

Superstitious beliefs and marketing appeals: how Brazilian brands use astrological content in their media¹

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Abstract

In recent years, superstitions and their characteristics have become a tool for brands to attract consumers to buy their products. This research aims to analyze how brands use astrological content in their digital media. Adopting a qualitative method, we conducted a content analysis on four Brazilian brands' websites and Instagram pages (Risqué, Farm, Imaginarium, Skol Beats). Five categories guided the analysis, within which subcategories were found, presented in the results section: (1) Type of language: "humorous" or "mystical"; (2) Approach to astrology: "prognostic" or/and "personality"; (3) Knowledge of astrology: requires or does not require consumer's knowledge of astrology; (4) Integration brand-product-content: astrological content "associated" or "not" with the products; (5) Partnerships: "presence" or "not" of partnerships with other brands concerning the astrology theme. In general, the type of content produced by these brands regarding astrology is interactional and uninformative. Therefore, this research answers the question: Are superstitious beliefs important for marketing appeals? Yes, they are, especially in the current market context. This research contributes to the literature on superstition, by exploring astrology in the context of the market, and to the marketing literature, by studying how brands use astrology in their media. For managerial implications, it is important for brands to work on astrology with content of the interactional type, that does not need to be very informative, as consumers interested in this topic seem to already have prior knowledge about it. Additionally, we highlight a range of ways in which brands can work with astrology as a theme.

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Keywords

superstitious beliefs; marketing strategy; astrology; brands

1 Introduction

Discussions about religiosity, spirituality, and other beliefs of a non-religious or spiritual nature have been considered as a research subject in the past years (Mitchell; Haggett, 1997; Keinan, 2002; Hammerman; Morewedge, 2015; Kang; Park; Kim, 2018; Chen; Young, 2018; Wu; Cutright, 2018; Einsebruch, 2020; Hyodo; Bolton, 2021; Couto; Gerbase, 2021; Souza; Silva; Piza, 2021; Rosa; Dalmolin, 2021). So, pseudoscientific and superstitious beliefs (something inconsistent with current scientific knowledge) (Vyse, 2018) are widespread among the general population, as well as among students, and even science educators. For instance, according to one of the National Science Board (NSB) reports, young informants (54%) aged 18 to 24 are more likely to consider astrology to be 'very' or 'sort of' scientific (NSB, 2012).

There is a body of previous research exploring people's perceptions about astrology's ability to indicate who is at risk and why (Eisenbruch, 2020; Fisman *et al.*, 2022), the belief in astrology as a strategy for self-verification and coping with adverse life events (Lillqvist; Lindeman, 1998), how astrology might be used as an objective method to make judgments about others (Furnham, 1991) or to develop self-knowledge (Weor, 2010; Mayer, 2020), and about superstitious beliefs as a tool to influence politics (Pellizzo; Kuzenbayev, 2023).

Some investigations on this subject also discuss the role in the market of superstitions and other extraordinary beliefs (Srichampa, 2014; Chen; Young, 2018; Sierra; Hyman; Turri, 2018; Souza; Silva; Piza, 2021), specifically, how humor and religiosity can be used to understand the mediatized society, using SenseMarcia as an example (Rosa; Dalmolin, 2021), the superstitious journey of lottery gamblers (Pusaksrikit *et al.*, 2018), and how people choose food according to their superstitious beliefs (Xu; Kim, 2023).

In this context, the superstition phenomenon has been used in the market, mainly by brands that employ astrological content to sell products to an audience that considers this topic relevant and makes decisions to buy products based on such beliefs (Pathak; Holani, 2020; Ribeiro, 2019). Souza (2019) highlights the numerical increase of astrological content on social media. For example, between 2016 and 2017, the search for astrological content on YouTube increased by 67%, on Facebook by 116%, and on Twitter by 300%. This growth is related to consumers' need for self-awareness because people use astrology knowledge to

better understand their personalities and improve interpersonal relationships (Souza, 2019). Also on this matter, Ribeiro (2019) considers that brands use superstitious perspectives to personalize their products for consumers interested in them.

When analyzing the literature on superstition and pseudoscience, it becomes apparent that these topics are relatively new and little explored in the market context (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2018; Otnes *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, this article contributes to the superstition literature, with a focus on astrology in the market. Besides, past research suggests that systematic study of astrological signs is still needed in the marketing literature (Kwak; Jaju; Zinkhan, 2015). The present research adds to this literature, with a study on how brands use astrology in their media. Thus, this paper aims to analyze how brands use astrological content in their digital media, and it uses content analysis as a methodological approach.

2 Superstitious beliefs and astrology

Superstition is one among many extraordinary beliefs (Otnes *et al.*, 2018). Examples of superstition are beliefs in stable and fleeting luck, magical thinking, amulets, numerology, or astrology (St. James; Handelman; Taylor, 2011; Chinchanchokchai; Pusaksrikit; Pongsakornrunsilp, 2017; Chen; Young, 2018; Sierra; Hyman; Turri, 2018) (see in Chart 1).

Chart 1 - Types of extraordinary beliefs: the role of superstition

Extraordinary Beliefs	Superstition	Definitions	Examples
		<p>The irrational belief that an object, action, or circumstance not logically related to a course of events influences its outcome (Damisch; Stoberock; Mussweiler, 2010, p. 1014).</p> <p>Beliefs that contradict the known laws of nature or rational thought (Otnes <i>et al.</i>, 2018).</p> <p>Belief in something inconsistent with current scientific knowledge (Vyse, 2018). (<i>present study</i>).</p>	<p>- Astrology (<i>present study</i>)</p> <p>- Beliefs in stable luck and fleeting luck;</p> <p>- Amulets;</p> <p>- Numerology;</p> <p>- Magical thinking;</p> <p>- Believing that seeing a black cat on the street brings bad luck.</p>

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

Superstitious objects and rituals psychologically impact people (Keinan, 2002; Schippers; Van Lange, 2006), for example when someone feels embarrassed to endorse superstitions (Vyse, 1997). In such cases, embarrassment affects purchase intent for a product with socially shared superstitious meanings (Wang; Oppewal; Thomas, 2016). In a superstitious context, a question arises: Is there a difference between lucky stars and lucky socks? Maslen (2019) emphasizes the discussion about why astrology is still denigrated as frivolous fairy tales while superstitions and sports disasters have been accepted as part of what it takes to win. This question aligns with models that view superstitious behavior as a system based on a personality trait (Mowen; Carlson, 2003).

However, this does not provide an adequate explanation for various superstitious behaviors that are not based on a lack of belief in science, as suggested by Vaidyanathan *et al.* (2007). Superstition analysis has been criticized for failing to recognize the differences between superstitions in contemporary society and traditional superstitions (Vaidyanathan *et al.*, 2007). Hence, it is relevant to explain why superstitions also have an effect on people with a high level of education, as well as why there are fundamental differences between a traditional superstition (black cats bring bad luck) and a new superstition (astrology as a form of self-knowledge).

Following Vyse's (2018) conceptualization, we can understand superstition as a belief in something inconsistent with current scientific knowledge, in the sense of not being corroborated or being refuted by it. In the case of astrology, some authors argue that it has no basis in scientific fact (Crowe, 1990), while others see it "[...] as part of the wider sphere of cosmobiology – the study of how a vegetable, animal or human life is influenced by bodies in the solar system (the sun and planets) other than the earth" (Mitchell, 1995, p. 48). Astrology suggests that a person's personality is predetermined by the Sun, Moon, and planets's positions at the time of their birth.

In this matter, it is important to highlight that each of the 12 zodiac signs is believed to be associated with a set of characteristics (Kwak; Jaju; Zinkhan., 2015): Aries (independent; enthusiastic; assertive; determined); Taurus (calm; stubborn; home-loving; affectionate; security conscious; possessive); Gemini (imaginative; communicative; sociable; witty); Cancer (sensitive; emotional; insecure; intuitive); Leo (proud; strong-minded; authoritative; trusting; ambitious); Virgo (methodical; careful; health-conscious; dutiful; given to worry); Libra (diplomatic; fair-minded; negotiator; indecisive); Scorpio (self-assured; obstinate; vindictive; passionate); Sagittarius (creative; impulsive; generous;

outdoorsy; enthusiastic); Capricorn (practical; cautious; persevering; organized; earnest; respectful of authority); Aquarius (humanitarian; inventive; intelligent; academic; eccentric; unpredictable); Pisces (sympathetic; emotional; temperamental; flexible; creative) (Mitchell, 1995; Mitchell; Haggett, 1997).

The signs are divided into four elements, which are also associated with certain characteristics, as presented in Chart 2.

Chart 2 - Elements and characteristics

Fire (Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius)	Earth (Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn)	Air (Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius)	Water (Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces)
Enthusiasm Inspiration	Practical ability Stability	Intellectual ability	Intuition Sensitivity

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

The signs are also divided into three groups: “cardinal” (outgoing by nature), “fixed” (rigid in opinions), and “mutable” (flexible) (Mitchell, 1995; Mitchell; Haggett, 1997).

In the context of astrological beliefs, Mayer (2020) states that astrology has two belief foundations: prognostic (the idea that astrology determines someone’s life or future) or personality (the belief that astrology can tell you something about yourself or another person, serving as a self-knowledge tool or a way of making judgments). The next section discusses how marketing strategy can help to disseminate content and create bonds with consumers with strong superstitious beliefs.

3 Marketing strategy as a way to disseminate superstitious beliefs

People all around the world have different religions, beliefs, and thoughts. It happens because each region has different social structures, traditions, and cultures (Akova, 2011). In this context, consumers (when superstitious feelings arise) actively create several meanings for products and behaviors by – at a certain point - mixing information from a range of memories, feelings, and experiences (Zaltman, 2003; Wang *et al.*, 2012).

As a phenomenon that people use to justify their purchases, superstition has a relevant impact in the business world, for example (Hamerman; Johar, 2009; Pathak; Holani, 2020). Therefore, the present research discusses how brands have used superstition to bring more awareness to their products, services, and experiences in the digital world. Brands

search for content design to gain more attention and engage their consumers in social media posts (Pezzuti; Leonhardt; Warren, 2021) or to personalize their products for consumers (Ribeiro, 2019). It can be considered an important tool because consumers, according to Ordenes *et al.* (2018), are more likely to share brand messages that use humor and emotion to engage with them on social media.

It is also important for brands to express certainty (being completely confident or having no doubt about something) through the language used in superstitious content (Pezzuti; Leonhardt; Warren., 2021). Certainty is a relevant element because, as mentioned by Akova (2011, p. 138):

Superstition is essentially a concept that can be defined as the set of thoughts and beliefs that are incongruent with reality and as a subjective concept that we can categorize as referring to the set of doings, behaviors, words, and beliefs that have different meanings for different individuals and cultures.

Hence, brands need to make people believe and share, like, and comment on the content they post on social media platforms (Cruz; Leonhardt; Pezzuti, 2017; Shahbaznezhad; Dolan; Rashidirad, 2021). So, when brands use superstitious content, it is necessary to share information that is confident, reliable, and relevant to the consumer. In order to do this, those creating posts for social media employ three types of content: rational, emotional, and transactional (Shahbaznezhad; Dolan; Rashidirad, 2021). In Chart 3, we present the concepts of each type.

Chart 3 - Content-Type and Concepts

Content-Type	Concept
Rational	It is also called informational, functional, educational, or current events.
Interactional	It can be experiential, personal, employee, brand community, customer relationship, cause-related.
Transactional	It is also referred to as remunerative, brand resonance, and sales promotion.

Source: Drawn up by the authors based on Shahbaznezhad, Dolan and Rashidirad (2021).

When a brand promotes its products and services based on the content type that best fits its consumers, there is a greater chance they will be better accepted and become a trend, which means that it is important to produce content that promotes the real context of the product (Hamerman; Johar, 2009), also when we talk about superstitious beliefs.

Additionally, social media are platforms where people build networks and share information and sentiments for others to see, like, and comment on (Li; Larimo; Leonidou, 2021). It is relevant to mention that social media enables companies and consumers to connect and has transformed how companies and customers interact and influence each other (Li; Larimo; Leonidou, 2021). So, the purpose of Social Media Marketing Strategy (SMMSs) is “[...] to generate, integrate, and reconfigure social media resources to achieve specific marketing objectives” (Li; Larimo; Leonidou, 2021, p. 53).

In light of this, when we discuss the use of content related to superstition on social media, it is essential to understand that it can be based on analysis, mainly about what is linked to the consumer and to the product or service that is being marketed. To better understand this discussion, the results presented in this article can shed light on concerns about using superstitions to promote products and services.

4 Method

This research is qualitative (Merriam, 2009) since we aim to analyze how brands use astrological content in their digital media. In this sense, we define digital media as “[...] technologies that connect to the Internet” (Boulianne; Theocharis, 2020, p. 112), which includes, in this study, posts on social networking sites (for example, Instagram) and brand websites. Thus, we used such posts and web pages for data analysis.

Four Brazilian brands were used as representatives of the use of astrological content across various sectors: Skol (food and beverage sector), Farm (clothing sector), Risqué (cosmetic industry), and Imaginarium (variety sector). These companies were chosen because they have products or collections focused on astrology.

As an illustration, Skol Beats, in 2020, launched Beats Zodiac, Farm has a collection of T-shirts inspired by each sign called Farm Astral, Risqué launched an Astrology Risqué Nail Polish Kit, and Imaginarium works with products such as cups, cards, and planners with a zodiac theme.

As a data treatment technique, we used content analysis (Bardin, 2011) to interpret the meanings of astrological content in brands' posts/texts, focusing on written and visual content relevant to the analysis (Altheide; Schneider, 2013). This technique relies on identifying thematic patterns in a text by using inductive, case-oriented, and interpretative features (Schreier, 2012). We first identified content that focused on astrology in these brands' posts and web pages. After that, we defined categories related to how Brazilian brands use astrological content in their digital media to guide the analysis, see Chart 4.

Chart 4 - Categories prior to content analysis

Category	Definition
Type of language	The type of language used by brands in their astrological content.
Approach to astrology	The astrology approach that brands use in their media content.
Knowledge of astrology	How brands place astrological content with consumers' level of knowledge about astrology.
Integration brand-product-content	How brands discuss astrological content, related to products or not.
Partnerships	Presence of partnerships with other brands or companies related to astrology themes in brands' media content.

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

As shown in Chart 4, five categories will guide content analysis: (1) the type of language used by brands in their astrological content; (2) the approach to astrology that brands use in their media content; (3) knowledge of astrology (how brands place astrological content with consumers' level of knowledge about this theme); (4) brand-product-content integration (how brands discuss astrological content, related to products or not; (5) and partnerships, that is, the presence of collaboration with other brands or companies related to astrology themes in brands' media content. In the next section, we present the results of this research.

5 Brazilian brands: astrological content in practice

In this section, we present the main results found in the digital media of Brazilian brands chosen for analysis. The first category aims to understand the "type of language" brands use in their astrological content. For instance, Risqu  (2021) employs humor to

attract consumers' attention: "A Louca dos Signos² (green)," "Sambando no Inferno Astral³ (red)." Skol Beats (2021a) also uses humor in astrological content, as shown in this excerpt: "Quer saber os melhores matches do seu signo? Venha brincar de Zodiac Match com a gente⁴."

In addition, Imaginarium and Farm employ mystical language to reach the consumer in their presentation of astrological products and contents. For example, when Imaginarium (2021a) talks about destiny in their product presentation "Mas uma coisa pode ter certeza, esse copo foi feito pra você e tá no seu destino⁵." Besides, Farm (2018a) associates astrology to the idea of *Yin & Yang* in the post "Feminino de cada Signo⁶", which says: "Na astrologia, as distinções entre feminino e masculino seguem o mesmo sentido do *yin* e do *yang* do Tao (que significa "caminho"): são energias complementares, as forças receptivas (*yin*) e ativa (*yang*) que compõem tudo no universo. Assim como podemos dividir os signos em elementos, também os dividimos entre feminino e masculino. Os signos *yin* são os do elemento água e terra, e os *yang*, de fogo e ar. Todos nós temos todos os signos no nosso mapa astral. Ou seja, todos somos feitos de *yin* e *yang*⁷."

Next, we discuss our findings about approaches to astrology, which, according to Mayer (2020), are divided into prognostic and personality. In the present study, Risqué (2021), when their product includes the phrase "Meu Horóscopo do Dia⁸ (gold)" (Figure 1), applies a prognostic approach. Skol Beats (2021b) works with both perspectives, but not together. So, in the prognostic context, Skol has the "Horóscopo da Night⁹," as seen in this excerpt about the Scorpio sign: "Esse ciclo pede movimento e comunicação. No Natal talvez você não beije na boca, mas no dia seguinte, quem sabe [...] Postei e saí¹⁰" (Figure 2).

² "The kook with the signs".

³ "Sambando in the Astral Hell".

⁴ "Do you want to know the best matches for your sign? Come play Zodiac Match with us."

⁵ "But you can be sure of one thing, this cup was made for you and is in your destiny".

⁶ "Feminine of each sign"

⁷ "In astrology, the distinctions between feminine and masculine follow the same meaning as the yin and yang of the Tao (which means 'path'): they are complementary energies, the receptive (*yin*) and active (*yang*) forces that make up everything in the universe. Just as we can divide signs into elements, we also divide them into feminine and masculine. The yin signs are those of the water and earth elements, and the yang signs are those of fire and air. We all have all the signs in our birth chart. In other words, we are all made of yin and yang."

⁸ "My Horoscope of the Day"

⁹ "Night Horoscope"

¹⁰ "This cycle calls for movement and communication. At Christmas maybe you won't kiss on the mouth, but the next day, who knows... I posted it and left."

Figure 1 - Risqué: prognostic approach



Source: Risqué (2021).

Figure 1 Description: The image shows a metallic nail polish packaging that represents the prognostic approach of the study.

Figure 2 - Skol Beats: prognostic approach



Source: Skol Beats (2021b).

Figure 2 Description: The image shows a print from the Skol Beats website exemplifying the prognostic approach.

On the other hand, Skol Beats (2021c) utilizes the personality approach when they say about Cancerians: “Sua Beats. QUE EMOÇÃO! Chegou a Beats Zodiac do seu signo. Não chora. Ela veio pra te acompanhar no rolê com amigos e até no almoço na casa da avó¹¹.” This evokes water sign characteristics (emotions), specifically Cancer, for example when the

¹¹ “Your Beats. HOW EXCITING! The Beats Zodiac for your sign has arrived. Do not cry. It comes to accompany while you hang out with your friends and even at lunch at your grandmother’s house.”

message reads “do not cry”, because of this sign’s reputation for crying, and mentions hanging out with friends and lunch at grandma’s house, due to their attachment to friends and family, see Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Skol Beats - personality approach



Source: Skol Beats (2021c).

Figure 3 Description: The image shows a part of the Skol Beats website in which the personality approach to the signs is presented. A blue can is placed on a black background and the phrase previously presented in the article is highlighted.

The brand Farm (2019) uses only the personality approach, when emphasizing the following: “Câncer é o signo das raízes: nossa casa, família e intimidade, o nosso lar. Regido pela Lua, tem dentro da família uma relação direta com a mãe, [...] É a nossa história, a nossa memória, tem um clima nostálgico, saudoso, sonhador, de muita sensibilidade e imaginação fértil¹².”

Imaginarium (2021) employs both the prognostic and the personality approaches in its content. For example, about the Capricorn cup, it says: “Se você tiver Sol em Capricórnio, Lua em objetivos e Ascendente em realidade, encontrou seu copo ideal. Se tiver dúvidas, pergunte aos astros ... Este copo possui um dado na tampa pra você ‘consultar’ e tirar umas dúvidas – despretensiosas – sobre o que bem entender: rolê, vida, futuro...¹³”. Here, the brand is adopting the prognostic approach, which is combined with the personality approach in the following question: “Então se você é Capricórnio ou conhece o amigo/a que é ... vai rolar uma

¹² “**Cancer is the sign of roots: our house, family and intimacy, our home. Ruled by the moon**, within the family it has a direct relationship with the mother, [...] it is our history, our memory, it has a nostalgic, dreamy atmosphere, with a lot of sensitivity and a fertile imagination”.

¹³ “If you have your Sun in Capricorn, your Moon in goals and your Ascendant in reality, you have found your ideal cup. If you have any doubts, ask the stars... This cup has some dice on the lid for you to ‘consult’ and ask – unpretentious - questions about anything you want: party, life, future...”.

identificação. Dá uma olhada no que tem escrito nele: pé no chão, boletos, tem um plano, dias de luta, obstáculos? tomando decisões¹⁴ (Figure 4 and 5).

Figure 4 - Imaginarium: personality and prognostic approach



Source: Imaginarium (2021).

Figure 4 Description: The image features a Capricorn cup highlighting the use of both a prognostic and personality approach by the Imaginarium brand.

Figure 5 - Imaginarium: personality and prognostic approach



Source: Imaginarium (2021).

Figure 5 Description: The image shows a Capricorn cup highlighting the use of both a prognostic and personality approach by the Imaginarium brand.

¹⁴ "So, if you are a Capricorn or know a friend who is... you'll be able to relate. Take a look at what it says: down to earth, invoices, has a plan, days of struggle, obstacles? making decisions".

In the astrology knowledge category, the main findings are: First, Risqué organizes each type of nail polish by pairs of complementary opposite signs, using the zodiac symbols that represent them (for example, Taurus and Scorpio; Libra and Aries; Cancer and Capricorn), see Figure 4. It also makes references to astrological charts in its products (Risqué, 2021), for example, in the sentence “Joga Astral no Meu Mapa¹⁵ (metallic transparency)”. Another astrological issue seen in Risqué products is the reference to Saturn (“Antes que Saturno volte¹⁶”), one of the planets that make up the birth chart, see Figure 6 and 7. In this case, it is possible to say that the consumer, depending on their knowledge, may or may not notice and value this kind of information.

Figure 6 - Risqué: examples of astrology knowledge



Source: Risqué (2021).

Figure 6 Description: The image shows two nail polish packaging which highlights the role of prior knowledge about astrology in consuming the product presented.

¹⁵ “Throw astral (good mood) on my **chart**.”

¹⁶ “Before **Saturn** returns”

Figure 7 - Risqué: examples of astrology knowledge



Source: Risqué (2021).

Figure 7 Description: The image highlights two nail polish packaging which highlights the role of prior knowledge about astrology in consuming the product presented.

In relation to Skol Beats (2021a), the brand uses the four elements (fire, air, earth, and water) to organize the signs into groups (Mitchell, 1995; Mitchell; Haggett, 1997). For example, on the Skol Beats web page, it presents the “ZODIAC MATCH” with suggestions of sign matches based on complementary opposite relationships, such as Scorpio and Taurus, and relationships based on differences between signs of different and “incompatible” elements. The matches are organized in three types: “PARA A VIDA TODA¹⁷”; “PARA UMA NOITE CALIENTE¹⁸”; “IMPROVÁVEL¹⁹” (Figure 8, from left to right).

¹⁷ “FOR A LIFELONG PARTNERSHIP”

¹⁸ “FOR A HOT NIGHT”

¹⁹ “UNLIKELY”

Figure 8 - Skol Beats: Examples of astrological knowledge



Source: Skol Beats (2021a).

Figure 8 Description: The image presents three cards where the compatibility of different signs is discussed, highlighting the need to have prior knowledge about astrology to understand the content shared.

Therefore, Skol Beats can benefit from the consumer's prior knowledge of astrology in its use of astrological content. Similarly, Imaginarium needs consumers to know about astrology when it posts the following on Instagram: "Verificado Aqui o zodíaco inteiro tem espaço pra brilhar! Conta pra gente: qual é o seu signo, ascendente e lua?"²⁰ (Imaginarium, 2019c). In the case of Farm (2019), it is important to highlight that it is not necessary to have too much knowledge about astrology because this brand's discussions of astrology in its social media content but are not associated with any of the products in its collection (for example, Libra T-shirt), as can be observed in the posts on its website, see Figure 9 and 10.

²⁰ "Verified here the entire zodiac has room to shine! Tell us: what is your sign, ascendant and moon?"

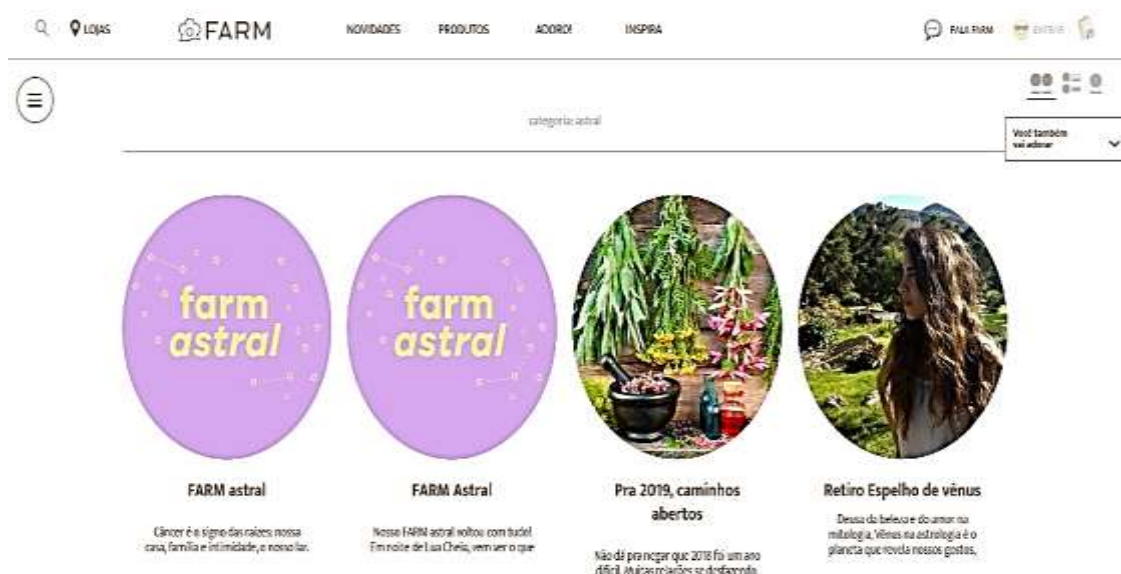
Figure 9 - Farm: examples of astrological knowledge and Integration brand-product-content



Source: Farm (2019).

Figure 9 Description: The image shows an astrology-themed T-shirt sold by Farm.

Figure 10 - Farm: examples of astrological knowledge and Integration brand-product-content



Source: Farm (2018b).

Figure 10 Description: The image shows astrology-themed content published on Farm's blog.

In the post “Retiro Espelho de Vênus²¹”, for example, Farm (2018b) discusses one of the planets involved in the birth chart, Venus. This is an illustrative excerpt:

²¹ “Mirror of Venus Retreat”

[...] Vênus na astrologia é o planeta que revela nossos gostos, valores, o que nos atrai e como atraímos. Então além de nos inspirar a moda, o design e a arte, com os recursos que dispõe nossa Vênus nós seduzimos, sensualizamos, transamos e sentimos prazer. Vênus é, portanto, essencial para nossa autoestima e superimportante na nossa dinâmica de relacionamento²².

This is evidence of the “integration brand-product-content” category, in which the brand does not associate its discussions of astrology with its product.

In the same direction, Imaginarium (2019a) produces astrology content without associating it directly with a product. For example, in the “consultation with Madame Ronron” post on Instagram, astrology is discussed independently of any products, Figure 11.

Figure 11 - Imaginarium: Integration brand-product content



Source: Imaginarium (2019a).

Figure 11 Description: The image shows a post on Instagram, where the brand Imaginarium advertises a tarot reader, linking the brand’s products to what it shares on social media to attract consumers’ attention.

When we analyze Risquè, there is no evidence of brand-product-content integration. Skol Beats (2021d), on the other hand, present on its website a page named “Sobre outros

²² “[...] Venus in astrology is the planet that reveals our tastes, values, what attracts us and how we attract. So, in addition to inspiring us with fashion, design and art, with the resources that our Venus has at our disposal, we seduce, sensualize, have sex and feel pleasure. Venus is, therefore, essential for our self-esteem and super important in our relationship dynamics.”

Signos”, where people can learn more about each of the signs (Figure 12), content which is associated with the products (cans) of the “Beats Zodiac” collection.

Figure 12 - Skol Beats: Integration brand-product-content



Source: Skol Beats (2021d).

Figure 12 Description: The image shows a part of the Skol Beats website, where the signs of the Zodiac are presented so that the reader and potential consumer can get information about a sign that is not their own.

In the last category, we analyze partnerships between brands that may use astrological content to reach consumers. In the cases of Risquè and Farm, there is no evidence of the brands' efforts regarding partnerships, as Risquè focuses on the astrological content of its products and Farm seeks to produce astrology content that goes beyond the products of its T-shirt collection, without using partnerships.

However, when analyzing Skol Beats (2021e) and Imaginarium, we can see the presence of partnerships with other brands. Skol Beats has the “Playlist dos Elementos,” a partnership with Spotify (Figure 13), and Imaginarium (2019b) has a partnership with Astrolink, a Brazilian astrology portal offering free and paid astrology services (Astrolink, c2021-2024) on its Instagram, where clients can make their birth charts (Figure 14).

Figure 13 - Skol Beats: partnerships



Source: Skol Beats (2021e).

Figure 13 Description: The image shows the playlist of the signs released by Skol Beats and Spotify

Figure 14 - Imaginarium: partnerships



Source: Imaginarium (2019b).

Figure 14 Description: The image shows an Instagram post describing the partnership between Imaginarium and Astrolink so that everyone can generate their birth chart to better understand their future paths.

Chart 5 presents a summary of our findings that includes how each brand works with astrological content based on the categories presented in the Method section.

Chart 5 - Categories after the content analysis

Type of language:	Risqu�	Skol Beats	Imaginarium	Farm
- Humorous	X	X		
- Mystical			X	X
Approach to astrology:	Risqu�	Skol Beats	Imaginarium	Farm
- Prognostic	X	X	X	
- Personality		X	X	X
Knowledge of astrology:	Risqu�	Skol Beats	Imaginarium	Farm
- Requires knowledge	X	X	X	
- Does not require knowledge				X
Integration brand-product-content:	Risqu�	Skol Beats	Imaginarium	Farm
- Associated with the product		X		
- Not associated with the product	(Not integrated)		X	X
Partnerships:	Risqu�	Skol Beats	Imaginarium	Farm
- Present		X	X	
- Not present	X			X

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

It is possible to observe in Chart 5 that each brand employs different perspectives on astrological contexts. Shahbaznezhad, Dolan e Rashidirad (2021) divide brands' social media content into three types: rational, interactional, and transactional. Overall, our results showed that most astrology-focused content posted by the brands investigated in this study is of the interactional type.

This was evident, for example, in the categories of "Type of language" and "Approach to astrology", used by brands in their astrological content. The use of humorous language or of mystical appeals, reinforces how these brands seek ways to make communication on this topic more interactive, personal, and targeted at consumers interested in astrology, which makes the experience of buying their products more attractive. Similarly, Ordenes *et al.* (2018) discuss how messages that use humor and emotions engage more consumers in brands' content on social media. This also applies to the use of a more prognostic or

personality approach to astrology in products and content. In this sense, Hamerman and Johar (2009) state that there is a greater chance that the products and services will be better accepted if the content type fits with their consumers.

According to Pezzuti, Leonhardt and Warren (2021), brands use social media content to gain more attention and engage their consumers. In this research, other categories (“Integration brand-product-content” and “Partnerships”) explored in this type of interactional content do not seem to be as utilized by the brands analyzed as they could be. Most of these brands do not associate astrology content with their astrology-focused products. Regarding partnerships with other companies, not all brands analyzed have them. Skol Beats, on the other hand, has a partnership with Spotify, through the “Playlist dos Elementos²³”.

Furthermore, results suggest that the content used by these brands is not very informative (less rational content type). This is corroborated by the “Knowledge of astrology” category, in which the findings show that three of the four brands require of consumers prior knowledge about astrology. Therefore, astrology-focused content is not as informative as it could be, as brands seem to expect consumers to have prior knowledge on the topic. When the content is used to disseminate information on the topic, as in the example of Farm, this knowledge is not aimed at complete beginners but at those interested in delving deeper and reading more about astrology, and it is not necessarily associated with the products of the brand’s astrology-themed collection.

6 Final remarks

This paper analyzed how brands use astrological content in their digital media. We applied content analysis as our methodological approach, choosing four Brazilian brands to represent the use of astrological content across various sectors (Skol, Farm, Risqué, and Imaginarium). Our results show subcategories associated with five previous categories, which were defined in order to guide analysis of results: (1) Type of language: “humorous” or “mystical”; (2) Approach to astrology: “prognostic” or/and “personality”; (3) Knowledge of astrology: requires or does not require consumers’ prior knowledge of astrology; (4) Integration brand-product-content: astrological content “associated” or “not” with the brands’ products; (5) Partnerships: “presence” or “not” of partnerships with other brands

²³ “Playlist of Elements”

concerning the astrology theme. Furthermore, we show that, in general, the type of content used by these brands regarding astrology is interactional, and not very informative.

Specifically, the results show that Skol Beats uses humor in its content, has a prognostic and personality approach when discussing astrology and its impact on consumers, and chooses to make partnerships to strengthen integration between content and brand products. Farm uses mystical language and delivers content that is easier to understand. We also have Imaginarium and Risqu  : the former looks for partnerships, deliver humorous content, and requires some prior knowledge of the consumer to understand the astrological content shared in its digital media; the latter, Risqu  , presents content that is less integrated across its digital media, and presents to the consumer new ways of seeing astrology and its impacts on their daily lives.

Therefore, this research answers the question: Are superstitious beliefs important for marketing appeals? Yes, they are important, especially in the current market context. This research contributes to the literature on superstition, by exploring astrology in the context of the market, and to the marketing literature, by studying how brands use astrology in their media. For managerial implications, the results suggest that it is important for brands to work on astrology with content of the interactional type, that does not need to be informative, as consumers interested in this topic seem to already have prior knowledge about it. Given this, brands can focus more on how to make this content interactive for consumers.

The findings also highlight a range of ways in which brands can work with astrology: (a) using language that is more humorous or with a more mystical appeal; (b) approaching astrology as a way for people to see characteristics of themselves in the products related to their zodiac sign or to talk to others about their personality based on their sign; or in a prognostic way, with the idea that astrology determines someone's life or future; (c) they can integrate more of their astrology content into astrology-focused products, thus encouraging more interactions with the brand's social networks when it comes to these products; (d) they can also invest more in partnerships with other brands or companies when it comes to this topic, as consumers' interactions and experience with astrology products can also be increased with content that involves other possibilities of consumer experience (for example, Imaginarium offering the opportunity for consumers of its astrology-focused products to make their birth chart with the Astrolink portal).

As limitations, in this research we look for common links between different sectors and products, however there may be particularities for each sector that works with products focused on astrology. Thus, we suggest that future studies attempt to understand the role of astrological content for brands in each sector. Another issue is not understanding the consumer perspective based on the content shared by brands. Future studies can investigate this perspective.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that astrological content is seasonal, so it is important to understand when these products, services, and information will gain more attention from potential consumers. This can be observed when we look for the products mentioned in the present research and find they are not available in the market anymore because they are launched as a limited edition. From that, future studies can investigate which marketing strategies can be used to create a buzz for these products. In that matter, it is important to understand how and why it happens, mainly for brands to understand how superstitions can be a tool that makes consumers more aware of their products, services, and experiences.

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²⁴ Imaginarium ended this collection after one selling. It is possible to find information about it on Imaginarium's Instagram page.

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As crenças supersticiosas e apelos de marketing: como as marcas brasileiras utilizam conteúdos astrológicos em suas mídias

Resumo

Nos últimos anos, as superstições e suas características se tornaram uma ferramenta para as marcas atraírem consumidores para a compra de seus produtos. Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar como as marcas utilizam conteúdos astrológicos em suas mídias digitais. Adotando um método qualitativo, foi utilizada análise de conteúdo em sites e páginas do Instagram de quatro marcas brasileiras (Risqué, Farm, Imaginarium, Skol Beats). Cinco categorias nortearam a análise, nas quais foram identificadas subcategorias, apresentadas como resultados: (1) Tipo de linguagem: “de humor” ou “mística”; (2) Abordagem da astrologia: “prognóstica” ou/e “personalidade”; (3) Conhecimento de astrologia: requer ou não conhecimento do consumidor; (4) Integração marca-produto-conteúdo: conteúdo astrológico “associado” ou “não” aos produtos; (5) Parcerias: “presença” ou “não” de parcerias com outras marcas relacionadas ao tema astrologia. Em geral, o tipo de conteúdo utilizado por essas marcas é interacional e menos informativo. Portanto, esta pesquisa responde à pergunta: As crenças supersticiosas são importantes para os apelos de marketing? Sim, são, especialmente no atual contexto de mercado. Esta pesquisa contribui para a literatura sobre superstição, ao explorar a astrologia no contexto do mercado, e para a literatura de marketing, ao estudar como as marcas utilizam a astrologia em suas mídias. Como implicações gerenciais, é importante que as marcas trabalhem a astrologia com conteúdo do tipo interacional, e menos informativo, uma vez que os consumidores interessados neste tema parecem já ter conhecimento prévio sobre o mesmo. Além disso, destacamos uma série de maneiras pelas quais as marcas podem trabalhar com o tema da astrologia.

Palavras-chave

marcas; crenças supersticiosas; estratégias de marketing; astrologia

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