Adaption” (persuasion) and “Goal Attainment” (advertising), both with 33% (Table 2), on the other hand, “Latent Pattern Maintenance” (identity) and “Integration” (community power) with 19% and 15%, respectively (Table 2). This may be explained because the influencer, especially in this case, pursues a niche tourism of very high level. In fact, she stays in luxurious accommodations. These are superb hotels and accommodations that attract and persuade her followers and make people desire to stay there too, nevertheless they are accessible to a high-level segment

of clients. She makes followers immediately curious to search them on the Internet because she shows accommodations with beautiful spas, internal and external pools, placed in the woods, etc. These places are not affordable for everyone because they are too expensive, this is the reason why there are low percentages for the “L” and “I” dimensions. In this case, it means that Chiara Ferragni’s followers have poor or no information and suggestions about the accommodation to exchange among themselves and with her. Therefore, with regard to this topic, it appears followers cannot identify with her because often they never visited a similar place before.

(KF 3) Chiara Ferragni eating local food in Italian restaurants

This is a category that depicts the most similar lifestyle between the influencer and her followers. It considers pictures of Chiara Ferragni at the restaurant, usually eating pizza or pasta (e.g., “Carbonara pasta” at Hostaria Da Pietro in Rome, “risotto alla Milanese” at Palazzo Parigi Hotel and Grand Spa, in Milan, “Margherita pizza” at Mandarin Oriental in Como). In the AGIL model used, the highest result is “G” (advertising), with 35% of partial percentage (Table 2), while “A” (persuasion) and “L” (identity) both achieved 23% (Table 2), and “I” (community power) only 19% (Table 2). This means that, in this case, the communication strategy used to promote and present a restaurant works, but it achieves a moderate persuasion to her followers, probably due to the final wide selection of restaurants possible to choose everywhere. Moreover, the “L” dimension result is moderate, but 23% (Table 2) of identity is enough to make people perceives the high quality of the restaurants Chiara Ferragni attends. Places that are more affordable than the accommodation where she stays (in fact they reached 19% (Table 2) in the “L” dimension in the second category analyzed) are clearly noticeable from her followers’ comments (e.g., “I know that place”, “We ate at that restaurant”, “This is my favourite restaurant in Rome”), equally for Italian and international ones. Finally, the “I” dimension is not very high either, probably because seeing Chiara Ferragni eating at a particular restaurant is already a guarantee of the restaurant’s excellence, so that followers do not need any more feedback, or to ask for any suggestions from their peers before choosing it.

(KF 4) Chiara Ferragni eating local food while in Italian touristic accommodations

In this category, there is a selection of some pictures of the influencer usually eating breakfast or lunch (e.g., breakfast at Il Sole di Ranco-Ranco, lunch at Grand Hotel Tremezzo-Lake Como, breakfast at Hotel de la Ville-Rocco Forte, etc.). The AGIL scheme shows “G” (advertising) and “I” (community power) as the highest dimensions, with their partial percentage of 29% (Table 2), close to them the “A” (persuasion) dimension of 25% (Table 2), finishing with the “L” (identity) dimension with its 18% of partial percentage (Table 2). She starts advertising an accommodation picturing her daily routine, especially publishing her breakfast time that she usually has in the accommodation terrace with a background special view. Therefore, there are different topics showed in a single picture that unleash several comments below her posts. Of course, a picture of a set table in a beautiful place is immediately eye-catching for everyone. In this way, the curiosity to investigate what she eats, or see how beautiful the accommodation and the place around are, is peaked, and this involvement generates an exchanging and sharing of various information among followers. By promoting a product and a service at the same time, she covers people’s veiled desire to have a holiday or simply a relaxing weekend. She appears extremely good at it since she matches food—that is often associated to the concept of conviviality—with enviable accommodations for where to stay and relax in a gorgeous landscape background. Chiara Ferragni’s goal is to persuade people to make them crave to go on a trip far from home. Moreover, in this case, she makes her followers dream it more than purchase it because, finally, she mainly talks about a luxurious lifestyle that is not affordable to everyone, as the low percentage of “L” confirms.

(KF 5) Chiara Ferragni eating typical local food in Italian touristic destinations

In this case, the AGIL model is nearly balanced for all voices, in fact, the highest dimension is “A” with its 29% (Table 2), then “G” (advertising) and “I” (community power) both resulted in 25% (Table 2), while “L” (identity) appears to be close to them with its

partial percentage of 21% (Table 2). This category includes pictures about Chiara Ferragni having lunch or dinner directly in the touristic destination visited, unifying culture and conviviality (e.g., Villa Cetinale in Siena, Terre di Sacra in Capalbio, and Castello di Rivalta in Val Trebbia). The influencer's persuasive power is the strongest, as it often occurs when she publishes her posts on her Instagram profile. Followers' positivity and appreciative reactions are several, and it happens due to Chiara Ferragni's perfect ability in attracting with everything she does and wherever she goes. Even if people know she is advertising a product or a service, this awareness fades into the background, and unconsciously it unleashes the desire to book a holiday in the place she visits (affirming the success of the promotional message, indeed). Moreover, in this case, the Instagram community made up by her followers is almost blended between people looking for information and pieces of advice before going to share the same Chiara Ferragni's experience and people giving suggestions, recommendations, or curiosities. It creates a real communication bond between followers–influencer and influencer–followers, except that this time, the influencer is not referred to as Chiara Ferragni, but to her followers themselves.

(KF 6) Chiara Ferragni showing her fashion accessories while in an Italian touristic accommodation, destination, or restaurant

It appeared interesting to observe the effectiveness and performance of C.F.'s message about a tourist destination or food venue when alone and when the influencer endorses accessories at the same time. This category was included since Chiara Ferragni's celebrity comes from being one of the most famous fashion bloggers in the world, since 2012. In this key finding, pictures illustrate Chiara Ferragni in an accommodation, at a touristic place, or at a restaurant exhibiting branded dresses and accessories, especially sunglasses or handbags.

This category revealed to be the second with the highest total percentage in the AGIL methodology. Furthermore, more confirmation of it are in the "A" (persuasion) and "G" (advertising) dimensions with 30% (Table 2) and 33% of partial percentage each, in comparison with "I" (community power) and "L" (identity) as the lowest dimensions, respectively, with 17% and 20% (Table 2) of their partial percentage. The results show that a picture of a set table, touristic attraction, or beautiful location (e.g., Musei Vaticani in Rome, Capo Coda Cavallo in Sardinia, lunch at the Bulgari Hotel in Milan, etc.) are more eye-catching and persuasive to her followers when she combined those elements with fashion ones. An interesting result is that although followers were more interested in all those elements together, their possibility to purchase the endorsed products (dresses, accessories, and jewelry) or to stay at the same accommodations is far from reality. However, everyone is curious to know what she eats (taking inspiration for a personal diet), to discover the details of the destination, and to locate the restaurant, even asking her for prices of everything she shows and to "tell to experience". In fact, from the previous categories analyzed, here the community power and the identity dimensions are lower. This happens because, in this case, followers prefer to pass from an Instagram post to another one to catch all the details and satisfy their curiosity by themselves, instead of directly asking someone else commenting on the posts. By doing so, they take part into a sort of virtual tour, in which it seems that a person is living the same amazing experience and sharing the same pleasant feelings as Chiara Ferragni. It is an individual virtual trip, as consequence of the high-level branded products and services Chiara Ferragni usually endorses. These are clearly not achievable to everyone, which is also why the identity dimension percentage is low. Followers cannot afford this kind of lifestyle, but exploring the influencer's Instagram profile, they try to take some cues to reach, somehow, at least a similar lifestyle as her.

Finally, exploring the total percentage achieved from each topic (or key finding), it is possible to trace and reaffirm the effectiveness of C.F.'s storytelling path for tourist destinations and food (described above). In fact, the key finding 1 "Chiara Ferragni in Italian touristic destinations" had a percentage of 78% (Table 2). This is followed by the KF4 "Chiara Ferragni eating local food while in Italian touristic accommodations" with a percentage of 70% (Table 2). Then, results show that the KF2 "Chiara Ferragni in Italian

touristic accommodations” was the next but with a very small gap of 2% (Table 2). At this point, the storytelling continues talking about local food with KF3 “Chiara Ferragni eating local food in Italian restaurants” with a total percentage of 65% and a gap of 3% with the previous one (KF2) and KF5 “Chiara Ferragni eating typical local food in Italian touristic destinations” with a value of 60% (Table 2). Food, in fact, is often somewhat representative of the identity of a territory wherein it originated, which evokes the history and traditions of local people worldwide [19,38], such as artistic attractions do as well. Nowadays food has become an important driver for tourism in the world, especially in Italy. Consider enogastronomy tourism and other correlated types of tourism such as slow and green tourism, or tourism in “Cities of art” that always include stops to taste the typical foods of the visited location, even street-food is another topic of interest for researchers in the tourist sectors [56,57]. Finally, the additional exhibition of a beautiful and elegant high-branded bag and a pair of branded sunglasses too makes everything even better, more appealing, and surely a dream-like experience to do or repeat. The results show that it is possible to state that the “G” and “A” dimensions are the highest due to the powerful character of Chiara Ferragni in being trustworthy and in persuading everyone by showing the location she visits as the best fairy tale ever to live. Storytelling is what makes Chiara Ferragni’s effectiveness communication strategy reach the peak with regard to food and tourist destinations.

5. Discussion

The AGIL scheme allowed understanding the overall effectiveness of each communication dimension and each of the observed key finding. Particularly, the results show that “Goal Attainment” was the most effective dimension (85%) (Table 1), followed by “Adaption” (76.67%) (Table 1). This result is consistent with previous studies on influencer’s persuasion ability [58]. It is interesting to notice that, contrarily to previous studies on wine influencers [8] with regard to tourist destinations and food venues, the “G” dimension is more effective than “Adaption”, and moreover, these two dimensions, although more powerful, are not very far from “Latent pattern maintenance” and “Integration” (Table 1). This is a very important finding, in fact, “Goal Attainment” in this study was the most effective dimension, demonstrating the strong imprint of Chiara Ferragni and her ability in advertising and promoting (providing information) tourist destinations and places visited or frequented. In short, this result shows the “power of the influencer” to “empower the value of a brand” with the information provided. Moreover, the results confirm the effectiveness of the influencers in “adding more value” to the original product value because of her ability in conveying the messages she posts. The “Latent pattern maintenance” dimension follows the first two but with a small deviation (16.67%) (Table 1) due to the strong identification of followers with the influencer.

This result is most important in this study because it highlights that discussions about food and tourism allow followers to identify themselves with the influencer more easily, and confirms previous studies on self-influencer congruence, para-social identification, and perceived endorser motive [59,60]. Finally, the “Integration” dimension (55%) (Table 1) highlights the presence of a constant activity of communication by the community composed by Chiara Ferragni’s followers. It highlights that discussions about food and tourism are more suitable to activate interactions among followers (eWoM), exchanging information, appreciations, and providing feedbacks references, ratings, and advice with regard to locations, restaurants, and typical local foods products, in line with previous studies on relationships in online communities [61]. Nevertheless, the important finding of this study is that the effectiveness of dimensions “L” and “I” highlights the strong “power of followers” for the key finding regarding “local & typical”. This is very important for Ho.Re.Ca. businesses.

Despite Chiara Ferragni’s activity on Instagram appearing distant from Ho.Re.Ca. enterprises’ problems, this study provided a new model of Open Innovation (OI) for firms in the Ho.Re.Ca. sectors. Professor H. Chesbrough defined the paradigm of Open

Innovation [62] and the business models this innovation triggers [63]. Open innovation is the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation and expand the markets for external use of innovation, respectively [64]. This paradigm assumes that firms can and should use external ideas as well as internal ideas, and internal and external paths to market, as they look to advance their technology. According to this model, the classic format of innovation inside companies is not obsolete, but it depends on a lot of factors [64,65]. The results of this new logic can derive new products and services in markets already known by companies, in incursions by companies in new markets, and in the creation of spin-offs of the company's fruit as result of innovation [63]. The F&B industry is very important in the UE for GDP generation, and it shows high integration and low-tech intensity. Some authors aimed to determine whether the benefits of OI practices are different for food and beverage (F&B) firms as compared with those of other sectors. The results of that study show that the "optimal" number of external sources of knowledge (OI) used by F&B firms is lesser for the rest of the companies [d]. Reaching the market with new proposals before the competence does could mean an opportunity for firms operating in the Ho.Re.Ca. sector, which is one of those more inclined to closed innovation rather than resources that come from the outside [66]. The important thing in innovation is to consolidate new technological solutions and new models of business that could allow increasing competitiveness [67–71]. This study provides OI input for the Ho.Re.Ca. sector.

In fact, the results of this study show how her influence triggers further peer relationships on Instagram and also on other social media platforms. This happens with stronger power than when the influencer "tells" about local food related with places where she or he goes for pleasure or business. The storytelling in fact is about "C.F. with the typical food" of those places. Particularly, the dialogue among followers is triggered more effectively when the influencer posts something that is "easily accessible to everyone", such as food or a restaurant, contrary to her high-standard lifestyle with which it is impossible to be reached by followers. In fact, it is easier visiting a certain place or eating certain typical foods, rather than experience the same luxury products, services, and brands that she posts the most. In the case of food or destinations visited, followers can identify with the influencer and talk with her about the same topics because it is definitely something within everyone's reach. This finding highlights that both C.F. in a conscious way, and her followers, unconsciously, act as influencers, making free advertising of Italian local restaurants and food and thus promoting Italian enogastronomy and tourism. The triggering of discussions between users about food and restaurants is the "power of followers" to empower the product/service value and the brand value, since advice is popular and "democratic" and, therefore, more credible and effective. Followers also influence people that have not experienced that food or restaurant yet because of trust in peers' eWoM and thanks to the reciprocity in trust among peers. As described above, Open innovation (OI) means, on the one hand, the use of external knowledge sources to accelerate internal innovation [72,73]. Therefore, this study offers new advertising and promotion OI for value empowerment of food and catering business. The model (Figure 3) shows how, in this social media context, interactions among the influencer and her followers add value to the original brand value. An additional value is given by the "power of influencer to empower the product/service value" and the brand value, and another additional value is given by the "power of followers to empower the same product/service value" increasing exponentially the original brand value. It is interesting to observe that Chiara Ferragni advertises only already famous high-level brands (few are middle-level). As a common person, she promotes those already well-known products or services just to increase their notoriety. Hence, the influencer tactic is to democratize the brand. Nevertheless, followers are not always able to imitate her because of the cost of accessories or clothes or services promoted. This happens also with hotels and locations. This does not happen with local and typical food and restaurants. Specifically, even if C.F. shows expensive restaurants, people may identify with her because she talks about local food—which is achievable by everyone.

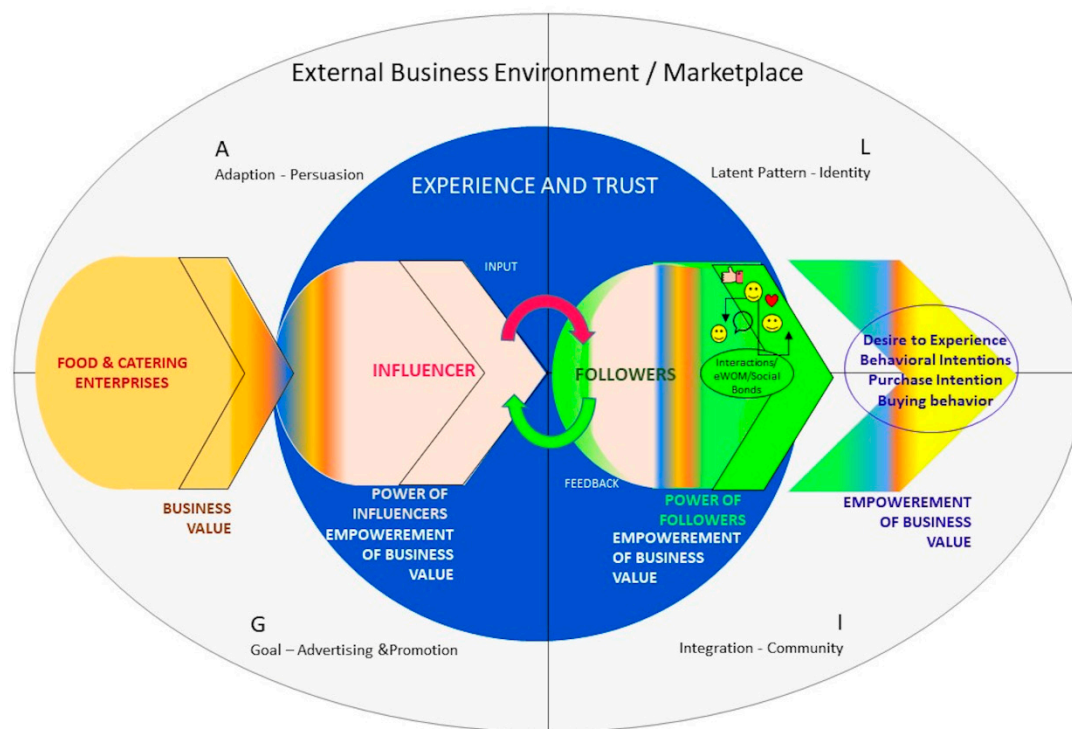


Figure 3. Graphical representation of the new model of open innovation for food and catering businesses promotion and advertising. AGIL are the communication dimensions analyzed. Food and catering enterprises, influencers, and followers are displayed in the plain based on their communication type. Experience and trust involve both influencers and followers about local food and restaurants. Outside the experience context, there are other people in social media that are persuaded to experience the product/service by the influencer’s followers through interactions, eWoM, and social bonds.

Local food, local restaurants, and local beautiful tourist destinations are accessible to everyone. Doing so, C.F. has an immense power to influence people and make her millions of national and international followers desire to gain the same magical and unique experiences as she does. For the key findings analyzed, the study demonstrates that followers also have a very strong power to develop positive emotions, behavioral intentions, purchasing intentions, and buying behaviors. The familiar interactions among members create stronger mutual trust among them [20]. Followers become influencers for the first time among themselves, fully identifying with the influencer. Followers, in fact, in the case of food and restaurants, post stunning pictures about their relaxing and dreamy holidays, in which they also display beautiful landscapes, high-level accommodations, and typical local food in classy restaurants (not necessarily too expensive). Finally, emotional communication is very important for interpersonal interaction factors. Group interactions produce positive/negative emotions, stimulating purchase intention or non-intention. Purchase intention is an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand. It includes the possibility or likelihood that consumers will be willing to purchase a certain product. Followers become influencers among themselves, in their community, but also outside. Followers establish a very strong mechanism of communication sharing dreams, desires, and experiences and emotionally engaging, so much so that they are able to involve other Instagram users not already following C.F. (other friends or contacts). Interactions among followers stimulate the desire to experience, even in those who have not yet experienced that specific product (local food) or service (restaurant or other food or celebration venue) and the purchase intention. These findings are in line with previous studies on digital marketing and user-generated contents, demonstrating that eWoM and brand awareness affect consumers’ attitudes toward ads and brands and their purchase intention [64]. More-

over, these findings are in line with the SOR paradigm that demonstrated that group members tend to be influenced more by the norms and values of familiar members than by unfamiliar ones, who are perceived closer and more affiliate to them. The findings also are consistent with recent studies on tourists' and residents' perceptions of tourist destinations and their attractions, demonstrating that people's opinions on social media and the generated contents can contribute to tourism innovation [73]. Moreover, the study is consistent with previous studies on effects of tourists' local food consumption on food destination image and behavioral intention [73].

This new model of open innovation shows how individuals respond to external advertising stimuli triggered by endorsed influencers or by other peers on the web or on social platforms (Figure 3). The model might help Italian and international food and catering businesses increase their notoriety and visibility, empowering their business value with value co-creation [74,75], especially the smaller ones during and after restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic [74,75]. This can occur when the influencer—such as in this case—puts the food (not the place) in the foreground (posts of images of the influencer with the food in front). Therefore, since food is the main topic of discussion—and not the restaurant or the hotel—followers can certainly discuss it on an equal level of the influencer. That is, they have “Awareness” of the brand/product [3,76]. In addition, the most important thing is that followers' comments are “democratic” and unselfish: that is “Value creation” or “Empowerment of Value” (Figure 3) [76]. These results are in line with recent studies on influencer marketing in the catering industry [76]. Moreover, followers identify with the influencer and take action by doing the same things; that is, “Purchase Intentions” [3,76]. In this specific case, they can do these things: going away for the weekend, having a breakfast served at a coffee shop or enjoying a lunch/dinner out (at a restaurant). Going to the same places the influencer goes does not matter, the important thing is to imitate their lifestyle. In fact, the results highlighted that there is greater identification with the influencer (dimension L, Tables 1 and 2) when discussing topics such as food and travel/trips. Hence, the Ho.Re.Ca. and gastronomy sectors might be positively influenced by the spread of the use of social media and online platforms for booking, communicate with sellers, and the exchange of opinions between digital users on places, prices, and much more.

The study shows that using a local influencer could be a good inspiration for small- and medium-sized enterprises in the promotion of local food related to tourism and hospitality, particularly for the food and catering businesses. Similarly, making use of a very famous influencer can be supportive of high-end hotels and restaurants, again not only because of the power of the influencer but also because of the power of the followers. The results, in fact, show that this sector received a dual benefit from the influencer's activity: the induced benefit of promotion and publicity by the influencer and the benefit from promotion and publicity by the influencer's followers. These new findings appear interesting for little and middle size enterprises operating in the Ho.Re.Ca. sector and for high-level brands in the tourist and catering sectors, but mainly for small businesses who have less funds available to finance promotion and advertising activities. These businesses can take advantage of endorsement and storytelling strategies exploiting social networks to reach their perfect target customers and benefit from their eWoM. Secondly, they can use influencers and their followers to have additional empowerment of their business value thanks to their power in the digital market.

6. Conclusions

The tourism and catering sector, particularly restaurants, have been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis as a result of lockdowns and strict health regulations imposed by national authorities all over the world. Various strategies have been adopted by local politics in the tourism and catering sector to gradually reopen. This study aimed to deepen the analysis of the power of one of the most endorsed influencers worldwide, Chiara Ferragni, to enhance Italian food and tourist destinations after the first wave of the

COVID-19 pandemic. The C.F. storytelling path was pieced together from the exploration of posts in Chiara Ferragni's Instagram profile, first by netnographic analysis and then through a deeper AGIL analysis to measure the effectiveness of the six discovered key factors. The study provides an open innovation adoptable by the entrepreneurs in the Ho.Re.Ca. sector to empower their business value. Although Chiara Ferragni's activity on Instagram may seem distant from the Ho.Re.Ca. industry, the results show that her influence activates peer relationships on Instagram and highlight the effectiveness of the influencer in stimulating discussions between followers about local food and restaurants. The findings highlight that the most effective dimensions of communication were the persuasive and managerial skills of the influencer. In addition, for food and restaurants, the role of followers becomes relevant to empower the business value and increase desire to experience, common behavioral intentions, and purchase intentions. In fact, the possibility to exchange information about this topic, different from others of exclusive use of the influencer, allows them to become influencers themselves thanks to the identification with the influencer and the building of bonds among themselves as a community of people. This phenomenon favors trust of the service/product because of the power of eWoM, comments, advice, and suggestions. The designed model of advertising and promotion is easily adoptable and not too expensive. Therefore, these findings may be useful for all enterprises in the catering sector, but mainly for small businesses who have less funds available to finance promotion and advertising activities. These firms, by using their own websites, blogs, and profiles in the social networks can use their clients' interactions, storytelling and endorsement to reach new (potential) customers. Secondly, small firms can use influencers and their followers to have additional empowerment of their business value thanks to their promotion activity in the digital environment. The findings of this study appear to be highly original, making a concrete contribution to the literature, and they may be of interest to researchers and businesses, even at an international level.

Despite this, the study has some limitations that can be overcome. The study, in fact, is limited to the observation of a single case of digital influencer, Chiara Ferragni, although C.F. is the most famous fashion blogger in the world. Nevertheless, there are other well-known influencers all over the world. Therefore, to complete the results and validate the findings, it could be useful to carry out similar studies, choosing local influencers from time to time based on their followers and/or the topics to be covered, and observe other population groups in other regions of the Western world, Africa or East Asia, with different cultures and food traditions. Therefore, this study may be an interesting starting point for future advances in food, tourist, and digital communication sciences. Moreover, due to the replicability of the method, the study provides interesting insights for conducting further studies investigating other industrial sectors (e.g., fashion and music) or social spheres (e.g., politics and sports) and comparing the results.

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