



25th International Conference on
Corporate and Marketing
Communications

CMC 2020

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Editors: Lucia Porcu and Salvador del Barrio García

Omni-Channel communication: Delivering unified
communications across all branded touch-points

Hosted by the University of Granada (Spain)

Faculty of Economics and Business

Venue: Online Conference

14-16 April 2021



UNIVERSIDAD
DE GRANADA



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Editors: Lucia Porcu and Salvador del Barrio García

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Granada, 2021

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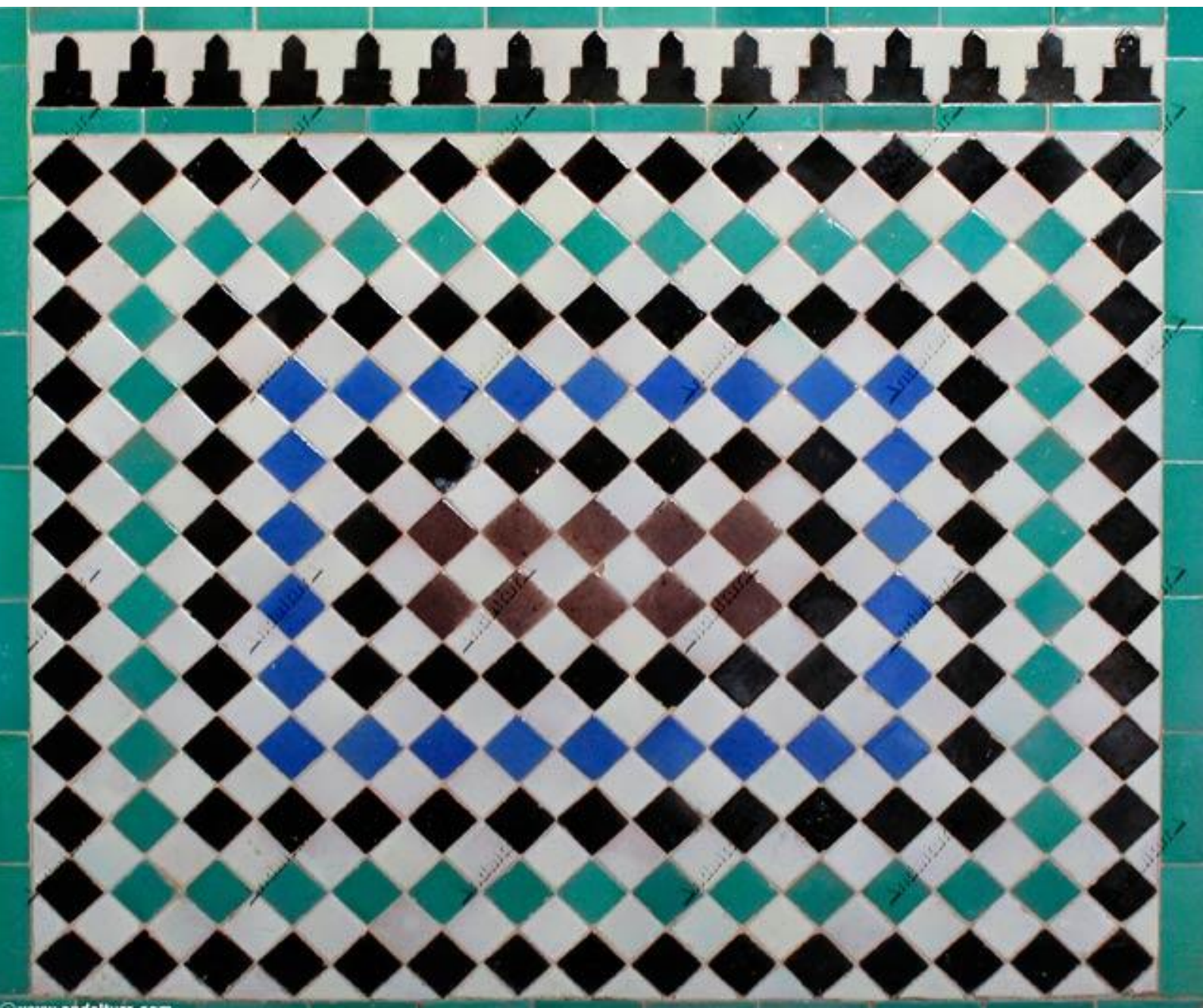
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CMC 2020





1. Welcome from the Conference Hosts

As co-chairs, we are honoured to host the **25th International Conference on Corporate and Marketing Communications (CMC 2020)** at the University of Granada and to celebrate with all of you this important milestone: a quarter of a century is certainly a crucial anniversary!

Undoubtedly, this conference is very special for us, not only for its academic relevance, but especially because it has contributed significantly to build friendships and good memories over these years. Senior and junior researchers meet every year thanks to this conference since 1996, sharing their experience and knowledge. More importantly, the conference is designed to be a family-scale event, where delegates have the chance to talk, share, interact and build relationships that last over time. This is indeed a great opportunity, especially for junior researchers.

In our case, the CMC conference has encompassed our careers during the last decade. In 2010, we had the privilege of collaborating with Professor Phil Kitchen, thanks to the visiting scholar stay at Brock University (Canada), where he was Lucia's mentor in the first stages of development of the theoretical framework for her doctoral thesis on the antecedents and effects of Integrated Marketing Communications. It was then that we were introduced to this conference and, since the CMC conference held in Athens in 2011, it is now a 'must' in our research agenda and Professor Philip Kitchen and many of the CMC faithful delegates have become good friends and collaborators of us over time.

The organization of the CMC 2020 conference commenced in 2018, when Professor Philip Kitchen has offered us the opportunity to host the event in Granada for the 25th edition and we took it with a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment, since we were aware of the challenges that come with the organization of an event like this international conference. The University of Granada has been very supportive since the beginning of this 'adventure' providing resources to guarantee a successful event. Nevertheless, our university (founded in 1531) has been the venue of many international conferences during the five centuries of its history. Moreover, the University of Granada has a great international vocation, being the most popular destination among European Exchange students and hosting more international students than any other European university for over a decade.

To welcome and greet our delegates and friends, we planned and organized several social activities, such as a gala dinner in a cave-restaurant located in the Sacromonte neighbourhood, the venue of flamenco and with privileged views to the Alhambra, a walking tour through the narrow streets of

the UNESCO heritage site of the Albayzín (the ancient *medina*) and an exclusive night visit to the Alhambra Palaces (another UNESCO heritage site) and its wonderful patios and gardens.

In March 2020, when everything seemed to be well-settled, the COVID-19 pandemic was announced by the World Health Organization and the restrictions we all know led us to postpone the celebration of the conference to April 2021. It was a very sad decision for all of us, but at that time we were relatively optimistic and believed that the pandemic would be over by then and we could celebrate CMC in Granada. However, unfortunately, we are still facing uncertain circumstances, thus we opted for celebrating the conference online and with the organizing committee we have done our best to make this a memorable conference. It is an unprecedented format for this conference, and we really hope that our delegates and friends will enjoy it.

Bringing together academics from marketing and corporate communications fields is the mission of the CMC conference and integration plays a key role in establishing a fruitful dialogue. Given the current dynamic communications environment and the important milestone of the *25th International Conference on Corporate and Marketing Communications*, the theme proposed for CMC 2020 is “*Omni-channel communication: delivering unified communications across all brand touch points*”, which is topical and relevant for both communication research and practice. Nowadays, firms have a great opportunity thanks to the increasingly broader range of media channels at their disposal to communicate with their stakeholders, however this phenomenon is leading to a more complex communication and media environment, which implies several challenges. In this regard, we consider that it is paramount to find the right balance between adopting an omni-channel or multi-channel communication approach and integrating all messages to ensure their consistency regardless of the channel or media used to deliver them. Thus, once again, the principles of Integrated Marketing Communication should guide the firms’ marketing and corporate communications strategy to achieve the maximum communication impact and the desired beneficial effects, for example in terms of brand equity and corporate reputation.

At CMC 2020, we will join the conversation regarding this phenomenon and the related issues and several perspectives to analyse it are offered by the over thirty papers that will be presented. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the delegates come from four different continents and this is a plus that provides the debate with a global-scale view.

We have no words to express our sincere gratitude to Professor Philip Kitchen for his trust and support. To organize this event, we have gathered the best human team and we would like to thank the members of the organizing committee for their availability and their contribution in all the stages of the organization, especially for the work performed to overcome the encountered difficulties and unexpected obstacles. We would also thank the ADEMAR research group for supporting the conference since the very beginning. Last but not least important, we would like to thank all the authors for sharing their most valuable and recent research at the CMC conference, the prestigious keynote speakers for their voluntary participation, and the collaboration of the

reviewers for their valuable evaluations and feedback enabling to significantly improve the quality of the submitted manuscripts and to select the best papers for the conference.

Finally, we would like to say that this year we will miss Professor Don E. Schultz, one of the very pillars of the CMC conference and the ‘father’ of integrated marketing communications (IMC). We have been doing research in IMC for over a decade and he has been a constant inspiration for our work. We are so sad to say he passed away last June 2020 at the age of 86, but we know that he will always be with us through his legacy. Personally, meeting Heidi and Don has always been one of the greatest motivations to attend this conference. Lucia met Don for the first time in Athens at the CMC 2011 conference. At that time, Lucia was a doctoral student who was developing her Ph.D. dissertation on IMC and Salvador was her Ph.D. advisor. How could they feel when meeting the author of the seminal studies on the topic? In that first meeting, Lucia could hardly pronounce a word, but in November 2011 Don hosted her at the Northwestern University – Medill School for a four-month visiting scholar stay and we had the privilege to work with and, above all, learn from Don. Undoubtedly, he was a great mentor and especially good at fostering rethinking and reflection by providing different viewpoints on the issue that was being addressed. We treasure many good memories and we will miss him so much. Thank you, Don, not only for your encouraging words, but also for your valuable comments, meaningful critiques and, especially, for your subtle humour, which contributed to make every conversation with you fascinating and engaging.

Lucia Porcu and Salvador del Barrio García

Co-Chairs of CMC2020



Philip J. Kitchen, Don E. Schultz, Lucia Porcu and Heidi Schultz at the CMC Conference held in Salerno in 2013.



2. Letter from the founder, Philip J. Kitchen

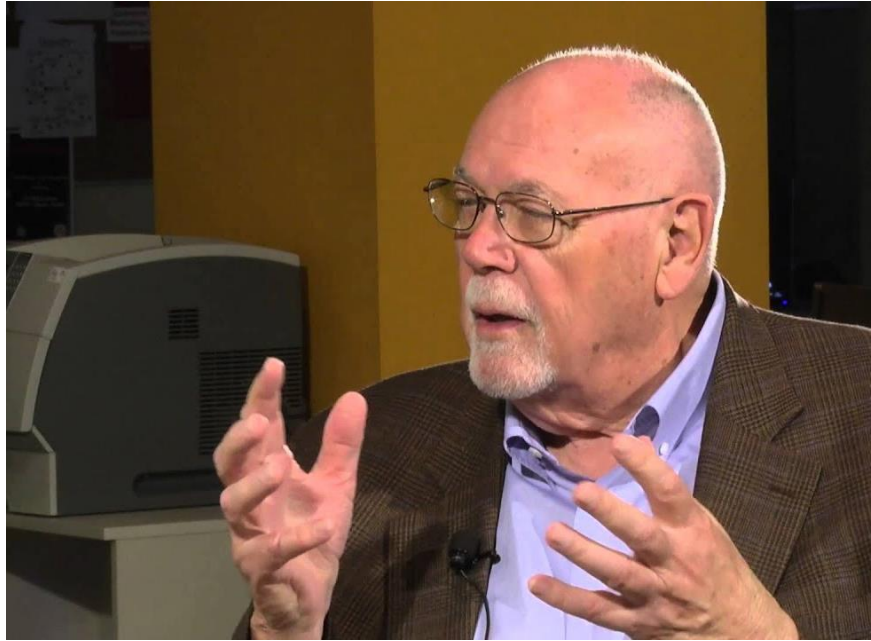
It is a privilege to write a few words about this great conference. Like most conferences, it started as an idea back in 1994 and the first conference was held in 1996 at Keele University, UK. Since then, it has been held at many great universities and business schools in the previous European Union, and elsewhere such as Israel. The purpose then was to bring together academics from marketing and corporate communications, and maybe the seeds of integration were planted at that time. It was also planned to be a small-scale conference where people could get together, talk together and work together toward research goals, ambitions and papers. It seemed to me then and still does now that in the larger rush and bustle of the major marketing conferences, somehow opportunities for interaction disappear. So, I am very grateful indeed for collegiality, friendships and collaborations which have stood the test of time and proved to be worth, value and significance.

The 2021 conference is no exception to the norm except it will be hosted online. Professor Lucia Porcu and I met when she came to visit and study for three months at Brock University, Canada. She has gone on to become a very sound academic in her chosen fields. I am also delighted that she and Professor Salvador Del Barrio are co-chairs and co-hosts at this conference and I am sure we all appreciate the work done to ensure a great conference.

As you will know, this International Conference on Corporate and Marketing Communications is **the meeting place** for academic researchers and educators as well as practitioners seeking to promote knowledge, stimulate dialogue and set trends in the fields of marketing and corporate communications as well as brand creation and management. In 2021 the focus is upon the current and future relevance of omnichannel communication and the need to deliver unified and consistent communications across all branded touch-points analysed taking both corporate and marketing communications approaches. I am looking forward to being there.



Let me also say a few words about Don and Heidi Schultz. Both were avid, keen and enthusiastic conference delegates and participants. In all their years of consistent and faithful attendance, Don acted as keynote speaker twice. Unlike other conferences where he was paid to present, however, he never charged our conference a dime. It was said, and I believe this fully, that the conference started fully only once Don and Heidi appeared. He and Heidi were always willing to spend time encouraging and mentoring others. Don, of course, was the pioneer, architect and guru in the field of integrated marketing



communications (IMC) and advertising. I am said to relate that he passed away on Thursday 4th June 2020 at the age of 86 and is survived by his wife Heidi, three sons, and seven grandchildren. He will be missed by the CMC, and by many of our delegates, not least 'yours truly'. We salute his great contributions to our field of endeavour and say 'we will miss him'. Perhaps Heidi one day will join us again. I attach photo of Don in a mentoring moment.

I look forward to seeing everyone in April 2021.



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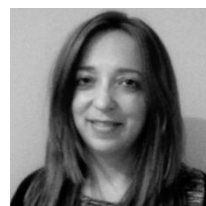
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- Mariola Palazón
- Marisa Viedma del Jesús
- Marta Flavián-Lázaro
- Marwa Tourky
- Myriam Martínez-Fiestas
- Noah Bell
- Olivier Mesly
- Pantelitsa Yerimou
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- Roger Bennett
- Sabine Einwiller
- Salvador del Barrio-García
- Sergio Ibáñez-Sánchez
- Tamar Lahav
- Teodoro Luque-Martínez
- Varsha Jain
- Victor W. Bohorquez-López
- Wolfgang Weitzl
- Zev Bronstein





6. Conference Tracks

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

- Corporate identity, image, reputation
- Integrated marketing communications
- Corporate branding and corporate online communities
- Corporate reputation in social media sites (SNS)
- Communication to stakeholders
- Internal communications and branding
- Public relations perspectives
- Organizational, Business and Management Communications
- Non-profit and voluntary sector organizations and branding
- Place marketing communications and branding

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

- Integrated marketing communications (IMC) campaigns and its dimensions
- Promotional mix offline-online issues including: advertising, marketing public relations (MPR), native advertising (and other forms of paid content), directmarketing, sales promotion, events, sponsorship and other promotional elements
- Owned earned and paid media
- Online marketing communications
- Marketing communications efficacy and effectiveness
- Measuring attitudinal/behavioral response
- Marketing communications in non-profit sector
- Political marketing communications
- Tourism communications



INTERACTIVE AND MULTICHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS

- Brand touchpoints
- Viral marketing and eWOM
- Mobile marketing communications
- Native advertising (NA) on social media sites (SNA)
- The consumer decision journey
- Digital web advertising conversion funnel
- Building customer relationship online
- Content management

RELATED AREAS

- Ethical issues of marketing communications
- Cultural issues of marketing communications
- Marketing communications research methods
- Rhetoric, semiotics in communication
- Knowledge management and communication
- Organization culture and communication
- Marketing communications in times of economic crisis
- Cross-cultural analysis
- Leadership, networks, trust-building and communication
- Marketing communications theory
- Communication management
- Marketing communications agencies in the digital age





7. Guest Keynote Speakers

Prof. Enrique Bigné

Professor of Marketing at the University of Valencia and visiting scholar at the University of Maryland and Berkeley Haas School of Business.

Enrique Bigné is Professor of Marketing at the University of Valencia (2001-) and at Jaume I University (1996-2001). He has been visiting scholar at the University of Maryland (2011, 2012) and Berkeley Haas School of Business (2014).

His main research interests are advertising, neuromarketing and virtual reality. His work has been published in *Psychology & Marketing*, *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, and *Journal of Services Marketing*, among others. He has served as Head of Department, Vice-Dean, Dean, Vice-Chancellor. He is the Editor of *European Journal of Management & Business Economics*.



ABSTRACT KEYNOTE

Integrated Marketing Communication Measures: Research Directions. IMCM

Based on three established paradigms in marketing and communication, this talk addresses the current research gaps of communications based on such paradigms. We adopt the IMC as a core paradigm that is complemented by the customer journey and the digital approach. Further, the emerging paradigms in marketing and technology that might contribute to overcoming those research gaps are discussed. These are derived from consumer neuroscience, in-store digital integrations, and virtual reality. We argue that the IMC paradigm needs to accomplish two extensions based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response approach: (i) a closer look into the emerging measurements based on dynamic and unconscious measurements, and (ii) deeply extend its domain to the point of sale, either digital or physical in order to gain managerial effectiveness. As a result, the author proposes to add a new perspective on IMC heavily based on measurement issues. It is named IMCM, Integrated Marketing Communication Measures.



Prof. Sabine Einwiller, Ph.D.

Professor of Public Relations Research, University of Vienna and Head of the Austrian Council on Public Relations Ethics

Sabine Einwiller is Professor of Public Relations Research at the University of Vienna's Department of Communication, where she heads the Corporate Communication Research Group. She is also the head of the Austrian Council on Public Relations Ethics.

She has been post-doctoral researcher in the United States (University of Southern California and Columbia University). Sabine has researched and published widely on topics of corporate communication and stakeholder psychology.



Her work has been published in Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Public Relations Review, Journal of Consumer Behaviour, and Journal of Marketing Communications, among others. In her research, she is mainly interested in integrated communication management and in the effects of corporate communication on their stakeholders. In particular, her research focuses on the strategic management of contents and topics, the effects of negative publicity and crisis communication on corporate reputation, and employee communication.

ABSTRACT KEYNOTE

Content-based strategic communication and corporate newsrooms: How companies are trying to make their communications function more agile

The digital transformation has brought about challenges and opportunities for communications. Yet, meeting the challenges and realizing the opportunities requires more agile structures and processes, because old ways of organizing the communications function along stakeholder groups and specific media create silos and hamper velocity, coordination, integration and flexibility. Thus, several companies have changed or are changing their structures and processes. They put topics and content at the center of every communication effort, following the rule “content first, channel second”. And they establish corporate newsrooms that mimic the way of working in editorial offices. Sabine Einwiller provides insights into changes in communication management based on recent research conducted in large organizations that have made their communications functions more agile and integrated.



Oliver Walker

Head of Commercial and Strategy (Analytics)
Merkle EMEA, UK.

Oliver Walker is Head of Commercial and Strategy (Analytics) at Merkle EMEA. He holds an MA in Consumer Psychology with business from the University of Wales, Bangor. Oliver is an experienced analytics & digital marketing professional working with clients to deliver on the promise of more customer-centric communications. This includes understanding organisations' maturity via our Data Maturity Assessment, through running workshops and stakeholder interviews. His key pillars include evaluation across customer strategy and customer experience; data, tech and measurement; ways of working and decisioning. He is currently working to bring together the propositions and strategy of two analytics teams as they come together within the newly formed Merkle Analytics service line.



ABSTRACT KEYNOTE

What is the formula to deliver omni-channel communications?

After a tumultuous year that has permanently changed consumer behaviors, customer experience transformation is top of mind for all of us. Organization's that are pivoting towards and delivering an omni-channel approach are creating competitive advantage, and this year that rings true more than ever. The formula required to deliver this capability is data transformation plus digital transformation equals customer experience transformation.

This blends the acquisition, management and activation of data; with the design and delivery of communications that are contextually relevant delivered by an agile organization that is adapted to meet their customer's needs.

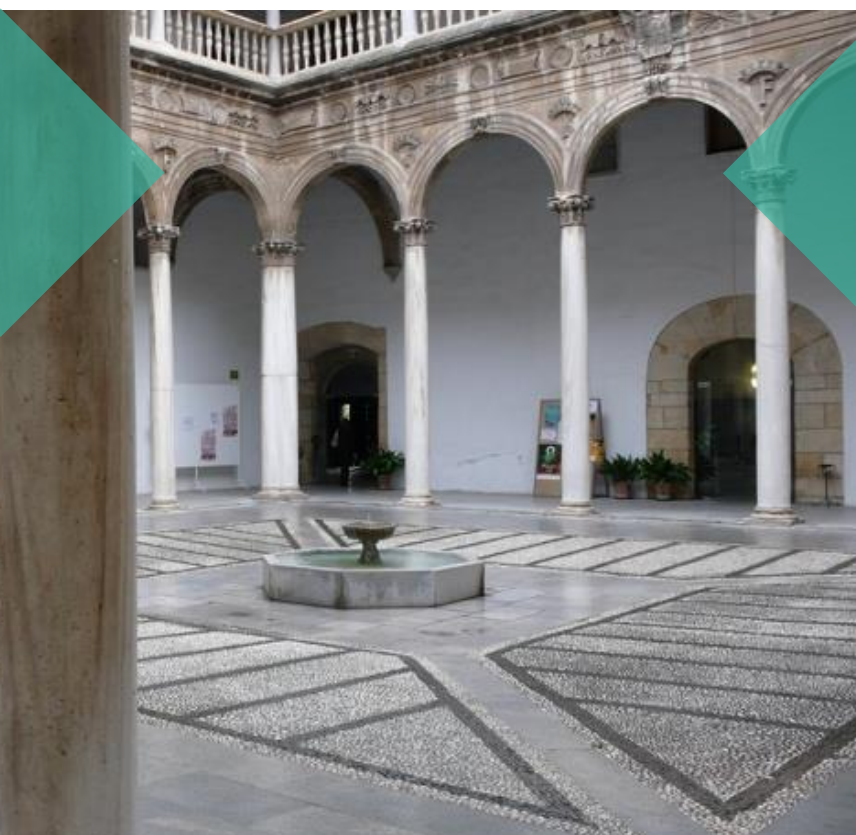
The key to it all is about marketing, sales, commerce, and service no longer working separately but in unison to deliver a total customer experience.



8. About the University of Granada

General overview

The University of Granada (UGR) is a public university situated in the historical city of Granada, which lies just 35 km from the spectacular Sierra Nevada mountain range and 65 km from the tropical Mediterranean coast. The University was officially founded by the Emperor Charles V in the year 1531, and built on a centuries-old teaching tradition dating back to the madrasahs of the Nasrid dynasty of Granada. Accordingly, it is one of the most significant universities in Europe in terms of its historical importance.





Since its founding, the UGR has expanded on a par with the city, with its faculties and schools distributed throughout the metropolitan area. Five of the UGR's seven campuses are spread out across the city of Granada, giving it an unmistakable university atmosphere. Meanwhile, the University's campuses in the North African cities of Ceuta and Melilla make it one of the few genuinely intercontinental universities in the world. It also maintains strong historical ties with institutions and universities in Latin America, leaving it perfectly placed to fulfil the role of a bridge between Europe and Latin America on the one hand, and between Europe and North Africa on the other.

As well as working constantly to enrich the city culturally, the UGR is fully committed to its policy of recovering, restoring and conserving buildings of historical worth in Granada. "La Madraza" (1349), the "Hospital Real" (the seat of the Rectorate of the UGR) and the Faculties of Law, Translation and Interpreting, and Communication and Documentation are all housed in spectacular buildings of considerable historical significance. Indeed, given its increasingly influential role in the life of Granada over the past 500 years, the University has come to define the city architecturally, culturally and economically.

Approximately 70,000 individuals – students, researchers, lecturers, and administrative and support staff – are directly linked to the UGR, making it the 4th largest university in Spain. This university community has turned Granada, with its 240,000 inhabitants, into a vibrant and cosmopolitan city.

Every year, an additional 8,000 students enrol on complementary courses, language courses, and continuous learning and summer courses, alongside approximately 60,000 students who complete online courses with our University, reflecting the vast scope of the UGR's influence in the higher education sector.

This year, over 47,000 undergraduate students will be enrolled on our 89 bachelor's degrees at the UGR, with a further 5000+ students set to enrol on our master's degrees. The UGR has also increased the scope of its postgraduate offerings for the academic year 2019-2020, which now include over 100 master's degrees and 28 doctoral programmes. As a result, we currently offer one of the most extensive and diverse ranges of higher education programmes in Spain.





A high-ranking university

The UGR is recognised internationally for its quality in higher education, teaching, research and outreach. National and international rankings reflect the UGR's position among the top universities in Spain and among the best in the world.

In 2020, the University of Granada has further consolidated this dominant position – taking 4th place in Spain and featuring among the global top 300 universities in the world in the recently published Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU 2020).

Viewed from the perspective of its performance in specific academic subjects, the UGR has also set a

new record, with 3 UGR subjects featuring among the global top 50 and a staggering 35 subjects featuring in the 2020 ARWU. In total, five UGR subjects feature among the world top 100, marking another significant milestone. Particularly noteworthy are the University's achievements in the subjects of Library & Information Sciences (32th worldwide); Food Science & Technology (36th worldwide); Mining and Mineral Engineering (global top 76-100), Hospitality & Tourism Management (global top 76-100); and Mathematics (global top 76-100).

The state-of-the-art Health Sciences Technology Park (PTS) University Campus, which houses the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine, offers a cutting-edge combination of teaching, research, healthcare and knowledge transfer, and is a significant example of the University's commitment to innovation, as well as to promoting local and global partnerships with the public and the private sectors.





An international and multicultural university

Once again, this year the UGR maintain its position as the most popular destination among European exchange students (Erasmus+). For over a decade, our university has consistently received more incoming international students than any other European institution. We also continue to send more students abroad on Erasmus+ exchange programmes than any other European university. During the 2019-2020 academic year, more than 2,600 new exchange students from over 70 countries will complete studies at the UGR, thanks to the diverse range of mobility programmes on offer at our institution. Collectively, the UGR participates in more than 800+ international bilateral and multilateral exchange agreements with institutions around the world.



Furthermore, approximately 10% of those enrolled on our undergraduate programmes, 20% of our master's students, and 30% of our doctoral candidates are international students. They also have the opportunity to learn Spanish and other languages alongside the 8,000 local and international students who enrol each year in courses offered by the UGR's Modern Languages Centre (CLM), Confucius Institute (Chinese), and "Russkiy Mir" Russian Centre. We are a founding member of the international Coimbra Group, an association of European universities at the forefront of higher education. We are also a member of a vast array of other prestigious international networks, such as the European University Association (EUA), the Iberoamerican University Association for Postgraduate Studies (AUIP), the International Association of Universities (IAU), the European Association for International Education (EAIE), and the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA).

Likewise, since 2018 the UGR is part of the Arqus European University Alliance (ARQUS), a multilateral alliance of internationalized institutions who share



academic, scientific and cultural objectives, a common vision of the role of higher education and research and mutual fields of interest. The ARQUS brings together the universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Padova and Vilnius, seven longstanding comprehensive research universities with deep regional engagement in medium-sized cities. The Alliance's name stems from the Latin term arcus/arquus, for arch, representing the strong foundations the consortium is laying for building bridges toward a shared future, to respond to the grand global societal challenges and to advance towards deeper European integration.



arQus
European University Alliance





9. About Granada

Granada is a lively city giving rise to the development of a modern, multicultural and vibrant city with a rich history and with a large university community (over 80,000 people). If there is a city that truly evokes the essence of Spain, that city is Granada. Cross-roads of civilizations since time immemorial and in an unparalleled location, Granada is a vibrant, friendly and lively metropolis that is full of culture. The Alhambra, the flagship of the city's vast historical heritage, stands on a hilltop overlooking a city that attracts around three million visitors every year.





Granada, capital of the province of the same name, is in south-eastern Spain, in the autonomous region of Andalusia. Traditionally, it was the capital of High Andalusia, or eastern Andalusia, which comprised the provinces of Jaen, Granada and Almería, as opposed to Lower Andalusia or western Andalusia. In addition to being the traditional capital, Granada is the judicial capital of Andalusia, as the home of the High Court of Justice of the autonomous region.

Granada is a city that will captivate all your senses: your sense of sight with its impressive monuments such as the Alhambra, the Cathedral and the stunning landscapes seen from the viewpoint of San Nicolás; your sense of smell with its jasmine blossom scented streets in the Albaicín district; your sense of hearing with the flamenco celebrations of the Sacromonte; your sense of touch when you cast your hand over the ancient stones of the buildings; your sense of taste when you try the delicious local dishes. Granada is a city of kings, which has to be experienced.

In addition to the provincial capital and the region of Granada, there are a number of towns historically linked to the city of the Alhambra. These towns share its rich heritage and are located in the town's so-called green belt, surrounded by carefully tended gardens and green spaces. Some municipalities have played a crucial role in world history and culture, such as Santa Fe, a town created by the Catholic Kings to besiege Granada and where the Capitulations for the discovery of the Americas were signed by Christopher Columbus. Another example is Fuente Vaqueros, the birthplace of Federico García Lorca, one of the most important Spanish poets and playwrights.





10. Conference Programme

Wednesday 14th April 2021

18:30
(Madrid time, UTC+2)
CMC2020 Inauguration

Welcome speech
Lucia Porcu and Salvador del Barrio (co-Chairs)
Philip J. Kitchen (CMC Founder)
Dorothy Kelly (Vice-Rector for Internationalization)

Live Virtual Tour
The Secrets of the Alhambra

Thursday 15th April 2021

9:00 – 9:30
(Madrid time, UTC+2)
Welcome Note
Lucia Porcu, Salvador del Barrio, Philip J. Kitchen

9:30-10:30
(Madrid time, UTC+2)
Keynote Speech
Enrique Bigné (University of Valencia, Spain)
Integrated Marketing Communication Measures: Research Directions. IMCM



10:30–11:30
(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session A1. Session Chair: Yioula Melanthiou

Track: Consumer journey

1. The evaluation of the consumer journey through omni-channel integration: A proposal of indicators (Mariola Palazón, Manuela López, Inés López, María Sicilia)
2. The Customer Never Forgets: The Role of Past Service Experience on Consumer's Switching to New Services Offered by the Same Service Provider (Noah Bell and Zev Bronstein)
3. Understanding the concept of time for food wellbeing (Saadet Meltem Hut, Danae Manika, Savvas Papagiannidis, Josephine Go Jefferies)
4. The effect of integrating Augmented Reality to Omni-channel Retailing and Its Impact on Customers Shopping Experience (Tandy Christoforou, Yioula Melanthiou and Ioanna Papasolomou)

10:30–11:30
(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session A2. Session Chair: Dorit Zimand-Sheiner

Track: Corporate Communications and Sponsorship

1. "Together we stand!" Why do brand communities support authentic sponsors? An experimental investigation (Debashree Roy, Debasis Pradhan and Tapas Ranjan Moharana)
2. The role of office atmospherics on enhancing internal marketing effectiveness in fulfilling job satisfaction: an application to the shipping industry (George Panigyrakis, Pantelitsa Yerimou, and Evdoxia Kyriacou)
3. The LW from the marketing perspective: analyzing its impact on the consumer response (Carlos Guerrero, Myriam Martínez-Fiestas and María Isabel Viedma)
4. Disruptions of Public Relations in the Digital Age (Dorit Zimand-Sheiner and Tamar Lahav)

11:30–12:00
(Madrid time, UTC+2)
Break



12:00–13:00
(Madrid time, UTC+2)
Keynote Speech

Oliver Walker, Head of Commercial and Strategy (Analytics), Merkle, UK
What is the formula to deliver omni-channel communications?

13:00–14:00
(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session B1. Session Chair: Ioanna Papasolomou

Track: Social Media

1. To follow the leader...or not: Influencer-product-follower congruence on Instagram (Daniel Belanche, Luis V. Casaló, Marta Flavián-Lázaro, and Sergio Ibáñez-Sánchez)
2. The impact of Social Media News on Halal Food Purchase Intentions in non-Muslim country: Evidence from the UK (Khaled Ibrahim, Ahmed Shaalan and Marwa Tourky)
3. Generations X and Y and Their Brand Exposure through Social Media: The Impact of Bloggers (Anastasia Boldurchidi, Yioula Melanthiou and Ioanna Papasolomou)

14:00–15:30
(Madrid time, UTC+2)
Break

15:30–16:30
(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session C1. Session Chair: Sabine Einwiller

Track: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

1. Review Online Ratings: An Analysis of Product Attributes and Competitive Environment (Manuel Sánchez Pérez, María D. Illescas Manzano and Sergio Martínez-Puertas)
2. The bigger the better: Understanding the moderating role of firm size in eWOM processes in the hospitality industry (Daniel Ruiz -Equihua, Luis V. Casaló, Jaime Romero)
3. Customer dissatisfaction as an antecedent of online complaints' desires: An ambivalent story (Wolfgang Weitzl, Clemens Hutzinger and Sabine Einwiller)

15:30–16:30

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session C2. Session Chair: Juan Miguel Alcántara Pilar

Track: Media Channels

1. Is streaming killing or saving the cinema? An exploratory study (Athanasios Poulis, Davide Melidoro, Anastasios Panopoulos and Andreas Andronikidis)
2. What television series interest viewers? Identification of general trends (Álvaro J. Rojas Lamorena, Salvador del Barrio García and Juan Miguel Alcántara Pilar)
3. “The Largest Digital Migration in History?”: #WearedeletingWhatsApp versus #WearenotdeletingWhatsApp WhatsApp Privacy Policy Crisis in Turkey, Brand Trust and Reaction of Users (Burcu Oksuz and T. Serra Gorpe)

Friday 16th April 2021

9:30–10:30

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session D1. Session Chair: George Panigyrakis

Track: Branding

1. Formation of customer-based Brand Equity via authenticity: the mediating role of utilitarian attitude and the moderating role of restaurant type (María Eugenia Rodríguez-López, Salvador del Barrio-García and Juan Miguel Alcántara-Pilar)
2. Effects of Fan Identification and Brand Collision on Perceived Value in a celebrity endorsement context (Manuel Cuadrado, Eduardo Fons-D’Ocon and María José Miquel)
3. Building a country brand through sustainability: the case of Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt (George Panigyrakis, Katerina Papakonstantinou, Pantelitsa Yerimou and Eirini Koronaki)



9:30–10:30

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session D2. Session Chair: Teodoro Luque

Track: Advertising

1. Are podcast advertisements effective? An emerging economy perspective (Subhalakshmi Bezbaruah and Kuldeep Brahmabhatt)
2. The effect of racial diversity in advertising on luxury and masstige brands (Caroline S.L. Tan)
3. Attitudinal and viral effects of a high emotional cause-related marketing ad. An integrative international approach (Elísabet Mora, Natalia Vila and Inés Küster)

10:30–11:00

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Break

11:00–12:00

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Keynote Speech

Sabine Einwiller

(University of Vienna, Austria)

Content-based strategic communication and corporate newsrooms: How companies are trying to make their communications function more agile

12:00–13:00

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session E1. Session Chair: Ana Isabel Polo Peña

Track: Marketing Communications and Consumer Behaviour

1. Examining the informational and affective processing of co-creative consumer experiences with the private label brands: A study from the perspective of consumer engagement within the context of retailing in United Kingdom (Gulbin Durmaz, TC Melewar, Athina Dilmperi and Charles Dennis)
2. The impact of Chatbot adoption on brand image, customer experience and engagement in Singapore Banking Sector: A Qualitative Study (Ahmed Shaalan, Marwa Tourky and Lim Sok Hoon)
3. Unveiling the drivers and outcomes of IMC capability: Insights from Consumer Market Companies in Pakistan (Ayaz Ahmad, Salniza Md. Salleh, Selvan AL Permul, Lucia Porcu and Wisal Ahmad)



12:00–13:00

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session E2. Session Chair: Carlos Flavián

Track: Online Communications

1. Neural Insights on the influence of hedonic and utilitarian web layouts on consumer value and choice (Luis-Alberto Casado-Aranda, Juan Sánchez and Ana-Belén Bastidas Manzano)
2. Online media channel choice for CSR communication (Andrea Pérez and María del Mar García de los Salmones)
3. Exploring users' responses towards Face Filters: Implications for social media and brands (Carlos Flavián, Sergio Ibáñez Sánchez and Carlos Orús)

13:00–15:00

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Break

15:00–16:00

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Session F. Session Chair: Philip J. Kitchen

Track: Integrated Marketing Communication

1. Examining the Integrated Marketing Communication research corpus: a co-word analysis approach (Lucia Porcu, Salvador del Barrio García and Francisco J. Muñoz Leiva)
2. Luxury brand and integrated Marketing Communication: towards a research agenda (Antigone G. Kyrousi, Eirini Koronaki, and Athina Y. Zotou)
3. Integrated Marketing Communications: Multi-Applicatory Models and a Judgement Call for 21st Century Practice (Philip Kitchen)

16:15–18:00

(Madrid time, UTC+2)

Awards Announcement and Closing ceremony

Tribute to Professor Don E. Schultz – In memoriam



11. Competitive papers



Competitive papers

The Customer Never Forgets: The Role of Past Service Experience on Consumer's Switching to New Services Offered by the Same Service Provider

Noah Bell^a, Zev Bronstein^b

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Keywords: *Services Marketing, Advertising, Continuous Competitive Services, Past Experience, Service Switching, Switching Intent, Consumer Behavior*

Broadband networks have enabled service providers to offer a growing variety of competitive services to consumers. In contrast to the past, when providers offered singular services (traditional telephone operators offered services in parallel to cable television and cellular providers), providers today intend to grow by allocating fixed costs across a range of diversified services. The result is that consumers are increasingly exposed to different services advertised by the same provider. Due to network convergence, service providers have started to offer service bundles, including combinations of services such as mobile communications, data, mobile television, and home internet services. Worldwide, many mobile service providers have launched their services to compete with traditional TV providers that deliver via cable or satellite. T-Mobile, Sling TV, and AT&T have all launched content streaming, and there are over a dozen streaming options with different capabilities and features just in the US (Moore & Albanesius, 2019). Since 2011, Netflix alone has grown from 21 million to 158 million subscribers (Watson, 2019).

This study aims to analyze the influence of past experience with a service provider on consumers' behavior when they are later offered a new and different competitive service by the same provider.

The consumer's past experience with the service provider can be seen as the "takeaway" impression formed in the past when the customer encountered products, services, and businesses, it's a perception produced when humans consolidate sensory information (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994). The introduction of a new service, mobile [internet]

television, to the market by Partner, a traditional cellular provider in Israel, was an opportunity to launch the current study. We expected consumers to use the competitive introductory offer as an opportunity to switch providers. This study aims to analyze the influence of past experiences that customers had with Partner's cellular service on their future switching intentions and switching behavior following the launching of Partner TV services.

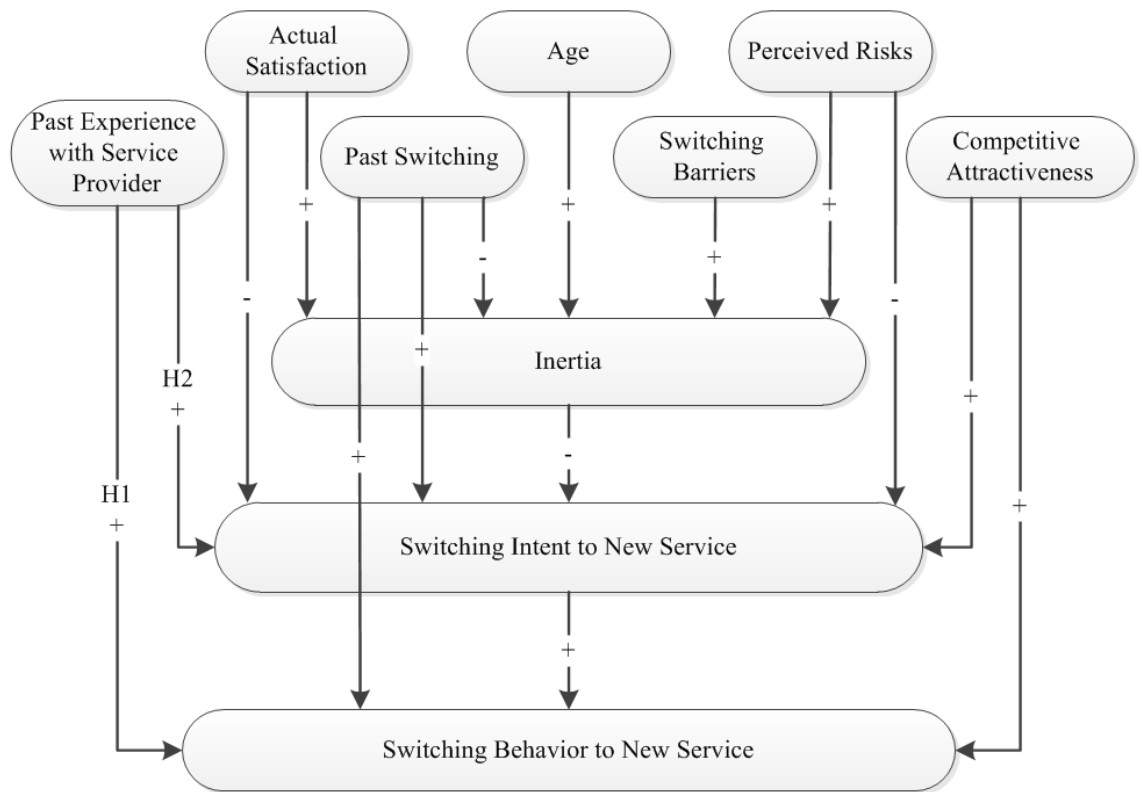
There is extensive literature in the field of consumer switching behavior. Customer satisfaction is an important factor in consumer switching in the mobile market (Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangin, 2015). The influence of switching barriers (Roos et al., 2004), switching costs (Lee, Lee, & Feick, 2001), as well as inertia as an inhibitor of switching behavior are also discussed (Carter, Gray, D'Alessandro, & Johnson, 2016). The influence of past experience with voice and SMS services in cellular services on consumers' switching intentions (Ojiaku & Osarenkhoe, 2018) and differences between drivers of switching intent and switching behavior in the mobile industry (Wirtz, Xiao, Chiang, & Malhotra, 2014) were also analyzed. An important caveat to previous studies that used switching intention as a proxy for actual switching behavior is that it may be a weaker predictor than commonly believed (Morwitz, 2014). For this reason, this study analyzes the influence of the consumer's past experience in the context of the actual switching of service providers.

We suggest a conceptual model (Figure 1) that describes relationships among the following constructs: inertia, switching intent, actual switching behavior and influencing factors, namely consumer satisfaction with current service, switching barriers, the perceived attractiveness of competitive offerings, and consumers' past experience (with a previous and different service by the same provider). In addition to hypotheses related to relationships between constructs and variables in the model, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Positive past experience with the previous service has a positive relationship with the switching to a newly offered service by the same provider.

H2: Positive past experience with the previous service has a positive relationship with the intent to switch to a newly offered service by the same provider.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



Data to test these hypotheses were collected online using a panel of respondents. To analyze consumers' behavior over time, data were collected in several rounds over a period of 20 months. Respondents were approached with an initial questionnaire in two rounds and were approached again with a second questionnaire to check switching behavior in four consecutive rounds. Out of 946 respondents that were initially approached, only 802 respondents completed the two questionnaires. After screening rejected questionnaires, the model was tested empirically with four groups of respondents: past users of Partner mobile services (n=369), current Partner mobile customers (n=154), respondents who had never used Partner mobile services (n=264), and all respondents together (n=787). Exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation and reliability analysis (using SPSS v.25) were performed for the purpose of data reduction and to test the items.

Using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM, SmartPLS ver.3), most of the research hypotheses related to the relationships presented in the model are accepted. The model was tested in all four scenarios. Next, the past service experience construct is added to the model, with switching to the new service (offered by the same provider, TV) as the dependent variable, allowing the acceptance of hypotheses H1, H2.

While assessing the model, we compare the f^2 effect size of past service experience on switching intent and actual switching (Hair et al., 2017). Our findings suggest that past service experience has a small effect size on switching intent and actual switching behavior while having a greater effect on switching behavior than switching intent.

This study has both theoretical and practical implications. Its theoretical contribution is the proposed consumer behavior model analyzing the influence of past service experience with the previous service on switching to a new service offered by the same provider. In practice, our model facilitates the development of marketing strategies for practitioners of continuous competitive services when considering segmentation and positioning decisions. Service providers interested in encouraging a switch to their brand with a new service should take advantage of the positive experience customers had with their previous service as satisfied past customers were found to be the fastest to react positively to an advertisement announcing the launched of the new product.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Effects of Fan Identification and Brand Collision on Perceived Value in a celebrity endorsement context

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Keywords: *Endorsement, fan identification, perceived value, brand collision, sport sponsorship, sports celebrity*

Sponsorship has grown constantly for 30 years reaching €55 billion worldwide in 2017 (IEG, 2018). Sport represents 70% of this expending and sports like football hoard the most of investment from commercial brands, given the number of followers it has (Sawe, 2018). Thus, athletes are people of public recognition and most of them are considered to be celebrities appearing to be the focus of brands, which seek to be promoted when endorsed in such athletes (Elberse & Verleun, 2012). Endorsement is then becoming an important tool in marketing communications (Badenhausen, 2017). Some athletes make much more money from commercial deals than from their wages (Roberts, 2014), as golfer Tiger woods (€8.4 million from salaries and €42 million from advertising) and tennis player Roger Federer (€6.3 million and €65 million from advertising) (Forbes, 2018). Athletes competing alone will be the direct target of brands. However, when competing in a team, brands will go to them but also to the team (Sport Business, 2017). In football, it is common to see celebrities sponsored by brands different to their teams' ones, triggering undesirable reactions in fans/consumers (Mowen & Brown, 1981).

In this context, the goal of the present study is to analyze the effect of the fan identification with the team and the celebrity on perceived value of the endorsement and of the endorsed brand. Given the positive effects perceived value has on satisfaction (Crompton & MacKay, 1989), brand attitude (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002), and

Purchase Intentions (Grewal, Krishnan, Baker & Borin, 1998), it becomes necessary to understand what antecedents can foster or erode perceived value. Besides, we are interested in filling a gap in previous research by finding out the effect that brand collision (the athlete has an endorsed brand different from the one sponsoring his team) has on consumer responses to the considered constructs of the model. Results aim to guide marketers of endorsing brands when selecting celebrities and football teams.

Fan identification with a group affects all the members of that club or group, as Wann and Branscombe (1995) defended when developing the Social Identification Theory from Tajfel and Turner (1979). According to them, individuals tend to identify themselves with reference groups, and they tend to emphasize the positive aspects of the group and to minimize the negative ones. Accordingly, we can set that (H1) there is a positive relationship between Fan Identification with the team and fan identification with the celebrity.

Moreover, according to Kwon, Trail and James (2007), we can set that there is a positive relationship between fan identification with the team and perceived value of the endorsement (H2) and a positive relationship between fan identification with the celebrity and perceived value of the endorsement (H3). Sweeney and Soutar (2001) consider the perceived value of the endorsement as a multidimensional construct based on four dimensions: quality, price, social and emotional. The present work follows this conceptualization. Taking all this into consideration and following the Image Transfer Theory (Gwinner, 1997) and the Affective Transfer Theory (Pracejus, 2004), we propose that perceived value of the endorsement has a positive effect on perceived value of the endorser brand (H4).

Besides, according to Zajonc (1968)'s Mere Exposure Theory, it can be expected that, just by repeatedly watching a player with the sponsored brand of his/her team, consumers may tend to relate the player with this brand, then being confused, triggering negative brand evaluations (Mowen & Brown, 1981). We can set that brand collision exerts a negative moderating effect between fan identification with the team and perceived value of the endorsement (H4), between fan identification with the celebrity and perceived value of the endorsement (H5), and between perceived value of the endorsement and perceived value of the endorsed brand (H6).

As for methodology, an empirical study through an online research addressed to football followers of the Spanish league (LaLiga) was done. Specifically, 324 individuals

answered the questionnaire. All of them were supporters from three football clubs with players with the same endorsed brand as their club's and players with a different endorsed brand from the one sponsoring their club. All the scales used to measure the constructs were adapted to the endorsement context. Perceived value was assessed in a formative way following Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff (2003)'s recommendations, and the whole structural equation model was analysed throughout Smart PLS 3.0. Every respondent evaluated two players, one in brand collision with the team's sponsor and one without brand collision. Thus, a multisampling analysis was performed in regard to the effect of brand collision on the considered constructs, so as to see the differences between the two subsamples.

Results support some hypotheses. Fan identification with the team has a positive effect on fan identification with the celebrity. Both have a positive effect on perceived value of the endorsement. The multisampling analysis shows that brand collision exerts a negative moderating effect between Fan Identification with the celebrity and perceived value of the endorsement, while fan identification with the team has a positive one. However, no significant effects of brand collision were found between perceived value of the endorsement and the endorsed brand.

Accordingly, marketers, in order to promote their brands, should not only invest in notorious athletes but also in communicating the endorsement to highly identified fans so as to trigger positive reactions in terms of perceived value. In addition, choosing players with no brand collision would be advisable in order to avoid value erosion.

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Neural insights on the influence of hedonic and utilitarian web layouts on consumer value and choice

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Keywords: *hedonic, utilitarian, web layout, neuroimage, price premium*

In recent years, e-commerce has grown dramatically. In 2019, retail e-commerce sales worldwide amounted to \$3.5 trillion and e-retail revenues are projected to grow to \$4.92 trillion in 2021 (Statistica, 2020). These figures have an even more impact in Spain (the country of the current research), the fourth best online seller in Europe where 70% of the users purchase on the online market place (eShopWorld, 2018). If in 2014 only 44% of Spanish bought on the online channel, in 2018 these figures rose to 71% (IAB, 2019). What is more, 67% of Spanish purchased products online in 2018 even though they were also offered in physical stores (IAB, 2019).

Despite the enormous growth of e-commerce, many consumers still do not achieve satisfactory experiences in the online shopping process. The lack of privacy, security, trust and the perceived risk in the web environment are the main areas that consumers have identified as dissuasive forces in their intentions and online purchases (Mohd Suki & Mohd Suki, 2015). These limitations justify the need for research to improve the understanding of the factors that affect consumer evaluations during their online purchase decision.

Traditional advertising and placement literature considered the interpersonal relationship between a consumer and the product / service as one of the key elements in the formation of consumer attitudes that impact their behavior. In the online channel, in turn, physical interpersonal interactions have been replaced by technology and electronic interaction,

and attitudes and behaviors are influenced by the characteristics of web design. In a literature review, Rose, Hair, and Clark (2011) concluded that the signals and characteristics of the web environment constitute inputs that directly affect purchasing decisions. Studies exploring website design effectiveness coincide in considering two different types of website elements influencing purchase (Bilgihan & Bujisic (2015) o Chiu, Wang, Fang, y Huang, (2014):

- Utilitarian or computer elements, which provide a direct, functional, convenient and informative support to the transactional process, e.g., a clear structure of the web, lots of product information, delivery dates, reliable seal or privacy policy.
- Hedonic or human elements, that promote enjoyment, visual experience and interactivity by the consumer, such as animated advertising, colors, avatars, social networks or icons.

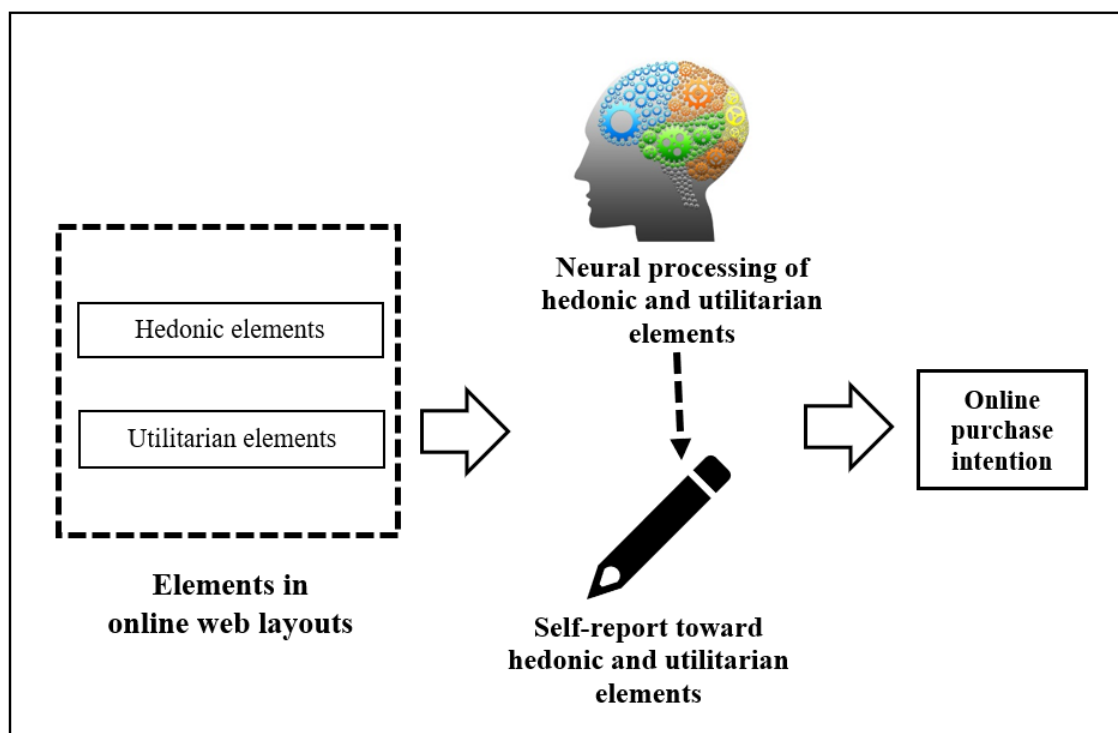
Studies, using self-reports, have identified differences between one and other types of elements. The research implemented by Rosen and Purinton (2004) showed that sensory stimuli, such as hedonic ones, play a crucial role in facilitating usability and promoting repeated purchases. Hausman and Siekpe (2009) found that while hedonic factors are crucial to the entertainment and perceived usefulness of the web, utilities affect the information capacity and usability of the web to a greater extent. Bilgihan and Bujisic (2015) concluded that both hedonic and utilitarian factors are indispensable for building trust in the online system and loyalty. More specifically, those authors reveal that hedonic elements are crucial in building affective commitment on the part of the consumer. The utilitarian factors, on the other hand, are crucial in developing a calculating commitment in the user, defined as the intention to continue the relationship with the company, but considering the costs and lack of alternatives.

Despite traditional techniques (surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews) are able to evaluate preferences, attitudes and intentions toward products inserted in utilitarian or hedonic web environments, they are nonetheless insufficient to assess implicit processes leading to buy products in such purchase contexts (Casado-Aranda, Sánchez-Fernández & Ibáñez-Zapata, 2020). The application of neuroscience to communication and purchase environments (so-called **consumer neuroscience**) constitutes a recent avenue to improve the generalization of models of behavior, evaluate responses in real time and provide

insight into the mechanisms leading to purchase, and by extension, the design of effective web layouts (Ramsøy, 2019).

This study precisely makes use of a neuroimaging technique, namely the functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), to monitor neurocognitive responses to utilitarian and hedonic website purchase environments. Particularly, the current research's main goal intends to propose efficient guidelines of website design, by including elements that provide a great neural value, trust and reward to consumers while purchasing in the online marketplace. This general objective is specified in the following sub-objectives: (i) analyzing the emotional, cognitive and attention processes involved in online purchases, as well as exploring the existence of a functional specificity in the brain for this typology of behavior; (ii) determining the most efficient web design alternatives to promote online shopping intent by means of the neural differences between hedonic and utilitarian layouts; and (iii) comparing whether there is congruence or inconsistency between the subjective data obtained through the survey method with other more objective, edge-cutting data using brain activity through fMRI.

Figure 1. Model of neural and self-reported evaluation of elements in online purchase environments



To this end, various intra-laboratory experiments will be developed to 30 regular Spanish users of online retailers while exposing to 40 hedonic and 40 utilitarian (previously tested) purchase environments. Simultaneously, we will record their brain activity caused by these stimuli through a system of Functional Magnetic Resonance (fMRI). In addition, traditional questionnaires will be used through surveys, in order to triangulate the results obtained with neuroimaging tests.

The findings of this project will allow us to give a step forward in solving a current issue affecting the field of online placement, namely, the improvement of the online consumer shopping experience, as we will provide insight into the most rewarding and trustee online purchase environment from the neural perspective. This is an original avenue as no other article has previously examined the neural mechanisms triggered by different online purchase environments, namely hedonic or utilitarian ones.

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The Effect of Integrating Augmented Reality to Omni-Channel Retailing and Its Impact on Customers Shopping Experience

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Keywords: *channel, Marketing, Retailing, Augmented Reality, Shopping Experience*

The constant transformation in the customers shopping experience in retail is phenomenal as it saw a dramatic difference over the last decade (Christiaans, 2016). The current retailing trend is known as ‘retail 4.0’. This technique requires a seamless unification of all the digital and offline channels, by providing to the consumers the freedom to choose the ways they prefer to interact with the retailer. This was the explosion of the phenomenon known as Omni-channel retailing (Lee, 2016). This alteration in retailing both online and offline is largely responsible due to the rapid technological advancements (Moorhouse et al., 2017; Y. Lee & Cheon, 2019) and specifically to the innovative technology known as augmented reality (AR), which according to Bonetti et al., (2017), can be defined as a method ‘to combine real and computer-generated digital information into the user’s view of the physical world in such a way they appear as one environment’. AR brings together the virtual and real world by utilising images, texts, and videos to the consumer’s sight of physical setting in real time (Cruz et al., 2018).

As stressed by Perannagari & Chakrabarti (2019), further research is essential in exploring the different ways that Augmented Reality would be integrated into an organization’s Omni-channel retailing strategy. As an Omni-channel strategy provides an all-in experience to the consumers and blurs the lines between online and offline worlds (Y. Lee & Cheon, 2019), (AR) can be described as the ideal link between these online and offline channels as it embeds digital content into the customer’s physical environment, being interactive and in real time (Hilken et al., 2018). In other words, AR

application thins the breach between online and offline shopping (Iftikhan, Pourzolfaghar, Helfert, 2019), as a result, retailers utilize AR by implementing it within the ‘brick and mortar’, by installing in-store technology for instance; AR virtual mirrors gives to the consumers an immersive, pleasant and memorable experience. Sephora introduced this technology in the physical stores and consumers through this technology can see what they would look like wearing, for example, different kinds of make-up (Christoforou & Melanthiou, 2019). Mister Spex, provides an AR virtual mirror where customers can experience virtually different glasses by trying them on from their online assortment (Iftikhan, Pourzolfaghar, Helfert, 2019).

The biggest challenging component is for retailers to overcome the implementation process of AR. Further research is required to understand the ways customers experience AR, in order for companies to overcome the process of designing AR applications (Perannagari & Chakrabarti, 2019). Retailers should focus on supporting their customers throughout their shopping experience and develop and design the AR application according to the customers shopping behaviour and preferences. Further to this, brands need to take advantage of the existing brand–customer interaction through Smartphone’s, as well as to recognize customers’ preferences to personalize the customers shopping experience using new technologies (Mosquera, Olarte-Pascual, Juaneda Ayensa, & Sierra Murillo, 2018).

According to Bonetti et al. (2019), by installing in-store AR, showed that the customers experience within the store had an increase in brand perception thus leading to an increase in brand engagement. Further, the authors stressed that future research is needed in exploring whether consumers would spend more time in store due to an enhanced overall experience. Retailers can put into practise promotions that boost the participation of customers by employing AR applications, for example, Blippar apps which are utilized in mobiles to expose objects by just pointing the mobile to the products. Plentiful virtual information that is relevant to tangible products will emerge on the mobiles display as if the viewer would be in a fantasy world. Consequently, customers will be encouraged to download AR applications that enhance reality along with promotions

For the purpose of this study, qualitative research is proposed to further understand customers’ shopping experience. The method to be employed thus answering research questions is the use of two sets of focus groups; heterogeneous in nature, in other words,

consisting of consumers of both genders in the ages of 22-37 years old who are in the Millennials generation. Research questions were set, but will not be limited to:

RQ1: Would the addition of augmented reality in the ‘brick and mortar’ drive the customers to spend more time in the store or enhance the customers overall shopping experience?

RQ2: What are the possible ways of implementing augmented reality in the physical world in an Omni-channel retailing strategy?

The findings are expected to reveal the influence that in-store AR will have on customers overall shopping experience, as well as showing the relationship that AR and Omni-channel retailing have. In addition to this, solutions could possibly be presented for the current challenges that retailers face in implementing AR correctly in ‘brick and mortar’ stores, taking into consideration customers’ shopping behaviour and preferences.

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Generations X and Y and Their Brand Exposure through Social Media: The Impact of Bloggers

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Keywords: *Generations X and Y, bloggers, social media, brand engagement*

The new era of online marketing emphasizes the importance of word-of-mouth and user-generated content within social media platforms for both brands and businesses. Arguably, social media advertisements are often ineffective especially when compared with personal brand experiences shared among consumers in social media platforms. Businesses increasingly rely on the influence of bloggers and other influencers in an effort to enhance the degree of consumers' engagement with their brands. However, a number of factors need to be considered when using non-media connectors such as bloggers for example, the influencer's target audience (followers) as well as, the audience's demographic and psychographic characteristics impacting on their purchase behaviour.

The study's overarching aim is to explore the attitudinal and perceptual differences of Generation X and Y consumers in relation to the use of social media and the impact of social media advertisements and blogs on their brand purchase decisions.

There is a rich body of literature on the use of online and social media marketing by businesses. The key advantage of creating online marketing campaigns for businesses is to reduce consumer search costs and lead them to efficient purchasing decisions (Hong-Youl, 2002). Purchase decisions involve a certain degree of perceived risk. Consumers are usually uncertain about the products or services they purchase and they carefully evaluate the possible positive and negative consequences of the purchase. Hong-Youl (2002) and Tan (1999) claim that word-of-mouth communication reduces consumer risk perceptions more than any other information related to the product in the digital

purchasing process. Consumers rely on online word-of-mouth communication as a form of shared consumer experience, which tends to be the strongest influence on product evaluation. However, Burgess et al. (2011) stated that the majority of UGC designed to review or to expose brands online comes from the mix of amateurs, semi-professionals, and professionals. There are several examples of unprofessional brand exposure and paid manipulation of the review process by consumers for example, businesses pay for the positive brand comments or delete the negative ones (China Daily, 2010).

Several studies support that favorable purchase behavior is stimulated by the perceived level of source credibility (Metzger et. al., 2003; Kerstetter and Cho, 2004). Xie et. al. (2001) stipulated that the perceived source credibility of online User Generated Content (UGC) has a significant impact on consumers' purchase behaviour. In a study carried out by Park, et.al., (2007) UGC is perceived to be more credible and trustworthy by consumers than the information provided by suppliers.

In the past two decades, researchers have studied the influence of UGC on building a positive brand image. These studies emphasized primarily the effectiveness of online word-of-mouth communication and UGC, the characteristics of UGC and its impact on users (Berger and Milkman, 2012), the tendency of consumers to generate UGC (Blazevic, Wiertz, Cotte, De Ruyter, and Keeling, 2014), and the way in which UGC is related to brand storytelling (Gensler, Völckner, LiuThompkins, and Wiertz (2013). However, there is a lack of information related to the impact of UGC on continuous purchase brand behavior. The study of Malthouse et. al. (2016), revealed that the improvements in UGC elaboration have a direct relation to the behavioral response. On the contrary, the UGC by itself does not influence the purchasing behavior unless people put cognitive efforts while interacting with the content. Consequently, UGC may establish a positive brand image with favorable perceptions and attitudes towards the brand, but in order to enhance continuous purchase behavior, organizations should take into consideration the degree of UGC elaboration and the extent to which users interact with the content online. Thus, the research conducted by Malthouse et. al. (2016) states that marketers and opinion leaders should create more complex ways of interaction and utilization of the incentives, which people may receive as a reward for interacting with a brand.

The research approach used in the present study was the deductive methodology according to which, the hypotheses are derived from the existing theory on a specific

topic (Wilson, 2010). This approach builds on the use of quantitative methods, which were used in the present study, in order to examine causal relationships between the two age groups and their attitudes towards UGC and online brand exposure. Data was collected using a questionnaire distributed online on Facebook Russian Community Groups. A total of 36 and 30 completed questionnaires were collected from Generation Y and X consumers, respectively.

Several interesting findings emerged from the study. Some of these are presented in this extended abstract. Generation X consumers are primarily skeptical, and less price sensitive. They prefer to buy customized products for their family, home and children. The findings of the research revealed that the Generation X consumers spend less time during the day in using social media. It is important that managers analyze the consumers' daily usage of online activity to enable them to schedule their social media activity, such as posting brand content and relate it to this group's interests. The majority of people aged between 39-54 tend to use Facebook as their primary social media platform. There is also an increased usage of YouTube among this specific generation group. Businesses targeting this group should primarily focus on Facebook and YouTube. Although generation X consumers are aware of various influencers and sometimes tend to rely on online reviews, the 2nd hypothesis confirmed that they value user-generated content less than branded advertising. Therefore, it is important that organizations launch both advertising campaigns through Facebook Ad Manager and Google Adwords, as well as cooperate with bloggers. The 4th hypothesis that stated that Generation X consumers hold positive perceptions about those bloggers who advertise brands, is rejected since the majority of consumers within the cohort hold neutral or sometimes negative perceptions.

Generation Y consumers tend to rely heavily on online reviews when buying technologies. Businesses targeting this group can use paid advertising in blogs that focuses on the "opening" content. This kind of content represents the person who opens the box with the new product and makes an in-depth review about it. In targeting generation Y consumers businesses should take into consideration their perceptions towards bloggers and their role in promoting brands. The study revealed that generation Y consumers hold negative or neutral perceptions regarding those bloggers who are getting paid for promoting brands. Businesses should carefully examine how the blogger's audience reacts to various advertisements.

The study's findings revealed that Generation Y consumers value UGC content more than Generation X consumers, especially when it comes to buying technology products. Generation Y consumers are tending to use YouTube mostly for inspiration and entertainment, whilst, generation X consumers tend to be less influenced by bloggers in their purchase decisions and brand engagement. In general, the study has several managerial implications mostly relating to the selection and use of appropriate social media tools such as blogs, YouTube, based on the key characteristics and preferences of each generation group. Even though the study's primary limitation is its small sample, its findings revealed some interesting relationships between the two generation groups and the use of social media tools which should be explored in future research studies.

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What television series interest viewers? Identification of general trends

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Keywords: *TV series, Trend analysis, Longitudinal analysis, Google Trends, Dinamic factor analysis*

Thanks to the universal access and the population towards television this medium is still today, the 'King' of media (Jardine, Romaniuk, Dawes and Beal 2016). Evidence displays, the number of daily minutes on television consumption, per person/day stood at 247 minutes in January 2019 (Barlovento Comunicación, 2019). However, the television sector is undergoing major changes as a result of technological advances linked to the development of the Internet (Quintas-Froufe, 2018; Wayne, 2017). Thus, the phenomenon of content and digitalization has created a rather diffuse border between traditional and digital television platforms through the Internet (Dhoest and Simons, 2016). The Internet has played an essential role in the clear expansion of the leading television sector, affecting the consumption of the mediums, and causing an increase of supply to television channels worldwide in a significant way and facilitating the distribution of audiovisual products (Duarte-Hueros, Duarte-Hueros and Ruano - López, 2016; Gjoni, 2017). This allows the viewer to adopt a much more active role; interacting, sharing and controlling reproduction, as well as generating opinions and content (Nandakumar and Murray, 2014). This development has led to a generation in large amounts of data, that without a doubt comprises a vast source of information with enormous academic and business value (Jun, Yoo and Choi, 2018).

The development of the Internet and its massive use by consumers as a common source of information allows companies to track their behavior much easier (Du, Hu and Damangir, 2015; Du and Kamakura, 2012), by in order to understand the social changes

that are taking place in society and to be able to make predictions about their future behavior (Jun et al., 2018). In this sense, the prediction of the audience of the television series is of interest to television networks and advertisers, since they will be able to guide their efforts based on these predictions. This predictive activity is developed by consulting individual indicators of Internet search engine, searches that are archived for consultation, such as Google Trends (Clipp, 2011; Du et al., 2015; Du and Kamakura, 2012). From a marketing perspective, there are works that propose Google search as a step prior to the consumption of a certain product (Dotson et al., 2017; Jun et al., 2018). Consumers try to maximize their satisfaction by reducing uncertainty, participating in an active search for information on the Internet (Jun et al., 2018). Based on this assumption, it is possible to consider that the volume of searches serves as an indicator of consumer interest in the products or brands sought (Lehmann, 2016).

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to know the interest generated by television series in viewers, examining what type of series developed greater interest on the Internet, specifically analysing the evolution of the interests of American viewers of various drama series between 2015 and 2017. To achieve this objective, we will use Dynamic Factor Analysis (DFA), a tool for the analysis of longitudinal mass data that will allow us to analyze the interests of viewers in the television series through a series of common trends.

To meet the objective of our work, Google Trends was used as a source of obtaining trends in a television series search. Prior to data collection, an analysis of websites specialised in television series such as IMDB and Rotten Tomatoes was performed to select those television series related to the genres (action, crime, detective, police, medical, historical, adolescent, science fiction and fantasy), issued between 2015 and 2017 in the US. Finally, 34 cases of series originating in the United States were selected that met the broadcasting requirement during those years. Therefore, had a higher average score on these websites specialised in television series (See Table 1). For this, we use as a search terms << television series / television program >> in order to be able to make comparisons between equivalent terms, thus avoiding searches of similar terms but referring to other categories. DFA makes it possible to reduce all the information contained in the weekly search data over the 2 years of the 34 series selected in a few common trends. The decision on the optimal number of trends to be extracted is made according to information criteria such as the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), selecting that solution of common trends that does not entail an overfit (Du and

Kamakura, 2012). In our case, after the application of the technique, 9 factors arose that represented a percentage of variance explained for each television series between 27.2% and 92.3% (See table 2). The interpretation is similar to that of the exploratory factor analysis, being the series that present the greatest loads in a factor those that represent similar behaviors in terms of the search behavior on the part of the individuals, and also taking into account the R2 of each series of TV as an indicator of how well it is represented in the factorial solution.

Table 1. Evolution of US search data for the selected series (2015 - 2017).

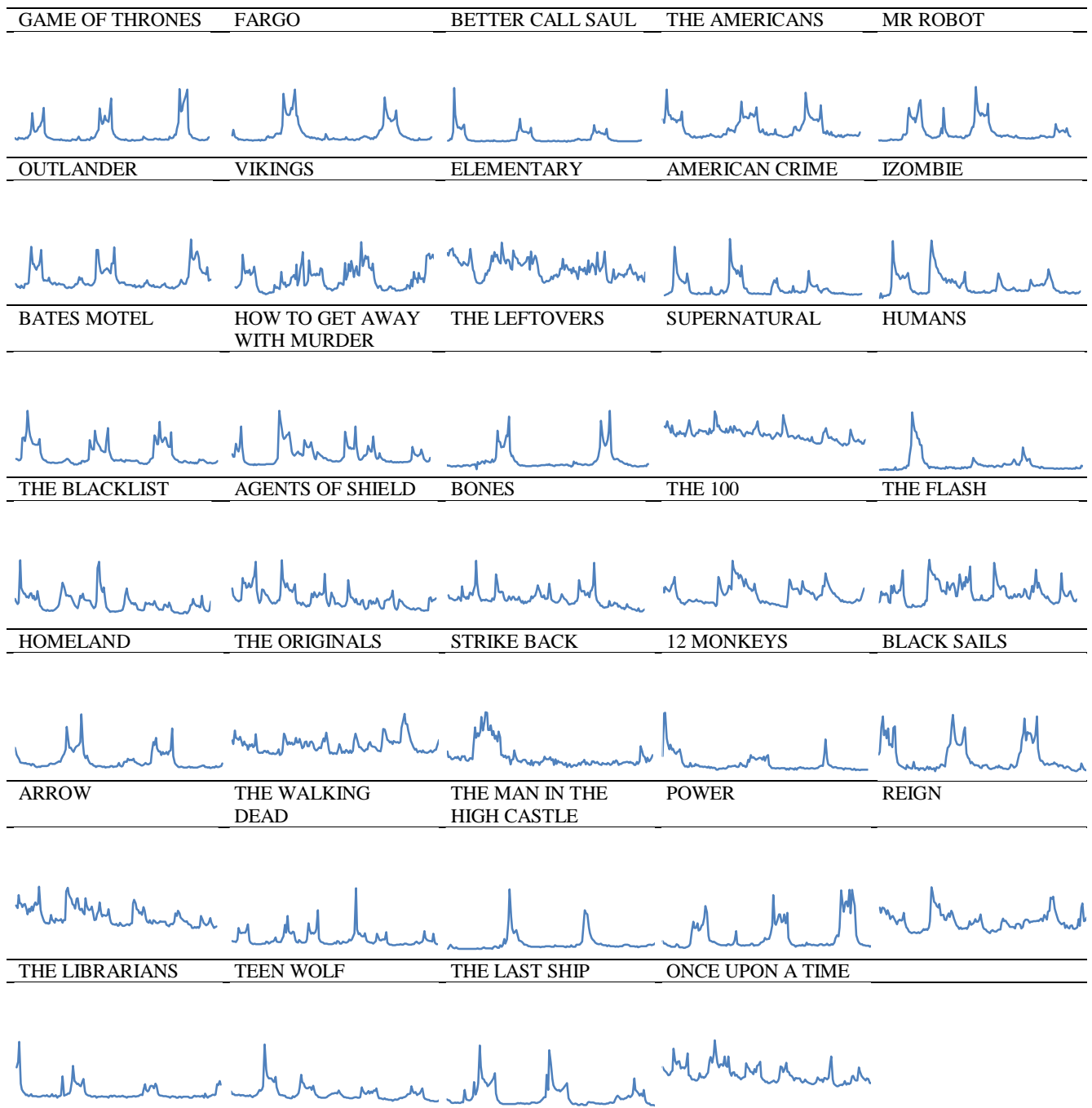


Table 2. Latent factorial loads and explained variance percentages.

| TV series | R ² | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 | F6 | F7 | F8 | F9 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Game of Thrones | .63 | .07 | -.15 | .15 | -.82 | -.37 | .01 | .07 | .28 | .11 |
| Fargo | .92 | .12 | -.23 | -.91 | .11 | -.13 | .00 | .02 | .00 | .06 |
| Better Call Saul | .60 | -.09 | .56 | -.01 | .09 | .05 | -.27 | -.10 | -.41 | .17 |
| The Americans | .82 | .07 | .86 | -.10 | .01 | -.03 | .09 | -.01 | -.03 | -.30 |
| Mr. Robot | .51 | -.20 | -.35 | .15 | .03 | .57 | -.03 | -.06 | -.01 | -.27 |
| Outlander | .37 | .34 | -.03 | .33 | -.13 | -.31 | -.13 | -.04 | -.11 | -.26 |
| Vikings | .68 | -.04 | -.01 | .42 | .58 | -.29 | .00 | -.10 | -.23 | .27 |
| Elementary | .72 | .65 | .40 | -.11 | .33 | -.34 | .15 | .01 | -.05 | .12 |
| American Crime | .53 | -.02 | .40 | .20 | .11 | .03 | -.43 | -.03 | -.07 | .61 |
| iZombie | .77 | .71 | -.04 | -.37 | -.08 | -.52 | -.24 | .35 | .27 | .55 |
| Bates Motel | .82 | .30 | .84 | .22 | .02 | -.08 | -.42 | -.15 | .16 | .13 |
| How to Get Away with Murder | .43 | .48 | .11 | -.03 | .46 | -.26 | .07 | .01 | .13 | .13 |
| The Leftovers | .84 | .12 | -.21 | -.94 | .12 | -.07 | -.09 | .03 | -.12 | -.12 |
| Supernatural | .87 | .69 | .25 | -.33 | .28 | .05 | .43 | .68 | .06 | -.10 |
| Humans | .83 | -.46 | .01 | -.06 | .03 | 1.10 | -.06 | .18 | .12 | -.20 |
| The Blacklist | .56 | .78 | .40 | .09 | .30 | -.36 | .01 | .02 | -.05 | -.01 |
| Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. | .61 | .99 | .15 | -.07 | -.01 | -.34 | -.11 | .02 | .16 | .04 |
| Bones | .70 | .63 | .32 | .05 | -.23 | -.01 | .10 | .06 | .83 | .03 |
| The 100 | .68 | -.52 | .50 | -.15 | .21 | .19 | .06 | .28 | -.15 | .46 |
| The Flash | .94 | .72 | .35 | -.57 | .52 | -.57 | .10 | .75 | -.01 | -.04 |
| Homeland | .84 | .26 | -.08 | -.27 | .13 | -.03 | .26 | -.20 | .63 | .20 |
| The Originals | .63 | .01 | .17 | -.40 | -.36 | -.44 | .21 | .33 | .23 | .38 |
| Strike Back | .86 | .01 | -.30 | -.02 | -.10 | .82 | -.06 | -.09 | -.02 | -.08 |
| 12 Monkeys | .84 | .04 | .42 | -.05 | -.19 | .04 | .60 | .05 | -.23 | -.31 |
| Black Sails | .86 | -.31 | .77 | .18 | .07 | .23 | .05 | -.02 | .21 | .41 |
| Arrow | .92 | .69 | .28 | -.35 | .30 | -.30 | .30 | .60 | -.01 | .27 |
| The Walking Dead | .32 | .34 | .22 | .02 | .44 | -.16 | -.08 | .23 | -.07 | .22 |
| The Man in the High Castle | .49 | -.18 | -.23 | -.19 | .24 | -.06 | .24 | -.04 | .26 | .24 |
| Power | .66 | -.42 | -.52 | .09 | -.74 | .08 | -.04 | -.03 | .16 | .21 |
| Reign | .70 | .25 | -.05 | -.46 | -.24 | -.58 | .33 | .25 | .14 | .38 |
| The Librarians | .76 | -.05 | -.20 | -.11 | .07 | -.06 | .82 | -.07 | .10 | .01 |
| Teen Wolf | .76 | -.55 | -.09 | .11 | -.10 | .98 | .01 | .21 | .03 | .27 |
| The Last Ship | .70 | -.15 | -.26 | .06 | -.45 | .55 | .02 | -.02 | .06 | -.37 |
| Once Upon a Time | .74 | .98 | .07 | -.04 | .24 | -.31 | -.15 | -.19 | -.09 | -.03 |

Note: In bold those higher values for each TV series and which determines the factor to which it is associated.

The detailed analysis of the results revealed the following set of TV series trends (see table 3 and figure 1).

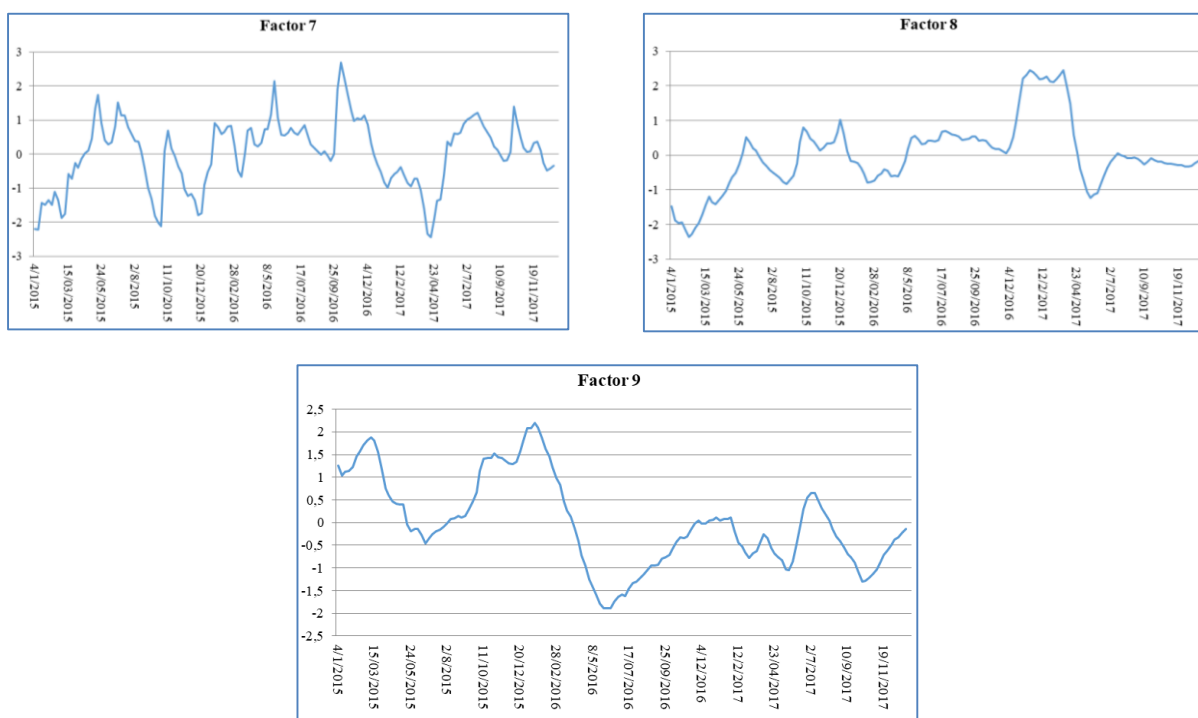
Table 3: Trends obtained.

| Nº | Name Factor | TV Series included | Characteristics | Behavior |
|----|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| 1 | Investigators – open TV | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elementary - How to get away with murder - The Blacklist - IZombie - Supernatural - Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D - The 100 - Arrow - Once upon a time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open Broadcasting - Criminal genre - Fantasy and science fiction genres based on solving a mystery or crime. | Descending in general, with small peaks and valleys. |
| 2 | Crime – by Cable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better call Saul - The Americans - Bates motel - Black sails | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broadcast by cable - Criminal genre | More seasonal character, with wide climbs and steep valleys. |
| 3 | Crime/Fantasy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fargo - The Leftovers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criminal and Fantasy genres | Clearly seasonal, with drastic falls, producing deep valleys with negative peaks. |
| 4 | Great TV series | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Game of Thrones - Vikings - The Walking Dead - Power | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Science Fiction - Incorporation of historical elements - More than 5 seasons of emission - Large audience worldwide (Nielsen, 2017). - Criminal genre incorporation with Power. | Seasonal behavior with increasing tendency |
| 5 | Science Fiction/fantasy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Robot - Humans - The Originals - Strike Back - Reign - Teen Wolf - The Last Ship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broadcast in open or basic cable - Science Fiction or Fantasy - Characteristics of teenage series | Decreasing behavior despite being made up of series aimed primarily at teenagers. |
| 6 | Science Fiction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 monkeys - The Librarians | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broadcast by basic cable. - Science Fiction genre - Similar episode duration | Virtually linear behavior, with small increases and decreases. |
| 7 | The Flash | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Flash | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Science fiction / action - Broadcast in open | Seasonal behavior associated with the issuance of seasons. |

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| | | | | Some instability with numerous search peaks. |
| 8 | Crime/Science Fiction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bones - Homeland - The man in the high castle | - Criminal and Science Fiction Genre | Unstable behavior with wide ups and downs. |
| 9 | American Crime | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American Crime | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criminal genre - Broadcast in open | Stable behavior, with wide fall after the end of the season in early 2016. |

Figure 1. Latent trends in search behavior.





In the audiovisual sector, the launch of new television series entails large monetary investments and, in turn, influences negotiations on the costs associated with the inclusion of advertising by other companies. In this sense, the information provided by various services such as Google Trends has important business implications, since it enables rapid detection and evaluation of different marketing activities related to television series. Consequently, the analysis carried out in this investigation highlights the interest of the audience in the different television options, showing those series that gain interest among the audiences and which lose their attention. This implies important implications for negotiations with advertisers, since the advertising companies will want to include their advertising in those television series that generate greater interest among the viewers, since the audiences are those that make up the popularity of the different audiovisual products (Fukushima et al., 2016).

The data analysis has shown that the interest of TV series viewers is not homogeneous or evolves in the same way over time, but there are different trends in the search for the series. Thus, we have verified how television series based on investigations of criminal cases or mysteries, broadcast on the open, are losing interest on the part of viewers in the U.S., while those broadcast on cable have a more cyclical behavior. We have also observed that television series belonging to cable television and science fiction / fantasy

TVs are gaining interest from the audience, compared to the “teenagers” series that increasingly cause fewer searches.

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Formation of customer-based *Brand Equity* via authenticity: the mediating role of utilitarian attitude and the moderating role of restaurant type.

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Keywords: *authenticity, Brand equity, utilitarian attitude, restaurants, moderated mediation.*

Currently, restaurants play a key business role in gastronomic tourism (Rolim et al., 2018). On the other hand, from the point of view of marketing, the value of the brand is defined as the set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add or subtract the value of a product or service and which has as its objective identification and differentiation of goods and services from those of the competition (Aaker, 1991). Given all this, it is observed that there are many questions to be resolved about how customers form the value of the brand of a restaurant after their gastronomic experience in it (Rodríguez-López et al., 2020).

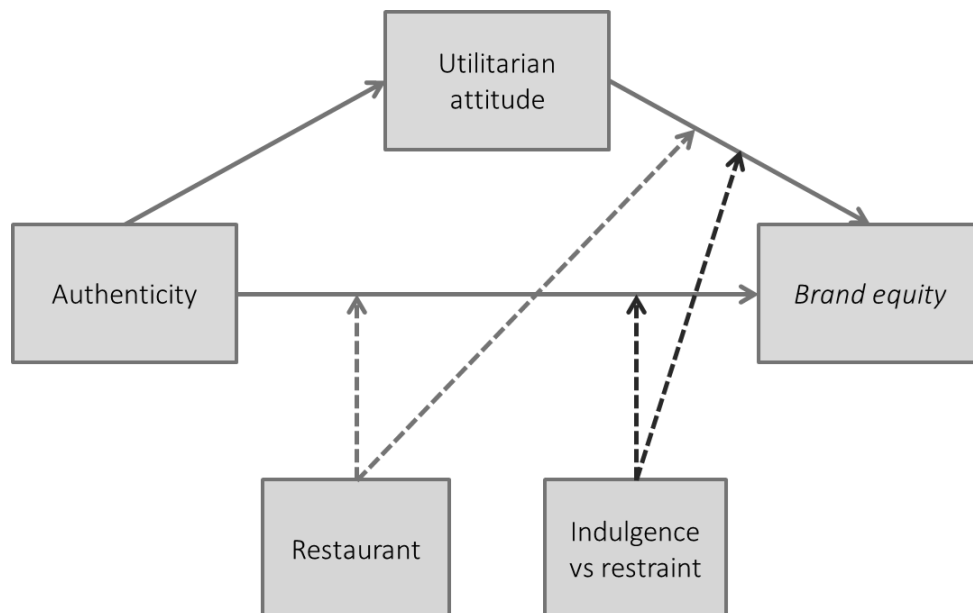
Therefore, the main objective of this work is to analyze the process of forming brand value in restaurants from the customer's perspective. More specifically, it is analyzed to what extent the degree of authenticity perceived by the restaurant's client determines directly, and indirectly, through the utilitarian attitude of the client (Hwang and Ok, 2013), the formation of the restaurant's equity brand (Liu et al., 2018). All this taking into account the possible moderating effect that the type of restaurant (medium-scale and moderate-high scale) has in this process, as well as the moderating effect of the culture of the individual in terms of indulgence (Viberg and Grönlund, 2013).

For the collection of data, a questionnaire was administered by the diners at the end of their gastronomic experience in the two selected restaurants. Finally, 540 valid responses

were obtained, of which 290 belong to the medium-scale restaurant, and 250 to the moderate-high-scale restaurant.

A Moderate Mediation Model has been proposed using the PROCESS software (Hayes, 2018) (see figure 1). The variables used were the following: the independent variable is the authenticity perceived by the client, the dependent variable is brand equity, the mediating variable is the utilitarian attitude of the client and the moderating variables are on the one hand the type of restaurant (1 = medium-scale restaurant, 2 = moderate-high-scale restaurant), and on the other hand the indulgence cultural dimension (low, medium and high).

Figure 1. Conceptual model for the formation of the proposed Brand equity.



The results show the existence of a direct and significant effect of authenticity (X) on brand equity (Y) (see table 1), which means that as the perception of authenticity increases by the client, the greater the Brand equity formation of the restaurant, confirming H1. It also shows the direct and positive effect of authenticity on the utilitarian attitude, which indicates that the greater the perceived authenticity, the greater the utilitarian attitude experienced by the client, allowing H3 to be confirmed (see table 2). Similarly, the positive and direct effect of the utilitarian attitude (M) on brand equity (Y) is also observed (see table 1), which allows confirming H2 and approving the mediating effect of the utilitarian attitude between authenticity and Brand equity.

Table 1. Moderate mediation analysis. Variable result: Brand equity.

| Efect | Coef. | SE | t-value | p-value | 95% CI |
|--|---------|------|---------|---------|---------------|
| Constant | 5,85 | 0,04 | 127,99 | 0,00 | 5,76 – 5,94 |
| Authenticity (X) | 0,43** | 0,04 | 9,06 | 0,00 | 0,33 – 0,52 |
| Utilitarian attitude (M) | 0,21** | 0,04 | 5,06 | 0,00 | 0,12 – 0,29 |
| Indulgence (W) | 0,15 | 0,04 | 3,87 | 0,00 | 0,07 – 0,23 |
| Restaurant type (Z) | -0,16* | 0,08 | -1,84 | 0,06 | -0,33 – 0,01 |
| X*W | -0,09** | 0,04 | -1,99 | 0,04 | -0,18 – -0,00 |
| M*W | 0,07** | 0,02 | 2,46 | 0,01 | 0,01 – 0,13 |
| X*Z | 0,37** | 0,09 | 3,99 | 0,00 | 0,18 – 0,55 |
| M*Z | -0,38** | 0,07 | -4,80 | 0,00 | -0,54 – -0,22 |
| Model fit: R-cuadrado: 0,44; F: 53,15; df1: 8; df2: 531; p-value: 0,00 | | | | | |

Table 2. Moderate mediation analysis. Variable result: utilitarian attitude.

| Efect | Coef. | SE | t-value | p-value | 95% CI |
|--|--------|------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Constant | 0,00 | 0,05 | 0,00 | 1,00 | -0,11 – 0,11 |
| Authenticity (X) | 0,76** | 0,07 | 9,92 | 0,00 | 0,61 – 0,91 |
| Model fit: R-cuadrado: 0,15; F: 98,42; df1: 1; df2: 538; p-value: 0,00 | | | | | |

The four resulting interactions in the model by restaurant and by level of leniency allow us to confirm the hypotheses H1a, H2a, H1b, H2b, and are translated as follows: the increase in Brand equity as a result of the authenticity perceived by the client, is more pronounced in the restaurant of moderate-high scale, in which before a decrease of the authenticity perceived by the client, the penalty in brand equity would be much greater than in the restaurant of medium scale (see figure 2). On the other hand, low-lenient customers (more restrictive) are the ones that generate the most brand equity from the authenticity they perceive, and those that similarly penalize the restaurant's brand equity, given a decrease in authenticity. And in general, the greatest increases in brand equity derived from the authenticity perceived by the client, will occur in low-indulgence customers of the restaurant of moderate-high scale (see figure 2).

Then, the increase in brand equity from the utilitarian attitude, occurs only in the medium-scale restaurant, and within this, it is the most lenient customers who would most penalize Brand equity for a decrease in their utilitarian attitude. In the restaurant of moderate-high scale, only low-lenient customers would start generating brand equity in the face of a decrease in the utilitarian attitude (see figure 3).

Figure 2. Interaction effect between authenticity and Brand equity by type of restaurant and by level of indulgence.

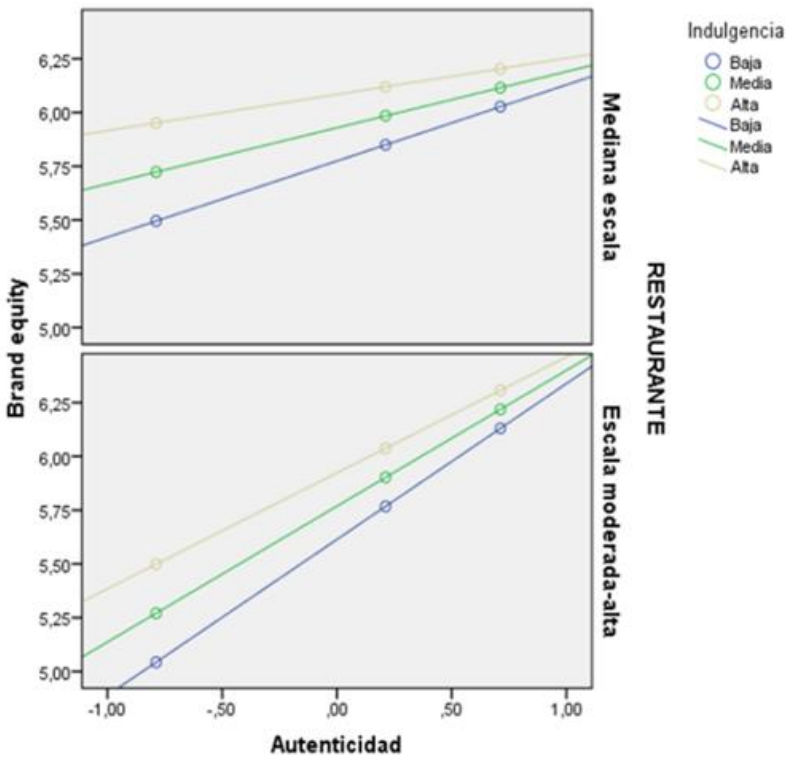
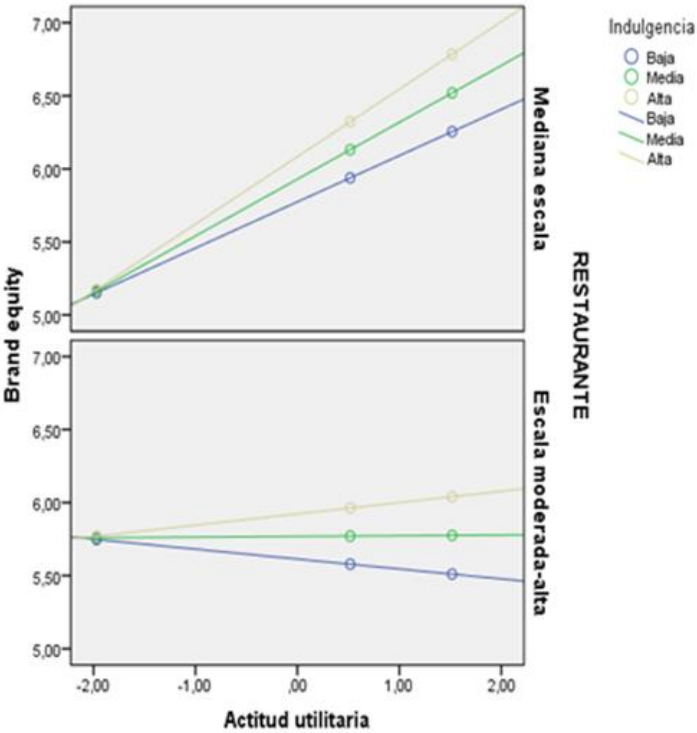


Figure 3. Interaction effect between utilitarian attitude and Brand equity by type of restaurant and by level of indulgence.



The analysis of the effects of direct and indirect conditions indicates that the effect of authenticity on brand equity is significant in both restaurants and for a low and medium level of indulgence. While for a high level of indulgence, this effect will only be significant in the restaurant of moderate-high scale (see table 3). On the other hand, the indirect conditioned effect of authenticity on brand equity through the utilitarian attitude mediator variable is significant for all levels of indulgence but only in the medium-scale restaurant, that is, that the utilitarian attitude does not play a role. mediator between authenticity and brand equity when it comes to the restaurant of moderate-high scale.

Table 3. Conditional direct and indirect effects.

| Conditional direct effects | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------|------|--------------|
| Indulgence | Restaurant type | Effect | SE | 95% CI |
| Low | Midscale | 0,35** | 0,08 | 0,19 – 0,51 |
| | Moderate-high scale | 0,72** | 0,06 | 0,59 – 0,85 |
| Medium | Midscale | 0,26** | 0,07 | 0,12–0,40 |
| | Moderate-high scale | 0,63** | 0,06 | 0,51–0,75 |
| High | Midscale | 0,16 | 0,08 | -0,00–0,33 |
| | Moderate-high scale | 0,53** | 0,08 | 0,37–0,70 |
| Conditional indirect effects Authenticity → Utilitarian attitude → <i>Brand equity</i> | | | | |
| Indulgence | Tipo de restaurante | Effect | SE | 95% CI |
| Low | Midscale | 0,24** | 0,07 | 0,11 – 0,39 |
| | Moderate-high scale | -0,05 | 0,03 | -0,12 – 0,01 |
| Medium | Midscale | 0,29** | 0,06 | 0,18 – 0,43 |
| | Moderate-high scale | 0,00 | 0,02 | -0,05 – 0,05 |
| High | Midscale | 0,35** | 0,06 | 0,22– 0,49 |
| | Moderate-high scale | 0,05 | 0,03 | -0,02 – 0,13 |

A main conclusion that is drawn is that brand equity reaches very high levels in general with customers who are very forgiving, and when they also perceive the authenticity of the restaurant. But this only happens in the restaurant of moderate-high scale. Clients of medium and low indulgence do generate brand equity the more authenticity they perceive, for both types of restaurants.

In relation to the practical or management implications, restaurant managers are recommended that if customers are very forgiving such as Mexicans or Colombians (Hofstede-insights, 2019), efforts at the high-scale restaurant should focus in generating authenticity to be perceived by this type of customers. Customers with a medium indulgence, such as the English, also value authenticity in a large-scale and medium-scale restaurant. And to those who are very restrictive like the Italians and Portuguese, they

have to reduce their feelings of usefulness to make them understand that the experience in the high-scale restaurant is a fun and exciting hedonic experience.

The originality of this work is that to date there is no empirical evidence that demonstrates the possible moderating effect of the type of restaurant in the formation of brand equity, and methodologically there are few studies that in the field of restaurants have used the analysis of moderate mediation regression.

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Examining the informational and affective processing of co-creating consumer experiences with the private label brands:

A study from the perspective of consumer engagement within the context of retailing in United Kingdom

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Keywords: *consumer engagement, private label brands, information processing, affective processing, consumer psychology, co-creating brand experiences.*

The rise of private label brands can be considered as a significant milestone in the history of retailing and has received substantial attention from research companies (Nielsen, 2017, 2019; PLMA, 2019; IRI, 2019). In Europe, growth in these brands has been very dramatic over the past decade (Nielsen, 2019). According to the latest research conducted for PLMA's 2019 International Private Label Yearbook, market share for private labels stands at 30% or more in 17 European countries (PLMA, 2019). Research also suggests that "private label brand share has remained above 40% in the UK since Nielsen began compiling data for PLMA in 1997" (PLMA, 2019). These brands have seen rapid growth in the retail industry across all product categories (Chakraborty, 2014). The IRI Consumer Connect Survey (2019) reveals that "private brand dollar sales grew 3.8% in 2019, twice the rate of national brands". The results also indicate that consumers are seeking better value in private brands, not just better price (IRI, 2019). According to an intriguing report by Eddie Yoon, consumers who are heavy purchasers of private label brands have positive strong emotions and a deep level of pride towards these brands and the retailer concerned (Yoon, 2015).

The literature on private label brands shows that researchers have predominantly investigated consumer perceptions of private label characteristics, intention to purchase

private label brands, and the effects of consumer-level factors on private label brands (Glynn and Chen, 2009; Rubio et al., 2017; Verhoef et al., 2010); while little is known about the level of consumer cognitive processing and psychological factors, which are considered as intangible attributes rather than from a functional perspective (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2014). Considering the increasing importance of private label brands and their market share in the fast-moving consumer goods industry (Goldsmith et al., 2010; Sutton-Brady et al., 2017), it is essential to grasp consumers' cognitive and affective processing towards private label brands with respect to the concept of consumer engagement (Shukla et al., 2013; Delgado-Ballester et al., 2014).

Private label brands defined as consisting of “merchandise produced and sold by a specific retailer or chain of retail stores” (Kumar and Steenkamp, 2007, p. 9). The current study adopts more broader definition of private label brands as “owned, produced and sold exclusively by a specific retailer or chain who is responsible from development, sourcing and warehousing to merchandising and marketing” (Baltas, 1997; Kumar and Steenkamp, 2007; Bushman, 1993; Dhar and Hoch, 1997).

In modern multifaceted and interactive business atmosphere, consumers follow a non-linear route to the brands with which they engage, with different levels of communication on multiple and/or across channels (Brodie et al., 2011). This increasing interaction has been explored through different constructs and phenomena in the field of marketing in order to develop a clearer understanding of the relationship between consumers and brands. Over the past decade, there has been a greater focus on consumer engagement in branding and relationship marketing (Bowden, 2009; De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Dessart et al., 2015). Consumer engagement is a complex phenomenon with multiple definitions depending on the context, and entailing various dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011), such as emotional, cognitive and behavioural. It is defined as “the level of individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by a specific level of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in brand interactions” (Hollebeek, 2011a, p 790). It is also defined as “the intensity of an individual's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and activities initiated by either the customer or the organization” (Vivek et al., 2012, p.133). Amid the many definitions and dimensions given in the literature for consumer engagement, all theorists seem to agree that it is subject to various factors, particularly considering the rapid expansion of communication technologies.

The present study has four objectives. First, it investigates the degree of consumers' elaboration about private label brands, and the impacts of cognitive processing on consumer engagement with private label brands. Second, it examines consumers' affective processing of private label brands, in order to comprehend the psychological attributes of consumer engagement. Third, it investigates the influence of prior knowledge, consumer perceptions and consumer-level moderators (e.g., consumers' retail brand awareness) on consumer engagement process. Finally, it explores the antecedents and consequences of co-creative brand experiences for private label brands.

Taking into consideration of discussed above, the main research question is '*To what extent do cognitive and psychological processing affect co-creating private label brands experiences and consumer engagement with private label brands and in turn, influencing brand trust and sustainable competitive advantage?*'

H1: Involvement has a positive effect on co-creating PLB experience.

H2: Perceived risk has a positive effect on co-creating PLB experience.

H3a: Brand image has a positive effect on co-creating PLB experience.

H3b: Corporate image has a positive effect on co-creating PLB experience.

H3c: Store image has a positive effect on co-creating PLB experience.

H4: Perceived emotional value has positive influence on co-creating PLB experience.

H5: Emotional satisfaction has a positive influence on co-creating PLB experience.

H6: Co-creating PLB experience significantly correlates consumer engagement towards PLB

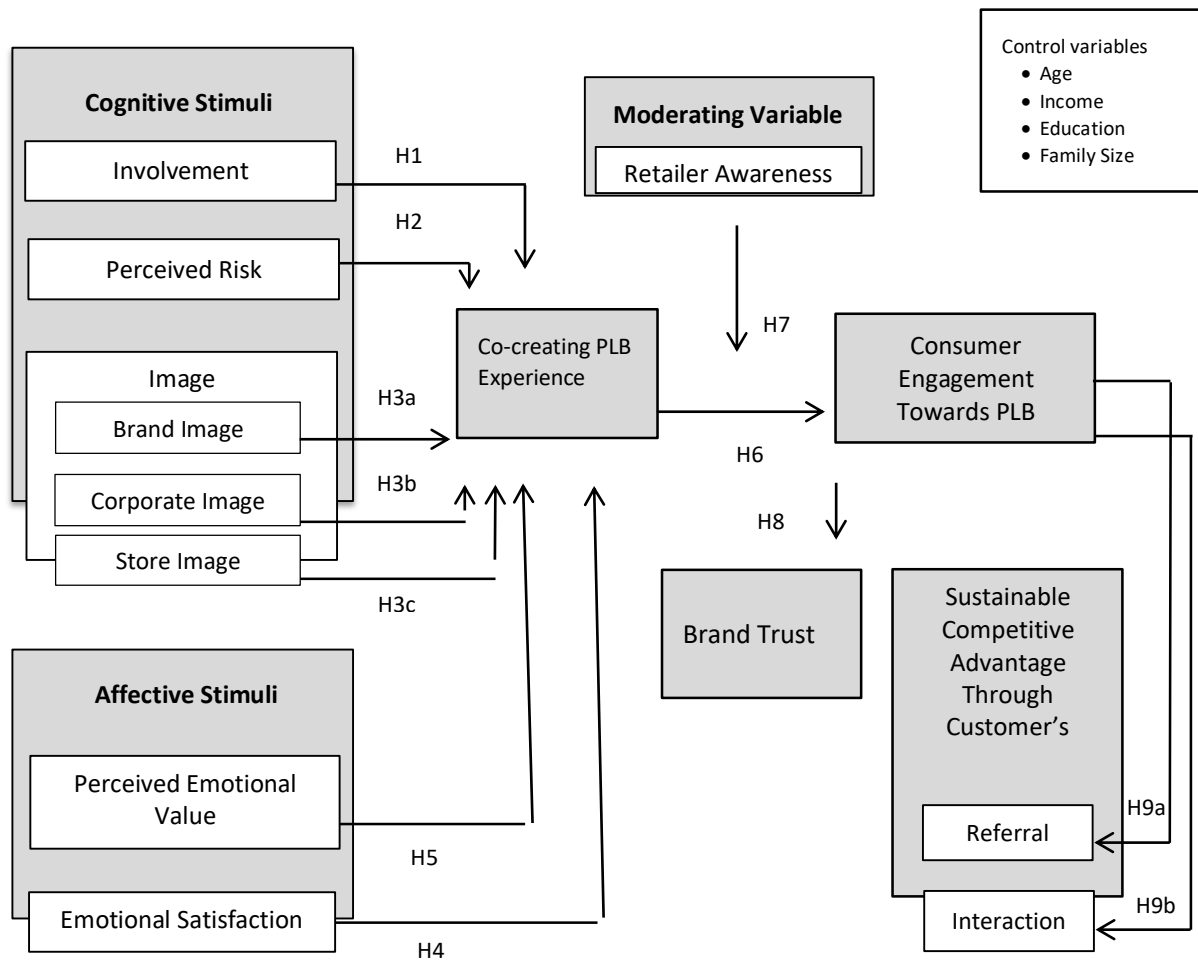
H7: Consumers' retailer awareness moderates the relationship between experience and engagement, such that there will be a positive relationship between experience and engagement when only awareness is high rather than low.

H8: Consumer engagement towards PLB positively influence on brand trust.

H9a: Consumer engagement towards PLB positively influence on sustainable competitive advantage through customer's referral.

H9b: Consumer engagement towards PLB positively influence on sustainable competitive advantage through customer's interaction.

Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework developed based on the literature review.



A mixed-method research design is proposed for the current study to investigate the complex and contemporary phenomenon of consumer engagement with private label brands. First phase, qualitative research will enable prior insights about the related phenomena to be gained. It will also allow an exploration of the variables, the development of a questionnaire and scale items, and the facilitation of the sampling of respondents for the quantitative method (Johnson et al., 2007). In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding from different aspects, the qualitative method will be dichotomised as a consumer-centric and managerial domain. First, the consumer-centric phase will be carried out by convening 8 focus groups, each with eight participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), second, in order to have a better understanding of the managerial domain, in-depth interviews will be conducted with managers who are responsible for customer relations. By this means, detailed information from retail managers will be gathered and will be used to test the reliability of the conceptual model, as well as developing the survey for the quantitative method.

After the qualitative phase, quantitative data will be collected for more prevalent findings. Thus, on the basis of the literature review and first stage of the research, and to ensure empirical and quantified results, a self-administered questionnaire will be developed to measure all the research constructs. The pilot study will be conducted to test the validity, consistency and reliability of the items. The study aims to achieve 500 questionnaire responses from individuals. Participants will indicate their responses according to their agreement or disagreement with each item on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Likert, 1932).

To assess the stability of the conceptual model, two retail brands (Tesco and Marks&Spencer) will be chosen. The reason for employing two different retail brands is the likelihood of having a different customer profiles for each retailer. The rationales of selecting these brands are two-fold; their market penetration and their positioning strategies (high-end or low-end). According to Kantar Media (2020), Tesco has highest grocery market share with %26.8 in UK and Marks&Spencer has a share of %3.1 of the UK's grocery market (Statistica, 2020). However, Marks&Spencer has been positioned as premium, modern, innovative and a high-end retailer claiming that with a tagline "quality worth paying more for" (grocer.co.uk, 2019). Examining the conceptual model with a premium retail brand and a retail brand that has highest market penetration will enable to investigate differences in income, age, education and family size of these two retailers may generate different statistics and outcomes. Furthermore, differentiation in cognitive and emotional processing might be observed based on various demographics.

This study will highlight the importance of gaining a broad understanding of customers' experiences and interactions with the brand and with other customers, in order to acquire engaged customers. It will therefore add to the academic body of knowledge on consumer engagement by examining the relationship between private label brands and their consumers. Studying consumer engagement with private label brands and investigating informational and affective processing by private label consumers will provide more accurate understanding of whether consumers adopt a utilitarian approach or are actively seeking and processing information and bonding with these brands emotionally. This study will reveal the impact of co-creating brand experiences within the context of private label brands and will provide a better understanding of the extent to which co-creating brand experiences generate sustainable competitive advantage. This research will also

respond to the Marketing Science Institute's (2018) call for further research into customer journeys, engagement drivers and rising to the new competitive challenge.

This study will make several managerial contributions by amalgamating existing knowledge on consumer engagement with executives' comments and customers' insights and perceptions, in order to investigate what makes them cognitively and affectively engaged in the context of private label brands. Consequently, it will offer a greater understanding of the causal relationship between private label brands and their customers, which will be derived from consumers' experiences and interactions. Focusing on the concept of brand awareness as a mediating effect will provide significant insights for companies and executives, enabling them to understand the extent to which higher or lower brand awareness moderates the relationship between customer experiences and their engagement. Therefore, this will be an appropriate avenue for discovering managerial applications of the concept and uncovering possible recipes for gaining more engaged customers and a greater level of brand trust.

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The bigger the better: Understanding the moderating role of firm size in eWOM processes in the hospitality industry

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Keywords: *Firm size, hospitality industry, eWOM, customer attitude, visiting intentions, valence.*

The unstoppable development of Internet has allowed consumers to access to an unimaginable quantity of information, much greater than ever before. This online information widespread led a new communication process, the so-called electronic word-of-mouth (hereafter eWOM). The eWOM communication is any positive or negative written expression about a product/service or company via the internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004), being online reviews a very relevant kind of eWOM and a crucial phenomenon for both managers and researchers.

Online consumer reviews thus become an essential source when looking for product-related information and, since their proliferation, consumers incorporate them to guide their purchase decisions (Cheung, Sia, & Kuan, 2012). Online reviews are particularly relevant in services industries, such as hospitality, due to service's intangibility (Casaló, Flavián, Guinalú, & Ekinci, 2015b; Nicolau & Sellers, 2010). As a result, consumers in the hospitality industry often search for online reviews to diminish their risk perception when purchasing hospitality services (Casaló, Flavián, Guinalú, & Ekinci, 2015a). In this respect, it is well-established that positive online reviews elicit more positive behaviors than negative ones (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). However, despite these traditional results, previous eWOM research mainly focused on big companies (e.g., Casaló, Flavián, Guinalú, & Ekinci, 2015a; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009) or sometimes they have not

taken into account company size (e.g., Chen & Lurie, 2013), leaving aside the small and medium enterprises (hereafter SMEs). This is quite surprising as, for example, SMEs in accommodation and food services represent the 89% of the companies in the European Union (Eurostat, 2019).

Therefore, this study contributes to previous literature in two ways: (1) by analyzing the impact of online reviews when they focus on SMEs, and (2) by evaluating whether this influence is similar or differs with regard to big hospitality companies. To do that, we analyze whether firm size moderates the influence of online review valence (positive vs. negative) in customer attitudes and visiting intentions in the hospitality industry. Specifically, this study is conducted in two hospitality settings (i.e. hotels and restaurants).

To test the research proposals, we developed a 2 (positive online review vs. negative online review) x 2 (SMEs vs. big firm) experimental research design, in two hospitality sectors: hotels and restaurants. Toluna, a market research company (<https://esus.toluna.com/#/>), assisted us in the data collection process. Finally, a series of ANOVAs were used to test the data. Specifically, 122 consumers participated for the case of hotels and 116 ones participated for the case of restaurants.

First of all, the results confirm that positive online reviews elicit for higher customer attitudes and visiting intentions than negative ones in both hospitality settings (hotels and restaurants), which is in line with previous literature as aforementioned (e.g., Casaló et al., 2015a; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). In addition, we observe that online review valence elicits for extremer consequences (i.e., more positive after reading a positive online review, and more negative after reading a negative online review) in big companies than in small ones for both business settings.

Attribution theory (Weiner, 1979, 1985) helps understand these results, as big companies usually have more standardized processes than SMEs, which results in the provision of more standardized services (Arias Aranda, 2002), so that the outcome of the service may be perceived as more stable. In turn, for SMEs, more inconsistent services may be expected (Arias Aranda, 2002), and the perceived result of a service may vary more among customers. Thus, the greater stability in the outcome for big companies may help consumers to produce more accurate expectations about the service, reducing risk perceptions and reinforcing the effect of online review valence. The research developed in this paper is pioneering on evaluating the moderating effect of firm size on the

influence of review valence (positive vs. negative) in customer attitudes and visiting intentions in two different hospitality sectors (hotels and restaurants). Based on the results, the authors propose some interesting theoretical/managerial implications as well as further research venues.

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Integrated Marketing Communications: Multi-Applicatory Models and a Judgement Call for 21st Century Practice

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Keywords: *Integrated Marketing Communications, IMC Models, Issues and Problems, Ways Forward*

The challenges facing most marketing organizations from a communications perspective in 2020 are not new. Instead, they are multi-faceted, diverse, and form a continuous challenge for practitioners and scholars alike.

Two decades ago, organisations were challenged with transitioning from where they were then -i.e., mainly traditional functions and operations to the apparently ‘brave new world’ of the 21st century and an apparently benign, expansive and expanding global marketplace/space. However, the benignity and expansiveness seem to be receding into the sedimentary strata of a previous (to some) golden age.

Today, transitional challenges continue to vex managerial and executive minds at different marketing for all businesses and organisations where managers freely admit they are not that good at marketing or communications in current marketplaces and spaces. For other organisations, who have successfully managed communications in their chosen spaces and places, the challenge is to keep up with current changes in big data/connectivity, not to mention environmental turbulence caused by political, economic, competitive and legislative change.

In 2000, Schultz and Kitchen claimed that the best mechanism for making the adjustment to new or changing marketplace realities was integrated marketing communications and there are good grounds for supporting this claim in 2020, hence the claim is reiterated. Even more Schultz and Kitchen’s book, brands and branding were the crucible into which IMC had to be poured. Building and sustaining brand equity and of course annual sales for all businesses has become paramount and it is easy to consider larger businesses such as Apple, Amazon, Carrefour, Pierre Cardin, and Lidl to name but a few. They are able, savvy, streetwise relative to their customers, and manage their

communications processes well. But many other businesses are not doing so well in terms of performance, equity, or sales performance. Yet, in 2020, these businesses and the agencies that service their needs, claim to have adopted 'IMC'. What could be going awry?

My perception is that there is no one applicatory model of IMC extant at this time (see Kitchen and Tourky, 2020). Instead, we have multiple models, and their application depends upon which material they access and how time, energy and resources can be deployed to make IMC work effectively and well. For example, the paper will discuss five models of IMC application, and the discussion will consider where these models have come from, how they work in practice, and of course the reasons why some of these models may be – if not irrelevant – certainly potentially damaging to adopting businesses, and worse, potentially damaging to customers and prospects. These models will be highlighted by a growing trend, evident everywhere in the world, to treat customers poorly once all-important purchases have been made (Kitchen, 2020). Thus, connective links between marketing, IMC and customer service will be further developed in the paper.

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Examining the Integrated Marketing Communication research *corpus*: a co-word analysis approach

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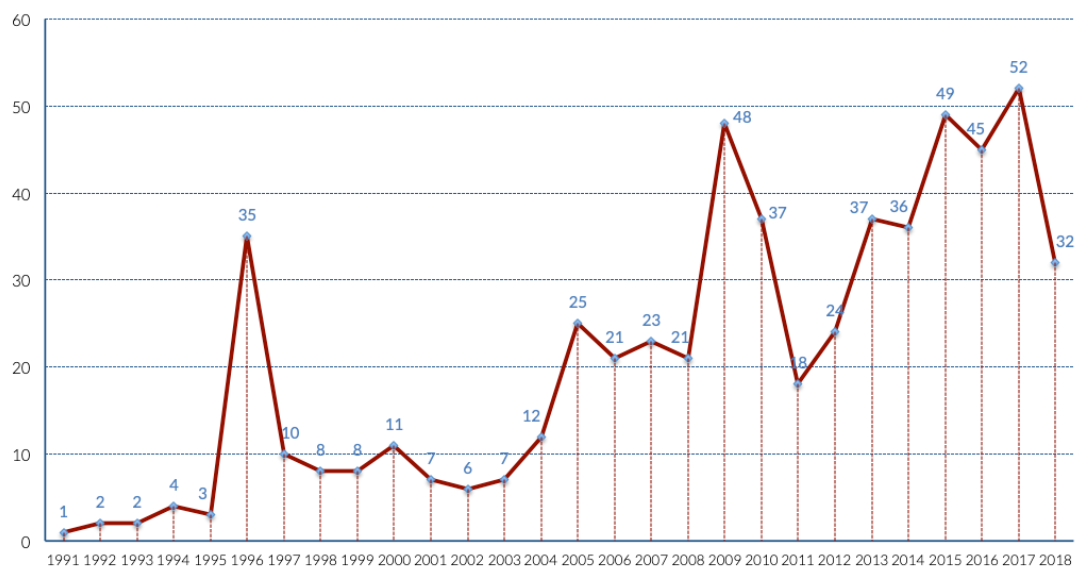
Keywords: *Integrated Marketing Communication, IMC, co-word analysis*

After three decades since the emergence of the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) concept, the communication environment has changed deeply, mostly due to the influence exerted by the rapid technological advances. Undoubtedly, IMC has currently become more relevant than ever before in both the academic field and the professional arena. In this regard, the Marketing Science Institute (2018) has found that the rise of omnichannel promotion is one of the five major research priorities for the 2018-2020 time frame and highlighted the need to address multichannel communications. In addition, over the last decade, IMC research has attracted greater attention and efforts, leading to a much more robust body of knowledge (see Figure 1).

In line with this, several authors have called for further research on IMC to clarify its conceptual foundations (Taylor, 2010; Porcu, del Barrio-García, and Kitchen, 2012, 2017), the recent special issue of the *European Journal of Marketing* (Kitchen, 2017) being an eloquent evidence of the relevant role IMC is currently playing in academia. More interestingly, while many scholars acknowledged the need to explore the IMC research trends to better understand its development and current status and discern possible evolution paths, previous studies (i.e. Kliatchko, 2008; Schultz *et al.*, 2014) attempting to analyse the IMC research *corpus* have been mostly characterised by a qualitative and subjective approach.

With these premises in mind, the present study aims to clarify the main research themes in the IMC research field, its evolution and trends. To pursue this goal, we opted for examining the IMC body of literature that has been published between 1991 and 2018 by taking a systematic and quantitative approach applying co-word analysis with the *SciMAT* software (Cobo et al., 2012). Co-word analysis combines both performance tools and science mapping techniques to analyse a particular research field and enables the detection and visualisation of sub-domains (specific themes or general thematic areas) and the evolution of the main topics within the field. In addition, this is a powerful bibliometric technique for revealing, describing and visualising the interactions between keywords, terms and topics.

Figure 1. Evolution of the research *corpus* on Integrated Marketing Communications from 1991 to 2018.



Regarding the data collection, we have applied the standard bibliometric protocol and the data were extracted from the ISI Web of Science (ISIWoS) and SCOPUS databases for a wider coverage, resulting in a total of 584 documents (336 from ISIWoS and 248 from SCOPUS). Based on Schultz *et al.* (2014), the time frame subjected to the analysis has been preliminarily divided into two research stages: (1) origins and evolution of the IMC concept (1991-2002, with 97 publications); (2) theoretical consolidation and broadening of the IMC concept (2003-2018, with 487 publications). From the data of the whole networks extracted from SciMAT (thresholds for the data reduction method and the network: 2), a keyword cluster analysis was carried out in Pajek.

The results highlighted that 18 thematic areas emerged from the analysis of the 1991-2002 timeframe, highlighting that IMC research was quite disjointed during the first decade of IMC, which is in line with the main concerns raised by several authors at the origins of this concept (i.e., Cornelissen and Lock, 2000). Moreover, the main themes were related to definitional issues and marketing communication tools, mass media and public relations. For the second period (2003-2018), we found a more reduced number of thematic areas (10) and the main topics reflect the broadening of the conceptualization of IMC embracing a firm-wide and organisational approach, the relevant role of stakeholders, the emergence of digital media, social networks and the phenomenon of audience fragmentation. Finally, a global thematic network has been developed for both timeframes applying the simple centers algorithm (Cobo et al., 2011). Firstly, as shown in Figure 2, for the first period there are five interrelated thematic areas, “Integrated Marketing Communications” being internally linked to “Communication and Education”. Such network is also externally connected with other networks including publications on relationship marketing, integrated communications and interpersonal communication network, the latter being linked strongly with the other themes included. Moreover, such network is linked to another one that includes classic studies on marketing communications, such as mass media, consumer response, advertising and gender issues. Secondly, as shown in Figure 3, the second period (2003-2018)) shows a clear network linked to “Integrated Marketing Communications”, which is internally connected to themes such as brand loyalty, brand image, or brand equity. Such network is also linked to other three thematic networks: perceptions, marketing communications and communications. In addition, we found a fairly reduced network with no linkages with the others and this includes themes regarding the debate over the role of IMC as a “theoretical concept” or a “management fashion”.

To sum up, this study enabled us to quantify and visualise the thematic evolution of IMC, providing both experts and novices with a better understanding of the current state-of-the-art of the IMC research and predict where future research could lead.

Figure 2. Global thematic networks including the most prominent research themes (1991-2012)

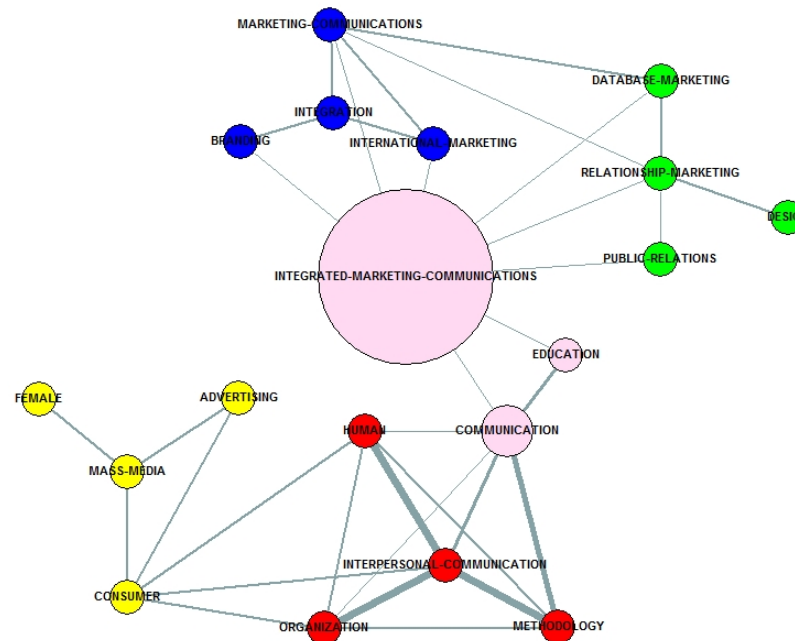
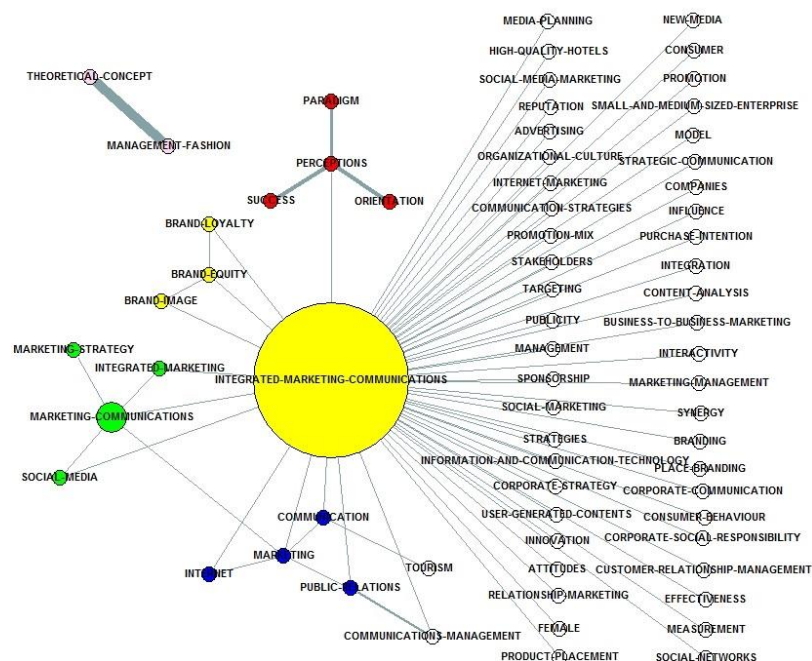


Figure 3. Global thematic networks including the most prominent research themes (2013-2018).



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“Together we stand!” Why do brand communities support authentic sponsors? An experimental investigation.

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Keywords: *Sponsorship, Brand community, Brand authenticity, Brand advocacy, Brand identification*

In recent times, sponsorship marketing activities have been burgeoning globally. According to the International Events Group (IEG 2018), the worldwide sponsorship market has been estimated at \$65 billion in 2018, with approximately 70% investments in sports properties. Sports sponsorships normally target a set of consumers who closely identify themselves to a sport, event or club and often come together to form a brand community. A brand community comprises a group of consumers with a common zeal for the brand, whose members jointly engage in collective initiatives to express their commitment for the brand (Muniz and O'guinn 2001). Despite the continuous growth of the sponsorship industry, the potential of highly passionate brand communities remains untapped (Dos-Santos et al. 2018). Meenaghan (2013) has indicated that reputed brands can employ sponsorship to connect with brand communities so that they may capitalize on their passion. Our study, therefore, builds on existing literature and seeks to address its first research question by empirically examining how these highly identified brand community members respond to sponsorship. This is relevant since brand communities are well-defined market segments that can be approached with customized offerings (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006). Cornwell and Kwon (2019) has highlighted the paucity of research conducted on engagement within the domain of sponsorship. Therefore, we

respond to this call and examine our second research question as to how brand community engagement practices impact the sponsor support decisions of a brand community.

Furthermore, due to increased sponsorship clutter, consumers are exposed to an array of sponsoring brands (Boeuf, Carrillat, and d'Astous 2018; Pradhan, Malhotra, and Moharana 2020). Recent studies have called for the need to understand authentic sponsorships (Cornwell 2019). Therefore, our third research question aims to investigate the role of sponsor brand authenticity in the sponsor support decisions of the brand community. Applying the signaling theory (Erdem and Swait 1998), we suggest that sponsor brand authenticity can act as a signal that could influence brand communities' sponsor support decisions. As brand authenticity is mostly unobservable prior to purchase, it serves as a potential source of information asymmetry and therefore could be used as a signal to influence consumer decisions.

Our experimental study aimed to investigate the impact of consumer's club brand community identification on sponsor brand advocacy, purchase intentions and club brand community engagement. Next, we assessed the mediating role of club brand community engagement between consumers' club brand community identification and their sponsor support decisions indicated by sponsor brand advocacy and purchase intentions. Furthermore, we manipulated sponsor brand authenticity (more vs less) experimentally, to examine its impact on consumers' sponsor support decisions. Based on a soccer club brand in India and the club brand community associated with it, we conducted a pre-test and an experimental study. The pre-test indicated that brand authenticity manipulations were successful. The main study consisted of a 2 (brand community identification: high vs low) \times 2 (sponsor brand authenticity: more vs less) between-subjects design. We manipulated the levels of identification of participants with the club brand community by engaging them in an essay writing task (adapted from Blader et al. 2007). We then measured the participants' identification with the club brand community (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann 2005). Further, we showed the participants one of the two pre-tested printed advertisements of authenticity after which we asked them to assess their perception of sponsor brand authenticity (Morhart et al. 2015). Next, we assessed club brand community engagement (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann 2005), sponsor brand advocacy and purchase intentions (Stokburger-

Sauer et al. 2012). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine the direct and interaction effects.

The findings indicated that club brand community identification positively influenced sponsor support decisions. The effect of this relationship was stronger for high identifiers. We also found evidence of the mediating effect of club brand community engagement on the relationship between club brand community identification and sponsor support decisions. Additionally, sponsor brand authenticity moderated the relationship between club brand community identification and sponsor support decisions. Specifically, at higher levels of sponsor brand authenticity, both, the high as well as the low identifiers had a higher intention to advocate and purchase the sponsor brand as compared to when the sponsor brand was perceived to have lower levels of authenticity (refer to figures 2a and 2b).

This research makes several theoretical contributions. First, we advance sponsorship literature by assessing consumer-level antecedents that impact sponsorship effectiveness. Adding to extant literature on identification and engagement (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann 2005), we evaluated how consumers with varying levels of identification with a brand community engage in a brand community and respond to sponsor brands (Mazodier, Henderson, and Beck 2018). Second, we empirically demonstrate the mediating role of engagement practices in a brand community that can be useful in developing sponsorship effectiveness. Third, responding to the call for understanding authenticity in sponsorship (Cornwell 2019), we show that consumers consider the signals of authenticity in the sponsor brands as inputs in decision making to support the sponsor brands.

We suggest that marketers capitalize on brand communities for sponsorship effectiveness. There must be mechanisms in place that cultivate consumer identification and engagement with the club brand community. We further suggest that sponsor companies focus on achieving brand authenticity with the aid of suitable brand communication.

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Appendix

Table 1. Results of Hypothesis Testing

| Study Hypothesis | Test | Results | Findings |
|--|-------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Brand Community Identification → Sponsor Brand Advocacy (H1a) | One-way ANOVA | MHigh=5.77 MLow=5.40; F (1,118) =4.727, p=0.032 | Supported |
| Brand Community Identification → Sponsor Brand Purchase Intention (H1b) | One-way ANOVA | MHigh=5.87, MLow=5.39; F (1,118) =8.509, p=0.004 | Supported |
| Brand Community Identification → Brand Community Engagement (H2) | One-way ANOVA | MHigh=9.01, MLow=7.87; F (1, 118) = 67.495, p=0.000 | Supported |
| Mediation of Brand community Engagement → Sponsor Brand Advocacy (H3a) | Hayes PROCESS Macro (model 4) | b=0.8160, SE=0.09, 95% CI=0.5431-1.1488 | Supported |
| Mediation of Brand community Engagement → Sponsor Brand Purchase intention (H3b) | Hayes PROCESS Macro (model 4) | b=0.8022, SE=0.08, 95% CI=0.5344-1.1229 | Supported |
| Brand Community Identification × Sponsor Brand Authenticity → Sponsor Brand Advocacy (H4a) | 2×2 ANOVA | MHigh=6.71, MLow=4.82; F (1,116) =12.621, p=0.001 | Supported |
| Brand Community Identification × Sponsor Brand Authenticity → Sponsor Brand Purchase Intention (H4b) | 2×2 ANOVA | MHigh=6.07, MLow=4.72; F (1,116) =10.101, p=0.002 | Supported |

Figure 1a (Left). The slope changes sharply, indicating that sponsor brand authenticity sharply increases when we expose brand community members to a more authentic sponsor brand.

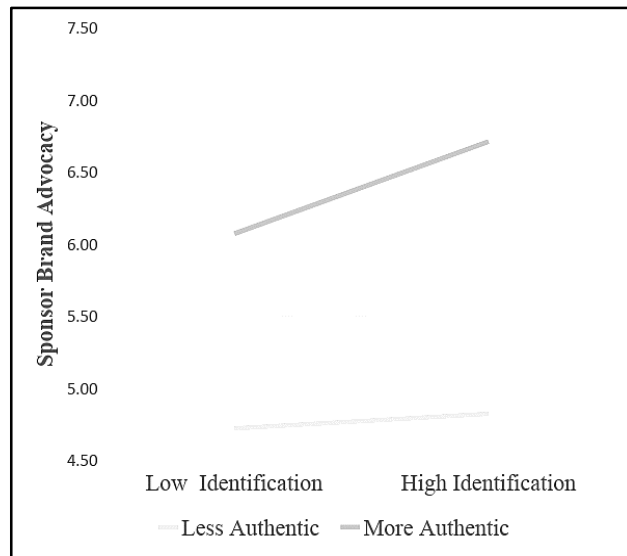
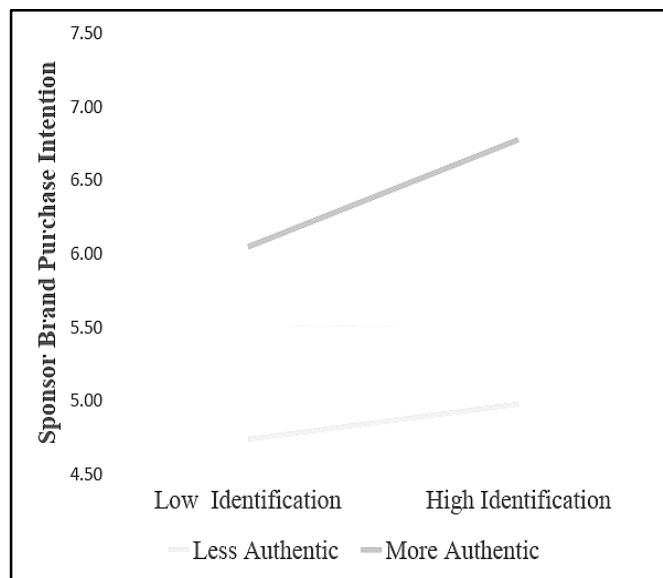


Figure 1b (Right). The slope changes sharply indicating that sponsor brand purchase intention sharply increases when we expose brand community members to a more authentic sponsor brand.



The effect of racial diversity in advertising on luxury and masstige brands

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Keywords: *diversity, advertising, race, masstige, luxury*

Brands are faced with the challenge of conveying the correct tone and message in their ads. As ads influence purchase behaviors (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981), inducing favorable reactions towards both ad and brand are vital (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Lee, Byon, Ammon, & Park, 2016; Phelps & Hoy, 1996; Varnali, 2014). Hence, brands have to ensure that the ads correctly convey the intended message, and not generate backlash. Through social media, the backlash that brands generate are immensely amplified, where netizens come together from across the globe calling out brands for ads that are deemed, tone deaf, insensitive and offensive (Richards, 2019, Sullivan, 2018, Williams, 2019; Xu, 2018). One of the more common themes that triggers criticism is the perceived lack of diversity in ads, from angles such as the depiction of gender, and race (Hosie, 2017; Slawson, 2018; Young, 2019). However, while these ads appear to face backlash, they generally gather mixed reactions, with some bashing the brands and others defending them (Margan & Lackey, 2018; Miller, 2018; Toppings, Lyons, & Weaver, 2019).

This study seeks to examine racial diversity in masstige and luxury ads and the corresponding attitudes toward advertisement and brand. This study employs a 2x2 between-subjects factorial design, where race (“single”, and “multi”) is crossed with product type (“masstige”, and “old luxury”). A total of 144 Japanese participants shaped the sample size of the experiment. The study manipulates different conditions depicting the different compositions of the predetermined factors are utilized as the stimuli, in the form of print ads. To measure attitude towards ad, a six-point semantic differential scale for five-items is used, for example dislike/like, unfavorable/favorable, negative/ positive, and boring/ interesting. Attitude towards the brand is measured for five items with a six-

point semantic differential scale with endpoints of not appealing/appealing, unfavorable/favorable, negative/ positive, and dislike/ like.

The findings reflect that there is no statistically significant interaction between race and type of product category on the combined dependent variables of attitude towards ad and attitude towards brand; basically, rejecting all hypotheses. Limitations of the study such as sample size could affect the results hence, moving forward a larger sample should be undertaken. In addition, product country of origin could be added as an IV.

Table 1. Summary of MANOVA Test results.

| Variable | Attitude towards Ad | | | Attitude towards Brand | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------|------|------------------------|-------|------|
| | Mean | F | Sig | Mean | F | Sig |
| <i>Race</i> | | | | | | |
| Single | 3.517 | .185 | .666 | 3.400 | 0.35 | .851 |
| Multiple | 3.447 | | | 3.367 | | |
| <i>Product Category</i> | | | | | | |
| Masstige | 3.547 | .654 | .417 | 3.481 | 1.205 | .271 |
| Luxury | 3.417 | | | 3.286 | | |
| <i>Race*Product Category</i> | .050 | .823 | .166 | .684 | | |
| Single Race*Masstige | 3.600 | | | 3.533 | | |
| Multiple Race*Masstige | 3.494 | | | 3.428 | | |
| Single Race*Luxury | 3.433 | | | 3.267 | | |
| Multiple Race*Luxury | 3.400 | | | 3.306 | | |

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The impact of Chatbot adoption on brand image, customer experience and engagement in Singapore Banking Sector: A Qualitative Study

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In this rapidly changing digital age, brand reputation management can be an uphill task. A strong brand reputation takes years to build but only minutes to destroy, as customers' expectations are becoming very demanding and personal. Bughin et al. (2017) indicate that companies are investing heavily in Artificial Inelegancy (AI) and Chatbot as their integrated communications and brand marketing. As an IBM Executive Architect, Michels (2017) concurred that Chatbot can be designed to proactively manage customer demands and concerns by addressing a variety of information and needs. Some examples of Chatbot platforms are Apple Siri, Google Assistant, Microsoft Cortana and IBM Cloud. Chatbots can significantly improve brand communications and engagement by offering products and services, or content, (Wong & Kruse, 2007). Chatbot is also able to provide a personalized customer experience upfront by answering questions without customers even realizing that the person they are conversing is an intelligent agent, and not a human agent. Foster (2007) indicated that Chatbot can keep customers engaged for a longer period and likely to enhance brand loyalty.

The global Chatbot market is expected to reach \$1.23 billion by 2025, and a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 24.3% (Nguyen, 2017). However, there is great leaps in digital technology in the past five years which Park & del Pobi (2013: p.77) anticipated "scale of service robots global market is expected to expand and set to grow". Technology will get even better and, in the future, we will witness the massive introduction of consumer robots as artificial intelligence and automation advances. Banks to retailers to healthcare to HR are rolling Chatbots out as they can be easily built and promise to be better, faster and cheaper than human alternative.

Interest in Banks adopting service-oriented Chatbot designed to assist customers in obtaining timely assistance and relevant information, and improving customer experience and engagement, is on the rise in Singapore. This research applied particularly in Singapore because though a small island country, is a leading global financial centre in Asia known for its continuous innovation and technology adoption.

Many academic researchers focused their studies on Chatbots in learning and language support (Hsieh, 2011; Ayedoun et al., 2015; Fryer & Carpenter, 2006) thus, not many studies have empirically investigated the benefits and motivations for using Chatbot specifically in the banking sector, and reasons behind the rise of Chatbot adoption is unclear. Identifying this research gap has resulted in conducting a qualitative study currently using semi-structured interviews to explore the key benefits and motivational factors driving Chatbot use in the Singapore banking sector. These factors are perceived as “improving customer experience”, “enhancing customer engagement” and “promoting operational efficiencies”. The in-depth interviews will involve managers, executives and vendors developing or working with Chatbot system within or for banks in Singapore.

Considering this aim, the following three research questions (RQ) have been developed for this research:

- RQ1: Will Chatbot improve Brand image and reputation, and Customer Experience in terms of interacting with the bank?
- RQ2 : How does Chatbot promotes Customer Engagement?
- RQ3 : What extent can Chatbot impact on bank Operational Efficiencies?
- Accordingly, this research will also be endeavoring to explore the following research objectives (RO).
- RO1: To discover if banks deploy Chatbot to create a more simple and seamless customer experience leading to customer satisfaction and enhancing bank branding and reputation.
- RO2: To establish whether Chatbot promotes customer engagement by providing value-driven relationship between its customers and the bank, and if the bank sees an improvement on customer retention and increase in sales leads.
- RO3 : To determine the extent of how Chatbot can improve bank operation efficiencies through less human interventions (productivity), cost savings, and quicker customer acquisition.

Data analysis will involve thematic analysis of themes that emerge and contents of what is transcribed with key words. This method offers flexibility in obtaining rich and detailed data. The findings are discussed in terms of the uses with grounded theory, and they provide insights into why banks choose to deploy Chatbot to effectively interact and engage with their customers.

While a service-oriented Chatbot may bring benefits to banks in remaining competitive and sustainable, there are drawbacks such as content and quality of human-chatbot communication, people losing jobs, and transitioning of system to robot-based economy. As Hill et al. (2015) articulated, A.I. efforts to model human language by computers in expressing words and meaning have not been widely successful. Essentially, a bad Chatbot could destroy a bank's reputation. The results of this study can therefore help banks focus on aspects of the Chatbot system which directly affect customers demonstrating it needs to develop a realistic and useful Chatbot. The results can also outline the challenges of Chatbot and put forth some general solutions to its challenges.

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The impact of Social Media News on Halal Food Purchase Intentions in non-Muslim country: Evidence from the UK.

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Keywords: *Halal food, Product judgment, Purchase Intention, Social media news, Source credibility.*

Introduction and Research Aim

Through-out human history, people have a tendency to rely on trustworthy sources in their interactions and when exchanging information such as scholars, government representatives or organisation icons. However, this is no longer the case as the digital era has emerged. Currently, individuals tend to virtually trust other people at the other end of their screens, the main commonality between them is that they use both the internet and certain social platforms (Keib et al., 2018). Social networking websites are hugely impacting individuals' opinions according to the current stream of opinions and news.

Recent events including the Arab spring in the middle east to the tsunami and earthquake disasters in Japan and Puerto Rico have proved that social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) are changing how individuals consume and share news. Particularly, a singular news case can spread around the world and be discussed by individuals in a few minutes through social media platforms. Also, immediate updates including videos, pictures and stories are made available for any major actions which instantly attracts worldwide attention (Lee and Ma, 2012). In addition, 37% of individuals who use the internet have experienced sharing news through social media platforms, social media is considered a powerful news referring source (Farley et al., 2014). Thus,

sharing news on social media has become a global phenomenon, and the growth has a social, economic and political impact (Lee and Ma, 2012). Individual behaviour toward sharing and reading the news on social media and what factors affect them has not yet been saturated in the literature.

The level of credibility of the news source is critical in addressing the social media news phenomenon. Source credibility considers an important factor that may affect an individual effort to evaluate concerns attached to the exposed message when the elaboration and the likelihood are high (Cheung et al., 2008, Petty et al., 2015). Credibility is considered the primary factor that shapes attitudes towards a product or service (O'Reilly et al., 2016), improve the receiver consideration of the message (Bansal and Voyer, 2000) and influences the individual's behaviour in evaluating the credibility of perceived information (Beltramini and Sirsi, 1992). In addition, when it is hard to evaluate the perceived message the value of source credibility increases (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

The information's exchanging over the social media platforms are not limited to particular type of news, marketers and brand managers interested to observe and use this trending consumer behaviour to increase their presence by effective marketing offering (Abosag and Lee, 2013). On the other hand, in cultural, technological, and marketing trendy mixture, we have observed that a minority practice in the United Kingdom has become a trend for people to consume. This phenomenon is Halal food, as the level of consumption is gradually increasing, also there is a huge demand from non-Muslims toward Halal products, moreover with the increase of the population in the Muslims across the UK. Islam is the third monotheistic religion of the Abrahamic faiths (El-Bassiouny, 2014). Muslims outline approximately 25 per cent of the world inhabitants (Pew, 2017). Thus, Muslims' shopping attitudes and purchase habits are considered extremely important in this highly potential market (Wilson et al., 2013, Wilson, 2014b, Auda, 2008). Muslims population growing 10 times faster than the non-Muslims (Wilson, 2014a). Therefore, Muslims are no longer considered as an ethnic minority, they are globally attractive consumer base. This huge segment has attracted marketer and decision-makers to target Muslims market (Elseidi, 2018).

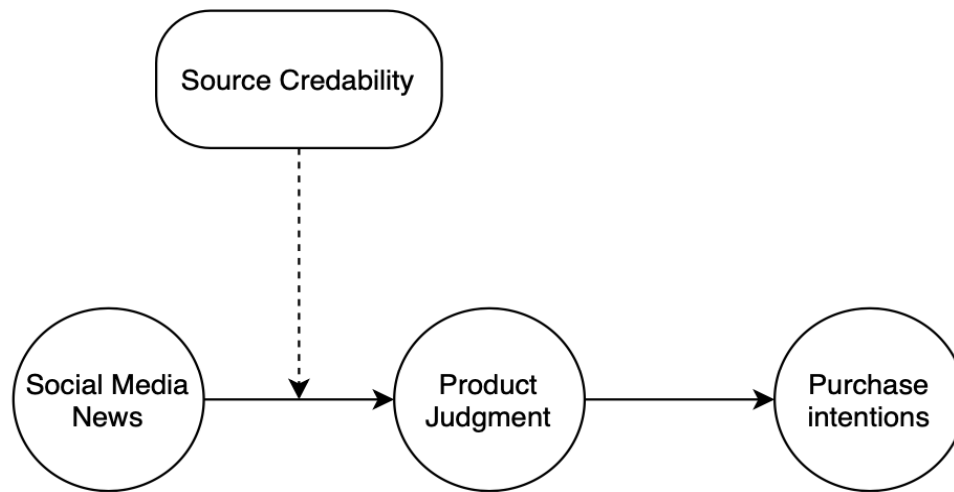
It is acknowledged that individuals create different perceptions regarding product judgment based on psychological process (Bredahl, 2004), this evaluation is influenced

by the consumers past experience and the cognitive dissonance regarding the message associated with the product (Gbadamosi, 2009). In addition, previous studies have shown that the products evaluated by other individuals influence consumer product judgements (Wilkins et al., 2019). Consumers evaluate the products according to different factors, which is based on personal characteristics (Bredahl, 2004). The perceived quality of the products can be evaluated by physical and emotional attributes (Brunsø et al., 2002). However, these quality attributes cannot be evaluated straight after the purchase due to consumers perception based on the actual consumption of the product itself, and this goes to physical attributes (Schleenbecker and Hamm, 2013), other consumers perceive the quality of the product based on the process associated with produces such as health, safety and ethical consideration (Guo and Zhou, 2017, Biraglia et al., 2018). Accordingly, this research aims to investigate the influence of social media news on consumer product judgment to the Halal food. By understand the role of source cedability in affecting the relationship between Social Media News (SMN) and Product Judgment (PJ). In addition, provide a deeper understanding for Halal marketers about the factors that influence the consumers purchase intentions in non-muslims countries.

Background and Conceptual Model

According to the previous literature reviewed, a conceptual framework has been developed to address the research aim. This research sketched on the strands of elaboration likelihood model and social identity theory. It intends to shed the light in new cultural and technological phenomenon combination, to understand how social media news could influence customers product judgment process and their intentions to buy Halal food. By adopting social identity theory to will endeavour to understand the consumers behaviour to react to news related to particular product category. In addition, applying elaboration likelihood model aims to comprehend the cognitive process occurs in consumers mind why they perceived this news from different news sources and with different message types. Therefore, the study conceptual framework illustrated in figure (1).

Figure 1. Research conceptual framework.



Methodology

To address the current phenomenon, this study follows positivist paradigm, and deductive approach. An experiment will be employed by design 2x2 experimental survey. The study uses source credibility as manipulation check between groups, this consisted of four groups, two with manipulation check (The Guardian “real provider” Vs. the Fellow “fake provider”) created for the study purpose, and two without manipulation check. The selected news platform to use is Twitter as it has been considered as the main online platform for news adoption from the users and this been supported by news agencies (Bruns and Burgess, 2012). In addition, Twitter has approximately 4 thousand topics with 106 million tweets of which more than 86% were all associated with news (Twitter, 2018). The sample has been collected by distributing the survey online targeting participants in the United Kingdom.

Motivation for the study and future direction

To recapitulate, the Halal concept and social media news have both currently been mentioned in recent studies as cultural and global phenomena representatively (Wilson, 2014b; Elseidi, 2018). However, there is still a lack of literature investigating the influence of news broadcasted on social media and associated with Halal food and their influence on individuals’ purchase intentions. Furthermore, limited studies have investigated the influence of this perceived information through the news regarding Halal products on an individual’s product judgment. Hence, this study aims to investigate the

factors affecting consumer purchase intention regarding Halal food. Data will be collected from UK.

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Unveiling the drivers and outcomes of IMC capability: Insights from Consumer Market Companies in Pakistan

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Keywords: Market orientation, Brand orientation, Top-Management Support, IMC capability, Campaign Effectiveness, Brand market performance

Firms are continuously involved in the reconfiguration of resources and capabilities to gain competitive positions (Kamasak, 2017; Morgan, Vorhies, & Mason, 2009; Vorhies, Orr, & Bush, 2011; Wang, 2017). To accrue campaign and brand-related market performance, firms' ability to plan and implement IMC programs is always in question (Luxton, Reid, & Mavondo, 2015, 2017; Tafesse & Kitchen, 2017). Effective planning and implementation of the IMC programs and achieving campaign and brand-related market objectives require the firm's ability (Ewing, 2009; Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015; Porcu, del Barrio-García, & Kitchen, 2012; Tafesse & Kitchen, 2017) to reconfigure the firms' resources and capabilities. Underpinned by the resource-based view, this study investigates the antecedent role of Market Orientation (MO), Brand Orientation (BO), and Top Management Support on the IMC capability among consumer market companies operating in Pakistan. It further explores the mediation effect of IMC capability on the relationship between the identified antecedent factors and IMC-related performance in

terms of Campaign Effectiveness (CE) and Brand Market Performance (BMP). Together with these relationships, this study also assumes the intervening role of the chain effect of BO and CE as full or partial mediation between their respective preceding and resultant variables i.e., IMC capability and BMP respectively, as recommended in the recent literature (see in Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2017; Nitzl, Roldan, & Cepeda, 2016). Data were collected via a self-administered survey and a total of 141 valid responses were obtained from managers who have the prime responsibility of marketing communications, working in consumer market companies in Pakistan. The conceptual model has been assessed by means of variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS3.2.8 to assess the proposed relationships. All the antecedents proved to be significantly and positively associated with IMC capability and its related exclusive outcomes except for the indirect effects of MO on BMP. Further, mediation effects of both BO and CE in respective relationships exhibited positive compounding and hence, partial mediation. This study has empirically established several new relationships and substantiated previous research findings by exploring the effects of organizational drivers, namely MO, BO, and TMS, on the IMC capability and its related outcomes. Besides, it contributes to mediation studies where variables as part of a chain effect are modeled as mediators. Future research is encouraged to include more factors as antecedents and/or moderators to broaden the scope of IMC research. Moreover, future studies should be conducted on a larger sample of brands and/or companies and geographic contexts.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

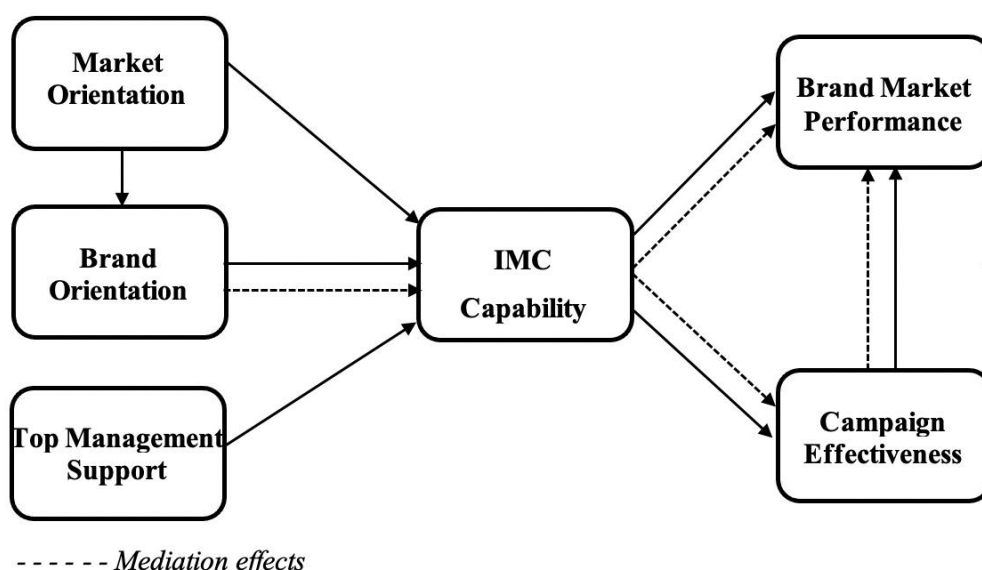


Table 1. Summary of the hypothesized relationships.

| Direct Structural Path(s) | | | | Beta | t - value | P – value | Decision | |
|-----------------------------|---|-----|---|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| H1a: MO | → | IMC | | 0.223 | 2.549 | 0.000 | Supported | |
| H1b: MO | → | BO | | 0.572 | 8.133 | 0.000 | Supported | |
| H2: BO | → | IMC | | 0.273 | 3.933 | 0.002 | Supported | |
| H3: TMS | → | IMC | | 0.421 | 6.415 | 0.000 | Supported | |
| H4a: IMC | → | CE | | 0.546 | 9.031 | 0.011 | Supported | |
| H4b: IMC | → | BMP | | 0.243 | 3.033 | 0.000 | Supported | |
| H5a: CE | → | BMP | | 0.525 | 6.971 | 0.000 | Supported | |
| Indirect Structural Path(s) | | | | | | | | |
| H2a: MO | → | BO | → | IMC | 0.156 | 3.425 | 0.001 | Supported* |
| H5b: IMC | → | CE | → | BMP | 0.287 | 5.174 | 0.000 | Supported* |
| H6a: MO | → | IMC | → | CE | 0.122 | 2.356 | 0.019 | Supported |
| H6b: MO | → | IMC | → | BMP | 0.054 | 1.935 | 0.059 | Not Supported |
| H7a: BO | → | IMC | → | CE | 0.149 | 3.432 | 0.001 | Supported |
| H7b: BO | → | IMC | → | BMP | 0.066 | 2.369 | 0.018 | Supported |
| H8a: TMS | → | IMC | → | CE | 0.230 | 5.319 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H8b: TMS | → | IMC | → | BMP | 0.102 | 2.654 | 0.008 | Supported |

Note: *partially supported, $p < 0.05$

MO – Market Orientation; BO – Brand Orientation Capability; TMS – Top Management Support; IMC – Integrated Marketing Communications Capability; CE – Campaign Effectiveness; BMP – Brand Market Performance.

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Building a country brand through sustainability: the case of Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt

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Abstract

Nation branding has been increasingly gaining ground lately. Earlier research focuses on the role that certain dimensions can have on the country brand or on the positive outcomes that a strong country brand can offer a country. The current paper shifts this focus to examine the relationship between a country's sustainability goals and its brand image. A secondary data analysis is implemented to answer this research question for the countries of Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt. The findings show that the relationship between sustainability and country brand strength is complex and requires further examination. Furthermore, the elements of the country brand image strength vary in their significance. Apart from insight into that, this paper also provides managerial implications for enhancing an existing country brand image.

Keywords: *nation branding, sustainability, country brand strength, country brand image*

1. Introduction

As countries strive to position themselves in the global marketplace, whether this refers to their own citizens or to other exterior stakeholders such as investors, workforce and tourists, the concept of branding for a country has been increasingly gaining ground. The challenge faced in this process is that in many cases different images may have to be managed simultaneously for those different stakeholders. In such a context, identifying which elements of a country brand to emphasize and invest in for the different stakeholders becomes a crucial decision.

Research in this field has examined a series of variables to measure the prevailing brand image. Some of them identified the image of the country as the peoples' perceptions about the quality of the products produced inside the country (Halo effect; Han, 1989) or the consumers' comparative evaluation of quality and value of similar countries' products (Summary Construct; Han, 1989); the country's reputation as emerged by the country's stakeholders' perception (Passow et al., 2005); an image that is being influenced by its stakeholders visit intentions to the country (Buhmann and Ingenhoff, 2013). The relationship between the arts and culture sector, the country's ministry and the country's economy and wealth has also been examined as a significant parameter (Ahn and Wu, 2015). The country's national resources and institutions policies and prestige (Suna et al., 2016), as well as the beliefs about the country's products have also been underlined (Lee et al, 2016).

One of the dimensions which has been increasingly gaining ground lately is the country's efforts towards sustainability. As literature revealed, sustainable development, is a common field of action for every country, trying to offer to the future generations the ability to 'meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987. p. 8), by taking into account their duty toward societies (Carroll, 1979). Furthermore, a critical issue identified in this context is the country's capability to communicate about its sustainable development efforts and goals (Sarikakis, 2015; Mozammel, 2011; Lee et al., 2009).

A stream of research examined countries as entities that can be branded and further developed for various audiences. Under this scope, it is crucial for a country to identify which elements to further invest in and promote for its various stakeholders. This parallelization between corporations and countries is further advanced to include the

concept of sustainability. As CSR activities create value for the companies that implement them (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2013; Pätäri et al., 2012; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2009; Reverte, 2012; Montabon, Sroufe, & Narasimhan, 2007; Jacobs, Singhal, and Subramanian, 2010), in this research it is argued that the investment in sustainability-oriented actions will create value for the countries as well.

This paper advances country branding in several ways. Firstly, the emphasis of this research shifts from the separate examination of variables which are able to enhance a country's brand image, to an examination of sustainability dimensions in total. The aim is to provide an overall summative evaluation of sustainability's role in this context. Secondly, this study examines secondary data to examine the aforementioned relationship, aiming to retrieve objective data to answer the research question. Finally, the paper identifies managerial implications for governments aiming to strengthen their country brand.

2. Background -Literature Review

2.1. Antecedents of country brand image

Brand attitudes and country image attributes must be combined to generate a specific brand identity. The country's physical appeal, its financial appeal, its leadership appeal, and its social appeal are some of the dimensions that synthesize the country's reputation, expressed in terms of its identity and image (Passow et al., 2005). Additionally, the country's economic development, quality of life, culture and heritage, tourism, technology and other social issues drive a country's powerful and dynamic brand image leading to positive consumers' perceptions of the country (Herrero-Crespo et al, 2016). Moreover, a country's locational attractiveness, investment environments, infrastructure, costs, taxes and business all increase the country's attractiveness, while they also enhance its image (Papadopoulos et al., 2016). The Country's total financial performance as derived by its exports (Kotler and Gertner, 2002), tourism rates (Fetscherin, 2010), FDI levels (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002, Fetscherin, 2010), its immigration rates but also its labour amenities, education system, and energy capability (Kotler & Gertner, 2002) constitute a positive country brand image (Fetscherin, 2010) as well.

However, there is also a direct relationship among the country's brand image and the size of a country (small developed European countries, found to have stronger country brands than bigger and economically developed countries), its economic development (More

Developed Countries – MDC, Less Developed Countries – LDC, on the evaluation of COO) (Bilkey & Nes, 1982), its geographical position (Fetscherin, 2010; Anholt, 2007) and topography (Anholt, 2007).

A positive product-country image and the beliefs of the country's people (Ryu et al., 2016, pp. 301); congruency between the product and the country of origin (Lee et al, 2016); the accuracy between brand country-of-origin (COO) Knowledge and COO image, but also the existence of a relationship among these two meanings, in the franchise market (Paswan & Sharma, 2004) also have a positive impact on the country's image.

Furthermore, consumers' awareness of a country, consumers perceptions of the products' quality from a country and the level of consumers' loyalty toward the products produced in a country, increase the country's equity leading to a more positive country brand image (Pappu & Qester's, 2010). In the following Table, the basic literature on the antecedents of country of brand image are presented (Table 1).

Table 1. Antecedents of country of brand image literature

| Author & Year | Independent | Dependent | Methodology |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Marc Fetscherin, (2010) | Exports, FDI, Immigration, Tourism rates | Country brand strength | Secondary data analysis |
| Tanja Passow, Rolf Fehlmann, Heike Grahlow, (2005) | Physical appeal, Financial performance, Product and services, vision and Leadership, Social responsibility | Country's reputation | Quantitative research focus group (Metaplan technique) Interviews with experts |
| Nicolas Papadopoulos, Leila Hamzaoui-Essoussi, Alia El Banna, (2016) | Nature, culture, tourism, agriculture, technology, investments, manufacture goods | FDI | Systematic and integrative review within the relevant literature |
| Kotler Philip, David Gertner (2002) | Country image | Product evaluations | Empirical research |
| Audhesh K. Paswan and Dheeraj Sharma (2004) | Accuracy of brand-COO knowledge about a competing brand, level of familiarity with the brand-specific | Country of origin (COO) image | Personal interviews |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| | country of origin, People travel abroad, Level of education, Socio-economic class | | |
| Richard Lee, Larry Lockshin, and Luke Greenacre (2016) | Product beliefs, Product familiarity, Country familiarity, Product - country congruence | Country image | interviews with questionnaire + test IAT |
| Ángel Herrero- Crespo, Héctor San Martín Gutiérrez and Maria del Mar Garcia-Salmones (2016) | Country's Perceived quality, Country's image, Country's awareness | Country Brand Equity i. Awareness of country's universities ii. Image of country's universities iii. Perceived quality of country's universities iv. Perceived Loyalty of country's universities 2. Loyalty on country's universities (the main outcome variable) | Quantitative research |
| Anholt, S. (2007) | Culture & heritage, political competitiveness, economic competitiveness | Country Competitive Identity | Bibliographic Review |
| Bilkey, W.J. and Nes, E. (1982) | Less developing countries, more developing countries, COO effect | Products preferences | Literature review |
| Papadopolous, N., & Heslop, L. (2002) | Product country image | Brand equity | Research Review |
| Ruy, J.S., Decosta, P., & Andehn, M. (2016) | Products Evaluations | Country Image Evaluations | Quantitative Research (surveys) |

2.2. Consequences of country brand image

Adopting Fetscherin's (2010) definition, "*country brand image [...] concerns a country's whole image, covering political, economic, social, environmental, historical, and cultural aspects.*" Country brand image help people relate with, act upon it or interact with it, but also is a useful concept that help countries and corporations to differentiate their brands from competitors' brands improving their competitiveness (Mendez, Murphy & Papadopoulos, 2013). Strong country brand images affect peoples' behaviours toward the country, increase their positive conations about the country but also their desire for closer interaction with the country (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Attractive and strong country brand images develop a scientific work force, highly rank the specific country in global bases and measures, gain more popularity, achieve sustainable development (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Anholt, 2005; Anholt, 2007); drive many companies to associate their products with that country (Anholt, 1998, pp. 397), increasing franchising for the specific country (Paswan & Sharma, 2004); and influence their evaluations about the universities brand awareness, their overall brand image and their perceived quality (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2016). Country image is a part of the country's equity (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002).

Through the COO effects country brand image is affecting peoples' attitudes toward the country's products (Bilkey and Nes, 1982, p. 90). Moreover, the country's economic development level is influencing the stakeholders' attitudes toward the country; increases the country's foreign Direct Investments (FDI), or else the "ownership and control of assets a company has in a foreign country" (Thomas and Grosse, 2001, p. 59, 60; Grosse and Trevino, 1996, p. 139); but also increases the country's capability of enjoying higher levels of financial performance as derived by its exports (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Papadopoulos et al, 2016), its tourism rates (Fetscherin, 2010), its foreign direct investments (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Szondi, 2008), and its immigration rates (Fetscherin, 2010). Additionally, strong country brand image attracts investors in several sectors (Fan, 2010), investments in alternative location choices (Capik, 2007), but also in foreign trade zones (FTZ) or special economic zones (SEZ) (Papadopoulos and Malhorta, 2007; WEPZA, 2012). Countries with stronger brand image lead to positive nation brand images and vice versa (Fetscherin, 2010; Anholt, 2005). Finally, a strong country brand image, means the country's capability of fulfilling its brand promise; by employing the

right people, and by having the right infrastructures; the right mentality; culture; financial and social ability, in order to call foreign investments (Szondi, 2007).

A strong country brand image has the "*ability to attract investment, businesses, and tourists*", while also influence the peoples' choices of visiting the place (Kotler and Gertner, 2002, pp. 253), or a destination that people desire to interact with (Ryu et al., 2016, pp. 301); while it is also creating the country's identity and reputation capital (Passow et al., 2005) that is positively positioned in the consumer's mind (Ahn and Wu, 2015). Furthermore, a strong country brand image enhances peoples' identification with the country, lead peoples' positive perceptions, increase travellers' visit intentions and project advocacy behaviours (Stokburger-Sauer, 2011; p. 1287).

In the following Table, the basic literature on the antecedents of country of brand image are presented (Table 2).

Table 2. Antecedents of country of brand image.

| Author & Year | Independent | Dependent | Methodology |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Michael J. Ahn & Hsin-Ching Wu (2013) | Art Culture | Country image | Quantitative Research (Dataset) |
| Ying Fan (2006) | Personal experiences Level of education Knowledge of the nation Ownerships on products made in a country, Level of media channel depiction Country's stereotypes | Product country image | Literature Review |
| Marc Fetscherin (2010) | Exports, FDI, Immigration, Tourism rates | Country brand strength | Secondary data analysis |
| Nicola E. Stokburger-Sauer (2011) | Personality congruence Nation brand embeddedness | Visit intentions brand advocacy | Quantitative Research (questionnaires) |

| | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| José I. Rojas-Méndez (2013) | Economy; Tourism; Geography and nature; Culture and heritage; Society; Science and technology; and Government. | Country brand image | Quantitative research |
| Tanja Passow, Rolf Fehlmann, Heike Grahlow (2005) | Physical appeal Financial performance Product and services vision and Leadership Social responsibility | Country's reputation | Quantitative research focus group (Metaplan technique) Interviews with experts |
| Nicolas Papadopoulos, Leila Hamzaoui-Essoussi, Alia El Banna, (2016) | Nature Culture Tourism Agriculture Technology Investments Manufacture goods | FDI | Systematic and integrative review within the relevant literature |
| Kotler Philip, David Gertner (2002) | Country image | Product evaluations | Empirical research |
| Audhesh K. Paswan and Dheeraj Sharma (2004) | Accuracy of brand-COO knowledge about a competing brand Level of familiarity with the brand-specific country of origin People travel abroad Level of education | Country of origin (COO) image | Personal interviews |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
| | Socio-economic class | | |
| Ángel Herrero-Crespo, Héctor San Martín Gutiérrez and Maria del Mar Garcia-Salmones (2016) | Country's Perceived quality Country's image Country's awareness | Country Brand Equity i. Awareness of country's universities ii. Image of country's universities iii. Perceived quality of country's universities iv. Perceived Loyalty of country's universities 2. Loyalty on country's universities (the main outcome variable) | Quantitative research |
| Anholt, S. (1998) | Product provenance | Nation branding perceptions | Quantitative research (surveys) |
| Anholt, S. (2005) | Tourism Culture & heritage Exports People Governance Immigration & investment | Nation branding | quantitative research (surveys) |
| Anholt, S. (2007) | Culture & heritage Political competitiveness Economic competitiveness | | Bibliographic Review |
| Bilkey, W.J. and Nes, E. (1982) | Less developing countries More developing countries Coo effect | Products preferences | Literature review |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Grosse, R. and Treviño, L.J. (1996) | Culture distance, Geographic distance Bilateral trade, Homecountry gdp | FDI in USA | Secondary data analysis |
| Papadopolous, N., & Heslop, L. (2002) | Product country image | Brand equity | Research Review |
| Thomas, D.E. and Grosse, R. (2001) | Cultural distance Geographic distance Bilateral rate Exchange rate Trade | FDI | Empirical test |
| José I. Rojas-Méndez, Steven A. Murphy, Nicolas Papadopoulos (2013) | Product purchase intentions Travel intentions Intention to develop ties Overall attitude | Behavioral intentions toward the U.S. Behavioral attitude toward the U.S. | Exploratory (qualitative) and descriptive (quantitative) studies |

2.3. Sustainability

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987. P. 8) sustainability is a development process that *“meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*. *“Is the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary duty of companies towards society”*, as Carroll (1979) describes (as seen in Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2013). Sustainability, as an idea emerged at the early 80’s, specifically in 1980 and linked the issues derived from both the nature and society (Kates et al., 2001). In the years passed by then, several protocols have been created to guide and secure the implementation of the whole process for sustainability, by companies and countries worldwide; such the ISO14000 or the ISO 26000, developed by the International Organization for Standardization (Kates et al., 2001), describing the rules for social responsibility actions to be taken by corporations and societies.

The recent literature shows that sustainability efforts have influence on the firms competitiveness and performance (Chandler, 1962; Kumar & Christodoulopoulou, 2013; Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Jacobs et al., 2010; Porter & Van der Linde, 1995; Rao & Holt, 2005; Sen et al., 2006), value (Kumar & Christodoulopoulou, 2013; Pätäri et al., 2012; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2009; Reverte, 2012; Montabon, Sroufe, & Narasimhan, 2007; Jacobs, Singhal, and Subramanian, 2010), higher profitability (Russo & Fouts, 1997), reduce firm risk (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2009), meet stakeholders' expectations (Bansal & Clelland, 2004), consumers responses and satisfaction (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006) or have an influence on marketing assets (Chabowski, Mena and Gonzalez-Padron, 2011).

3. Theoretical framework

The resource advantage theory (R-A theory hereafter; Hunt, 1995; Hunt and Morgan, 1996) can be used here as a theoretical framework to investigate the importance of the determinant factors to develop a country brand. This theory states that comparative advantages in a firm's resources create a competitive advantage in the marketplace, which in turn will result in the firm's superior financial performance. The latter is supposed to be the primary objective of the firm (Arnett and Madhavaram, 2012). Interestingly, the R-A theory defines resources as the tangible and intangible entities available to the firm that enable it to produce efficiently and/or (Hunt and Morgan, 1996: 322). In R-A theory the concept of value, as it is also understood in marketing, refers to the sum of benefits that consumers perceive they will receive from a market offering. Under this theory, resources are both significantly heterogeneous across competitors and imperfectly mobile, meaning that they are not commonly, easily, or readily bought and sold in the marketplace).

Although countries are much more complex than a firm, the R-A theory can also be applied in this context. A country can also aspire to achieve superior financial performance (i.e. increase in country's product exports, attract more foreign tourists, enhance foreign direct investments, etc.) by managing its tangible and intangible resources (natural resources, culture, history, society, etc.) in a competitive manner. Nation branding can result in a positive gain for countries as they obtain a distinctive image in a competitive global market. Consequently, like a firm, a country should strive to identify its resources and potential critical dimensions (both positive and negative) in

order to design, implement, and maintain the appropriate brand image for its different audiences, which in turn will contribute to its success.

Following this approach, Anholt (2002) argues that a useful metaphor is to view countries as corporate brands rather than product brands. Parallels between corporations and countries seem to be more evident: corporations have logos, jargons, culture, and employees, while countries have flags, languages, culture, and citizens, respectively. This is also reinforced by the fact that a nation brand has a multidimensional nature and diverse stakeholder interactions (Hankinson, 2004; Trueman et al., 2004). Today, it is considered to be the norm even by emerging and developing countries that allocate significant budgets to build and maintain an attractive nation brand (Herstein, 2012). It is like accepting that the question facing nations is not whether to brand but rather how to brand (Hanna and Rowley, 2011).

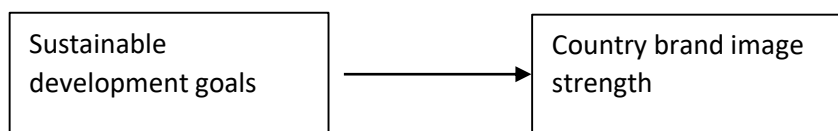
The question of how to brand a country thus emerges. One of the elements that are increasingly demanded today both from individuals and from societies in general is sustainability. The term sustainable development was conceived for a macrolevel that “calls for a convergence between the three pillars of economic development, social equity, and environmental protection” (Drexhage and Murphy 2010, p. 2). In other words, it is a hypernorm that offers universal principles. Companies have been increasingly attempting to embrace it, in the form of CSR, which reflects the highest expectations of citizens, consumers and investors concerning economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection (Eberhard-Harribey 2006). The underlying reason for increased CSR adoption from companies is based on the numerous positive outcomes which have been inked to that. For example, Corporate Social Responsibility perceptions have been shown to have a positive impact on various types of responses, such as brand reputation (Brammer and Millington 2005), firm credibility (Lafferty 2007), consumer–company identification (Mari’n and Ruiz 2007; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), the consumer’s purchase intention (Trudel and Cotte 2009) and attitude towards the firm (Brown and Dacin 1997; Du et al. 2011; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001).

Building on the fact that countries can be seen as corporations (Anholt, 2002), we argue that the inclusion of sustainability elements can positively influence a country’s brand, as CSR activities are related with the firms’, here countries performance (Reverte, 2012; Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2013, p.5). This is also due to the fact that consumers are willing to make an effort to support socially responsible businesses and punish

irresponsible organizations. Similarly, we argue that individuals will positively evaluate a country brand, based on its degree of sustainability. It has been underlined that nation branding strategies should not be developed as silos based on one or two specific dimensions exclusively without considering the impact on, or by, other relevant concepts (Rojas-Mendez, 2013). A more holistic approach should be adopted when developing an international positioning strategy, which at the same time allows their country to differentiate from what competitors are offering. The positioning statement must have sufficient depth to be translated into multi-faceted sub-positions that have relevance and meaning to each stakeholder group (Gilmore, 2002). Developing a country brand strategy based on stakeholders' point-of-view can lead to greater revenues, lower costs, price premiums, customer loyalty, purchase intent, and higher profits (Rojas-Mendez, 2013).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015 along with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although led by member states, the post-2015 development agenda encourages the private sector to support the SDGs in partnership with governments and civil society. Historically, this support would form part of more traditional (philanthropic) corporate responsibility programmes, but increasingly such corporate activities are viewed as strategic ways to create value.

Figure 1: Sustainability and country brand image



4. Methodology

Secondary data analysis increasingly is used in corporate governance (Bailey & Peck, 2013; Ravasi & Zattoni, 2006) and management studies (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudielko, 2017; He & Baruch, 2010). Among the secondary data gathered were sustainability development report, tourism reports and insights, population policies, trade and development reports, from World Bank to United Nations. These insights supported our interpretation of the emerging themes concerning sustainability's role and impact on the country brand. The use of multiple sources contributes to the reliability and validity of the data and lessens the risk of common method bias (Jakobsen & Jensen, 2015).

The connection between sustainability goals and country brand has not been tested within the real-world context. As a result, a case study research method (Yin, 2003) is proposed for aiming to understand their connection, as well as formulating an improved and contextualized framework based on the opportunities and strategic focus of country brands. The case study can lead the research using a theoretical framework analyzed beforehand, thus guiding the data collection and analyses (Woodside, 2010; Yin, 2003). In analyzing the case study, the authors examine the viability of the existing theories and models and may raise new themes and propose important theory extensions to the existing model based on the circumstances of banking organizations.

The country brand strength index (CBSI) developed by Fetscherin (2010) is used, which assesses the strength of a country brand based on objective secondary data. This index represents an alternative measurement to the existing subjective survey-based measurement indexes. The most recent sustainability reports of the SDG Index rankings were analysed in order to assess their support for the SDGs. This paper is investigating cases of four different countries, namely Greece, Cyprus Israel and Egypt. Secondary data are used for each of the countries, which scores and values are analysed in the next section.

5. Analysis

As the paper is based on Fetcherin's model on Country Brand Strength Index (CBSI), the present analysis uses secondary data from same or equivalent sources which then are analysed with the same method; an equation. Following that, as the authors measure the sustainability index as well, correlations are made to find any possible relationships. Fetcherin (2010, pp. 470), formulates the following equation to measure the CBSI for each country;

$$CSBI_i = f(E_i + T_i + F_i + M_i + G_i)$$

Exports in goods and services (E), Tourism Arrivals, inward Foreign Direct Investment (F), Immigration level (M) and Governance Environment Index (G) are the variables indicating numbers for each country and formulate the CSBI. Table 3 below indicates the source for each of the data. The letter *i* indicates each country.

Table 3. Source of each of the data.

| Variable | Source |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Exports (E) ^a | World Bank 2019 |
| Tourism (T) ^b | United Nations World Tourism Organization |
| FDI (F) | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2019 |
| Immigration (M) | United Nations Report on World Population Policies 2019 |
| Government (G) ^c | World Bank 2019 |
| Sustainability | Sustainability Development Report 2019 |

Notes: ^a Data are available for all the countries measured except Israel with one-year older data; ^b Egypt is the only country which data are not available as recent as the other countries – one year delay; ^c The Governance Environment Index is not measured with Li and Filer's (2007) index as its available data go back to 2001 and 2014 and for some countries, they are no data.

All data collected are from recent reports and sources, however, for the governance variable a new source was used, World Bank 2019. Li and Filer (2007) introduced an index for which sources are outdated or do not cover all the countries. Therefore, same or similar variables measured and calculated are found through the worldwide governance indicators by World Bank 2019.

Modifications for each of the values is made in order to give an equal comparison among the countries. According to Fetcherin (2010, pp. 40), the variables of Exports, Tourism, FDI and Immigration must be divided by the population of each country to get a relative value per capita. Therefore, the equation is changed to;

$$CSBI_i = \frac{E_i}{x_i} + \frac{T_i}{x_i} + \frac{F_i}{x_i} + \frac{M_i}{x_i} + G_i$$

Based on the above measurements, the CBSI is calculated for all the four countries; Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Egypt, and their results are presented in Table 4, as is the Sustainability Development Report Ranking. The results show that the highest score or

alternatively the strongest country brand corresponds to Cyprus whilst the lowest score which means the weakest country brand corresponds to Egypt. Egypt has in all its values a negative score, thus is resulting into a negative CSBI.

Table 4. CBSI results.

| Rank | Country | CBSI | SDG ranking and score |
|------|---------|-------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Cyprus | 20.04 | 61 st score:70.1 |
| 2 | Israel | 15.91 | 49 th score: 71.5 |
| 3 | Greece | 12.27 | 50 th score:71.4 |
| 4 | Egypt | -1.55 | 92 nd score: 66.2 |

At this point, as the CSBI per country is gained, a correlation between this score and the sustainability score is made to find possible relationships. Running the linear regression analysis, it is found that the measurement made is not statistically significant, or alternatively there is no significant relationship.

Following this, correlations among all the variables is calculated to explore further relationships. As shown in table 5, statistically significant relationships matter among exports and governance ($p < 0.01$) as well as exports and country brand strength index ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, the level of immigration seems to have an impact on the governance ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Correlations results.

| Correlations ^a | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Exports in Goods and Services (E) | Level of Immigration (M) | Governance Index (G) | Country Strength Brand Index (CBSI) |
| Exports in Goods and Services (E) | 1 | - | .994** | .986* |
| Level of Immigration (M) | - | 1 | .963* | - |
| Governance Index (G) | .994** | .963* | 1 | .967* |
| Country Brand Strength Index (CBSI) | .986* | - | .967* | 1 |

Notes: ^aPearson Correlations are made

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

- No significant correlation

All in all, the variable of Governance tends to be the variable with the most significant correlations, as it is shown that it has statistically significant relationships with Exports, Immigration and Country Brand Strength Index. On the other hand, Tourism, Inward FDI and Sustainability Ranking are the variables with none effects on any of the variables measured.

6. Conclusion and discussion

This research examines the relationship between a country's brand image and its sustainability efforts. A major contribution of this study is that it connects a country's sustainability efforts with its brand image. The previous literature focused on country branding has examined a variety of variables which are affecting the country's image. Some of them such as the environment or society are in fact linked to issues of sustainability. The sum of actions applied towards sustainability had yet to be examined as a parameter affecting a country's brand image.

Firstly, this research also sheds light on the application of resource advantage theory in the context of nation branding. Building on the fact that the management of a country's resources can provide a country with a competitive advantage, this research underlines how the implementation of sustainability-oriented actions can be perceived as such a resource (Arnett and Madhavaram, 2012). Furthermore, through the identification of the importance attributed to sustainability in the context of country branding, this research answers the established question of "what to brand" for a country (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). The results also identify that the significance of the relationship for the country brand image strength dimensions varies.

As far as the relationship between sustainability efforts and country brand image strength are concerned, the following was identified. The findings characterize the relationship as more complex and require distinctions between countries. In particular, while for Israel, Egypt and Greece the ranking on the SDG report is in line with their ranking of country brand image strength, this is not the case for the case of Cyprus. According to the score of its country brand image strength, Cyprus was expected to have the highest ranking

among the examined countries. This could be justified through a variety of factors and is an interesting avenue for future research.

7. Implications and Future research

7.1.- Academic Implications

This paper stands out from existing studies, as it is the first that examined the relationship between the country's efforts to build a positive country brand image and its actions and policies towards sustainable development. Until now, several studies have shown the importance of the environment (Hanna et al., 2015; Rojas-Mendez, 2013; Oliveira Santos et al., 2017; Passow et al., 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 2016; Suna et al., 2016; Anholt, 2005; Anholt, 2007; Grosse & Treviño, 1996), the economy (Fetscherin, 2010; Fan, 2006; Rojas-Mendez, 2013; Passow et al., 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2013; Suna et al., 2016; Ravi, 2010; Skinner, 2017; Paswan & Sharma, 2004; Pamment, 2014; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Anholt, 2005; Anholt, 2007; Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Grosse & Treviño, 1996; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Papadopoulos & Malhotra, 2007) and the society (Passow et al., 2005; Papadopoulos et al., 2016; Paswan et al., 2003; Kaneva, 2011; Ahn & Wu, 2013; Kurt Matzler, Strobl et al., 2016; Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Pan, 2019; Fetscherin, 2010; Lee et al., 2009; Rojas-Mendez, 2013; Ryu et al., 2016; Suna et al., 2016; Zenker et al., 2017; Paswan & Sharma, 2004; Pamment, 2014; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Anholt, 2005; Anholt, 2007; Grosse & Treviño, 1996; Keillor & Hult, 1999; Keillor et al., 1996; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Thomas & Thomas, 2001) as main variables (in a wide range and meaning) of research in the field of country brand image.

However, none of them found to deal with the subject of sustainability, as a way of living, but also a way of strategy for the country's future and global communication. Furthermore, none of these studies, has found to present the country's efforts for sustainability, as the basis by which the country's stakeholders perceive the country's brand image and cooperate with that 'corporate unit' (the country); influencing and enhancing the country's external image and increasing its rates of exports, tourism, FDIs, and immigration rates.

7.2. Managerial Implications

This research has some important practical contributions. Firstly, results indicate the influence that governance environment has on exports, immigration and CSBI.

Additionally, correlations also show that there is a strong relationship between the level of exports and CSBI as well. These findings give the message of the emphasis that must be given on these five variables and especially on the governance's policies, as it is the most influential value. The analysis should be utilized as a medium by which managers should use specific strategies and messages while promoting or building on their country's image. Or, in another way, managers or other stakeholders can take advantage of the above results and improve various actions and policies which have an impact on the country image.

Secondly, as the CSBI contains of five variables; FDI, exports, immigration, tourism and governance, it was shown that only three of them showed vital influences on CSBI which are the level of immigration, exports in goods and services and governance's policies. Therefore, as these are the most influential ones, it is recommended to give a greater emphasis on these while thinking for enhancing a country's image. Stakeholders are guided to build or enhance on each score in order to gain a high and positive value.

Thirdly, it is of high importance to understand the content by which CSBI is analyzed. Precisely, speaking of Egypt's CSBI, in order to understand the reason of its negative value someone must break down the variables and its scores. Understanding its low or/and negative scores, stakeholders can think of ways to first improve its general environment and then promote it outwards. In other words, the actual problems must firstly be understood and solved before any promotion. Governance tends to be the variable which in turn influences exports, immigration and as a result CSBI. Therefore, while building on a country image it is suggested that the first step for developing on must be the governance's policies which later lead to how various processes will proceed.

7.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has some limitations that continued research can address. First, though the SDG rating for each country is examined, the various dimensions of sustainability are not examined separately. Confirming our results with the examination of all the sustainability goals would be helpful. Second, the study examines specific countries, precisely Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt. To generalize our findings continued research to examine other countries would be of great interest. Furthermore, the examination of secondary data also includes certain limitations, which could be addressed with the inclusion of a primary research. Finally, a specific time period was chosen for the extraction of data. The

examination of a longer time period would significantly contribute to the generalizability of our findings.

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To follow the leader... or not: Influencer-product-follower congruence on Instagram

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Keywords: *Instagram, Influencers, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, Congruence, Product Attitude, Consumer Intentions.*

Instagram is the most used social networking site by influencers, especially for fashion brands (Klear, 2018). Influencer marketing will represent a \$15 billion industry in 2022 up from the current \$8 billion (Business Insider, 2019). Therefore, marketers are adopting influencer marketing to address and retain customers with greater efficacy than traditional celebrity-based advertising (Evans et al., 2017); such as higher purchase intentions (Lou and Yuan, 2019), recommendations (Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019), engagement (Hughes et al., 2019), or brand awareness (Lou and Yuan, 2019). However, actions with influencers may also not be as effective as previously established, leading to negative consequences for brands (Fashionista, 2019).

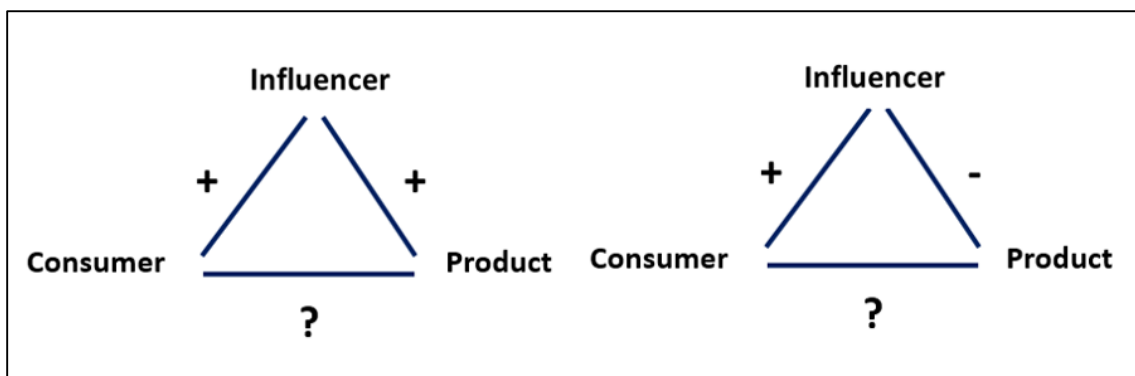
Given this double perspective, the aim of this research is to analyze the jointly effect of the congruence between the three main actors of an influencer marketing campaign (the influencer, the follower and the sponsored product on Instagram) on the followers' attitude and behavioral intentions toward the product on a fashion influencer's account.

Following balance theory (Heider, 1946), the relationships between (1) the influencer and the product and (2) the influencer and the consumer may have a joint effect (see Figure

1). When both relationships are positive and coherent, it is thus foreseeable that the relationship between the consumer and the product will also be positive. However, if one of these relationships is not positive and coherent, this can lead to a change in the final relationship between the consumer and the product. Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: When there is a high consumer-influencer congruence, a higher (lower) level of influencer-product congruence leads to a higher (lower) level of consumer-product congruence.

Figure 1. Relationships between the consumer, the influencer and the product advertised.



Source: Own elaboration based on Petty and Cacioppo (1981)

Numerous studies have argued and contrasted the relationship between the congruence of a product's image and the consumer's image with positive product evaluations in different contexts (Graeff, 1996). These results clearly show that consumers tend to evaluate more positively products that have a perceived image similar to their own image (Graeff, 1996), resulting in more positive attitudes toward these products. Therefore:

H2: Congruence between the consumer and the product has a positive influence on consumer's attitude toward the product.

When attitudes toward the products (or brands) advertised are generated, these attitudes will guide their future behaviors in a future purchase decision (Lu et al., 2014; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Additionally, when customers generate positive attitudes toward a product or brand, they are more prone to recommend it to others (De Matos and Rossi, 2008). Therefore:

H3a: Attitude toward the product has a positive influence on consumer's intention to purchase the product.

H3b: Attitude toward the product has a positive influence on consumer's intention to recommend the product.

An experimental design was addressed to 372 followers of a British top fashion influencer. The experiment was carried out through an online survey in which participants were asked to read a hypothetical fact about an influencer post. The manipulation consisted of showing a picture of the influencer with a high congruent outfit (her usual style) or a low congruence outfit (a style that she does not normally wear on her photos) that were supposedly published on her Instagram account. A pre-test was carried out first to test the suitability of the scenarios. To test the research hypotheses in the main experiment, we adapted 7-point Likert scales previously validated in the literature for consumer-influencer congruence (Casaló et al., 2018), influencer-product congruence and consumer-product congruence (Xu and Pratt, 2018), attitude toward the product (Silvera and Austad, 2004), intention to recommend (Bigne et al., 2001) and to purchase the product (Sia et al., 2009; Xu and Pratt, 2018).

The manipulation-check related to the influencer-product congruence (high congruence vs. low congruence) was confirmed by conducting an independent samples t-test. In addition, to check the validity of the measurement instrument, we confirmed the dimensional structure of the scales, the composite reliability indicators (Steenkamp and Geyskens, 2006) and the discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

An independent samples t-test was conducted to test H1. The results confirm that when there is a high consumer-influencer congruence, a higher (lower) level of influencer-product congruence leads to a higher (lower) level of consumer-product congruence, supporting H1. To test hypotheses H2 and H3 of our framework, we developed a structural equation model, using the statistical software EQS 6.1. Results reveal that a high congruence between the consumer and the product generates a more favorable attitude toward the sponsored product, which in turn leads to higher intentions to purchase and recommend that product.

Our findings are in accordance with balance theory (Heider, 1946); a greater degree of alignment between all the actors increases the effectiveness of the marketing action. Increasing follower's recommendations by means of influencer-product-consumer congruency is particularly noteworthy since it is an opportunity for enhancing the impact of the influencer's campaign by means of viral marketing. In turn, the capacity of our framework to explain consumer's purchase intention represents a contribution to the

research field, since there is an increasing debate about influencer's capacity to convert their marketing actions in followers' purchases (Evans et al., 2017).

As for managerial implications, companies considering to perform influencer marketing actions, should deeply analyze the possible options and the existence of congruence between the influencer they want to collaborate with, their target audience (similar to the influencer's followers) and the product they want to advertise.

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Review Online Ratings: An Analysis of Product Attributes and Competitive Environment

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Keywords: *arousal, advertising, brand recall, ad recall, skin conductivity*

Online reviews generated by consumers have reached a huge diffusion among buyers and constitute an important marketing communications tool for companies that allow them to successfully promote a product/service with a relevant impact on the performance of a company. Due to it, there are a widespread literature focused on online reviews generation and what features influence its rating (Liu, Steenkamp, and Zhang 2018; Ketelaar et al. 2015; Kim, Jun, and Kim 2018; Mathwick and Mosteller 2017). Despite this, to the best of our knowledge, there are two research gaps in the previous literature. Firstly, most of the works adopt a consumer perspective while studies focused on product/service characteristics are scarce (Martin-Fuentes 2016; Li and Hitt 2010). This study tries to adopt a less developed approach in previous studies and tries to analyze what attributes of a product or service are relevant when it comes to getting a good online assessment of consumers as well as to analyze if the competitive environment of the company also affects the ratings. More specifically, our study tries to analyze whether the differentiation in services, the size of the offer provided by the company, the company age, product quality, price and competitive environment have an impact on online review ratings.

Based on a sample of 1870 Spanish hotels and using stepwise regression to select the best set of predictors to model online rating with OLS. Results from stepwise process led to a final model that includes all variables all except differentiation and size and product

quality has the greatest explanatory power which indicates that the objective quality of the product/service is reflected in online reviews. Results from Table 1 show that age, price and quality are characteristics of a product/service that positively impact the online rating given by consumers. Additionally, the competitive environment also has an impact on the online rating and paradoxically, areas with a higher concentration of competitors allow companies to obtain a better evaluation as long as the competitors are not co-located very close to the company. These findings can support company managers to manage consumers online reviews and help marketers in promoting a product / service.

Table 1. Final model estimation

| Variable | Coefficient | Standard Error | p-value |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------|---------|
| Intercept | -0.1732 | 7.8E-1 | 0.8235 |
| Age | 0.0010*** | 3.9E-4 | 0.0080 |
| Price | 9.4E-4* | 5.2E-5 | 0.0703 |
| 2* | 0.0268 | 0.0025 | 0.2894 |
| 3* | 0.0632*** | 0.0231 | 0.0064 |
| 4* | 0.1350*** | 0.0232 | 7.4E-9 |
| 5* | 0.2049*** | 0.0271 | 5.9E-14 |
| Competitors | 8.9E-5** | 3.7E-5 | 0.0151 |
| Distance | 0.0030* | 0.0016 | 0.0553 |
| R² | 0.1343 | | |

***p<0.01

**p<0.05

*p<0.1

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Is streaming killing or saving the cinema? An exploratory study.

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Abstract

Movies and other media goods are traditionally distributed through the sequential distribution strategy. Thus, films are delivered across distinct channels as theatres and streaming/VOD (Video-on-Demand) platforms. The optimality of the sequential distribution and the timing of channel openings have become a matter of debate among marketing scholars and industry experts. A current debate regards the potential technological disruption which new streaming/VOD services (e.g., Netflix) may implement at the expense of theatres. This research investigates four elements affecting the moviegoers' decision -making process. These elements concern the characteristics of theatres and online services, the movie genre, the “star power” effect, and reviews. Findings from this study suggest that the elements of the theatre's physical evidence and the movie genre have a positive impact on moviegoers' decision -making process when choosing the viewing channel. These findings are strictly related to sensorial experience in watching movies.

Keywords: *motion picture industry, sequential distribution, theatre, streaming/VOD, movie genre, star power, reviews.*

1. Introduction

Recent developments concerning the distribution of movies led to a renewed interest in the sequential distribution strategy. This distribution methodology is structured into three temporal steps named “windows”. Release windows are referred to theatres premier, the distribution through retail markets, and, finally, the release on streaming/VOD (Video-on-Demand) services (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007).

The media markets are facing essential changes due to the digitalization processes and innovations, which affect the media organizations’ distribution models (Dogruel, 2015). Consequently, the consumer experience offered by theatres might be under serious assault by substitute channels. Hence, the shrinking or the abolition of the sequential distribution represents the main competitive threat for motion picture theatres (Silver & McDonnell, 2007).

There are four main elements influencing potential viewers are theatre’s physical evidence and online services characteristics, the movie genre, the “star power” effect, and reviews. This research aims to investigate which of these elements are positively evaluated by viewers when choosing to attend theatres rather than use streaming/VOD services, such as Netflix or Amazon Video. In this study, it will be argued if the rising of new online services may represent a technological disruption to the detriment of theatres’ attendance, and which investigated elements might be leveraged to keep theatres competitive in the market.

Multi-platform distribution strategies have been applied to film production, marketing, and distribution for decades. For instance, the windowing strategy is still adopted in the movie industry (Sattelberger, 2015). The sequential distribution strategy has always been the traditional distribution plan for a film. Sequential distribution consists of a marketing strategy designed to make products which are available through different retail channels, at different times. Indeed, this type of distribution turns out to be an effective way for producers and distributors to maximize their revenue, enlarging both the movies’ life - cycle and the potential audience (Nam, Chang & Park, 2015). This strategy is structured into three steps: First, the theatre premiere also called “release window” (35 -60 days); Second, movie release to retail markets through DVDs and Blu-ray/HD discs; Thirdly, movie release on streaming/VOD platforms and, eventually, television (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007). The shift from theatrical release to multi-platform digital delivery is

changing the relationship between the steps which set up the traditional sequential distribution strategy (Hilderbrand, 2010).

A study conducted by the National Association of Theatre Owners (2017) concluded that 33% of moviegoers, who are people watching 5-9 or more movies per year, also spend 15 or more hours per week on streaming/VOD platforms. It also demonstrated that online services would not pose a threat to the theatrical industry (Fithian, 2018). Indeed, film-makers still identify theatres as the most remunerative channel to turn a profit. On the other hand, streaming/VOD services are fast-growing distribution channels which could be used by movie producers and distributors to reach the wider audience possible, and extend the life-cycle of movies (Fagerjord&Kueng, 2019). Moreover, new viewing channels offer opportunities to consumers by enhancing the consumer experience, providing flexible programming possibilities and cost savings (Eliashberg, Elberse&Leenders, 2006). Despite new technologies, the theatrical release is still classified as the heart of exhibition for movies. Thus, the box office, which represents the first step of a movie distribution plan, could help film-makers and distributors in forecasting the eventual success on other channels (Chang & Ki, 2005). Indeed, through new technologies, the sequential strategy could be utilized to maximize producers' revenues by acting on audiences' preferences in releasing movies at different times and prices through different channels (Nam, Chang & Park, 2015).

Researchers have examined the characteristics of theatres and streaming/VOD platforms and the relative impact of the viewing channels concerning moviegoers' purchase intention (Boddy, 2008; Kim & Kim, 2017; Casetti, 2011). Studies to date (Visch et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Marshall et al., 2013; Zhuang et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2017; Song et al., 2018; Ulker-Demirel et al., 2018) have also investigated the elements affecting moviegoers' purchase intention during their decision-making process, more in details during the phases of information search and evaluation of alternatives. These elements are theatre's physical evidence and streaming/VOD services characteristics; movie genre; star power, and reviews. To the best of our knowledge, there is no research investigating the relation between movies' elements and streaming/VOD features, equating theatres and online platforms in terms of the movies' release date. Indeed, this field of study could represent a useful indication to predict a possible technological disruption caused by online platforms at the expense of theatres and related marketing implications.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Theatre's physical evidence VS Streaming/VOD services*

The movie theatre, over its century-old history, has faced several threats. One of the current menaces, due to external factors, is represented by new viewing channels, in particular: streaming and VOD (Video-on-Demand) services (Song et al., 2018). Despite the ongoing technological development in media consumption channels, the movie theatre persists in the media market, especially through its symbolic and experiential values and characteristics (Corbett, 2001). As regards the technological aspects, movie theatre can claim an undisputed superior experience, in contrast to home video channels, even the most expensive and developed ones. Moreover, movie theatre can also boost its appeal as a public event. Hence, movies released simultaneously on streaming/VOD platforms and in theatres on the same day, and related first window, would not necessarily affect moviegoing to cinemas (Corbett, 2001).

Focusing on new media channels, migration to streaming/VOD services is typified by the undoing of the filmic experience, due to new consumption patterns, characterized by devices' features and mandatory tracks (Casetti, 2011). Furthermore, online films consumption releases consumers from both spatial and temporal constraints. For instance, streaming/VOD services consumers do not result confined by screening schedules. Consumers can access on-demand movies through different devices at any time, and everywhere (Song et al., 2018). Moreover, consumers have a wider selection of movies through online platforms, with libraries and databases constantly expanding. Thus, new technologies could benefit producers and distributors in the movie industry, providing them with lower costs and higher visibility. On the other hand, this market development could affect box office performance (Kim & Kim, 2017). Both the theatricalization of the domestic and mobile/PC consumption via online services represent a significant transition in viewing experience (Boddy, 2008).

Notwithstanding these changes in the movie industry, theatres still represent the idea of a living space featured by physical and symbolic values (Casetti, 2011). The higher level of technology provided by theatres to consumers, their hedonic characteristics and experiential values are all factors which made theatres competitive in the market. On the other hand, streaming/VOD services could represent a technological disruption in the movie industry, due to their new consumption patterns and ductility. Hence:

H1a: Theatre's physical evidence has a positive impact on moviegoers' viewing channel decision.

H1b: Streaming/VOD characteristics have a positive impact on moviegoers' viewing channel decision.

2.2. *Movie genre*

The movie is a medium acknowledged for its ability in enhancing the response to emotional stimuli through its immersive capacities (Visch, Tan & Molenaar, 2010). Because of movies' hedonic characteristics, movie selection results permeated by personal preferences, such as movie genre (Song et al., 2018). Moreover, genres categorisation and choice require specific cognitive competences of the viewer. Usually, film genres are selected by moviegoers based on three elements: viewer's attention stimulated by the genre itself, narrative expectations and emotional mood (Visch, Tan & Molenaar, 2010). According to Visch and Tan (2008), genre recognition is driven by two types of cues: stylistic cues and narrative cues, where stylistic ones result to be more influential than narrative ones, concerning moviegoers' purchase intention. Besides genres' intrinsic elements, researchers tend to agree that genre represents an essential aspect, which influences both consumers' decision and box office performance (Marshall, Dockendorff & Ibáñez, 2013).

Genre is an element which designates movies' characteristics (Song et al., 2018). Movies' aspects affecting the product's quality are strictly related to movie genres. Indeed, elements such as visual effects, costume design, soundtrack, makeup, special features and plot structure are all elements dependent on the genre's binaries and characteristics (Zhuang et al., 2014). Hence, genre plays an important role in the moviegoing process. Consumers fond of any genres' aspects would decide to choose theatres as consumption channel, in order to appreciate those aspects through the best experiential way possible (Kim & Kim, 2018). Hence:

H2: Movie genre has an impact on moviegoers' viewing channel decision.

2.3. *Star power*

The performance of actors and actress has always been considered as the core element of movies. An actor could be defined as "star" in relation to four main aspects: past awards nominations, actor earnings, actor's number of followers among social media channels,

and, finally, the actor rankings. Studies to date agree that the star power effect represents a fundamental element for movies' success (Lash & Zhao, 2016).

The impact of movie stars, and related performance on box office revenues has been studied by many researchers over the past years. Indeed, a familiar movie star could be perceived by moviegoers as one of the main characteristics of a successful movie (Zhuang et al., 2014). Moreover, according to Elberse (2007), movie stars could lead moviegoers to expect a high-quality product, also in relation to a brand loyalty effect attached to stars. Research regarding the effect of stars performance on box office revenue determined conflicting results (Zhuang et al., 2014). According to Nelson et al. (2001), the nominations and awards for best actor/actress represent a winning element for movie producers to obtain financial success and benefits. On the other hand, researchers as Smith and Smith (1986) argue that the star power effect does not affect the movies' success and related box office revenues, disproving a possible statistical effect related with best actor/actress award.

Notwithstanding the contrasting findings concerning the effect of star power on box office performance, the majority of past research on this topic tend to agree on the positive effects due to stars presence in movies. Indeed, the appearance of famous actors results to be a driving force which could positively affect moviegoers' purchasing and consumption decisions (Song et al., 2018). Thus, in the movie industry, stars could be defined as a key ingredient in order to offer a high-quality product to consumers, and, moreover, to influence moviegoers to purchase the product in theatres, enhancing, in this way, the box office performance (Ulker-Demirel, Akyol & Simsek, 2018). Hence:

H3: Star power has an impact on moviegoers' viewing channel decision.

2.4. Reviews

Films reviews have become an important variable which affects moviegoers' purchasing intention, more in detail: the "information search" and "evaluation of alternatives" phases (Huang, Boh & Goh, 2017). Reviews had been examined on the basis of their sources, which are: critics/expert reviews and OCRs (Online Consumer Reviews). Many studies have examined the impact of electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) generated by the number of OCRs and expert reviews, in the context of cinematic movies. Indeed, researchers agree that it is common for consumers to search for information, both consumer or expert generated, in order to choose which movie to watch and through which consumption channel (Huang, Boh & Goh, 2017).

Focusing on expert reviews, they are written by critics, providing a subjective opinion and comments for audiences (Huang, Boh& Goh, 2017). Indeed, expert ratings result to be based and driven by experts' own preferences. As a result, expert reviews tend to have a stronger impact on moviegoers' final decision when their movie preferences match with the critic's ones (Song et al., 2018). Truly, expert reviews demonstrate their inability to influence general movies environment, while critics' opinions tend to be effective in influencing art-house studios products (Kim, Park & Park, 2013). From a marketing perspective, the role of critics' reviews could be defined as "influencer" or "predictor". Reviews as influencer could be generated by experts and opinion leaders, operating in the online environment. Influencers will positively affect the potential audience and the box office performance. Reviews as predictors result a useful tool to investigate consumers' decision-making process and related final decisions (Ulker- Demirel, Akyol &Simsek, 2018). According to Eliashberg and Shugan (1997), expert reviews can be considered as a predictor for late and cumulative box office revenues. On the other hand, expert reviews result ineffective in predicting early box office outcomes.

As concerns eWOM and OCRs, consumer word-of-mouth can be considered as the most important factor to determine the long-term success of movies. So, OCRs represent a helpful tool for firms, which could adapt their production and promotion processes, in relation to consumer attitudes emerged from online reviews (Dellarocas, Zhang &Awad, 2007). Indeed, eWOM plays a significant role in moviegoers' purchase decision. A characteristic aspect of eWOM is the positive feedback mechanism between reviews and box office performance. So, eWOM generates more product sales, which in turn produce more positive eWOM and then more sales (Duan, Gu &Whinston, 2008). Due to movies' nature of experience good, moviegoers tend to rely upon other consumers' opinions and reviews before choosing the viewing channel (Kim, Park & Park, 2013).

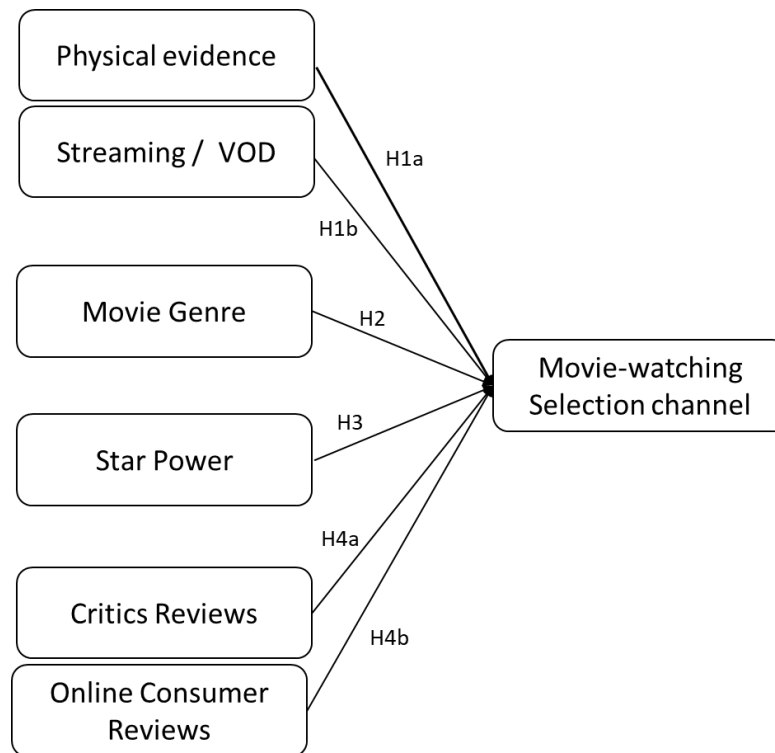
Furthermore, the relation between box office revenue and OCRs influence can be examined from two aspects: eWOM valence and eWOM volume. Previous research tends to agree that box office revenue appears positively influenced by eWOM volume, while eWOM valence significantly affects eWOM volume (Duan, Gu &Whinston, 2008).

Both expert reviews and consumer reviews influence moviegoers' final decision during their phase of evaluation of alternatives. Reviews, especially expert reviews, could also affect moviegoers' channel selection between theatres and online platforms, generally in favour of theatres, which can offer an enhanced immersive experience.

H4a: Critics reviews have a positive impact on moviegoers' viewing channel decision.

H4b: Online Consumer Reviews (OCRs) have a positive impact on moviegoers' viewing channel decision.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

According to the Online Testing eXchange (2005), moviegoers under 25 years old attended fewer movies at theatres in favour of new viewing channels (Silver & McDonnell, 2007). The same research concluded that millennials, who are people born between 1982 and 2005, watch more media products than other generations. Nearly 75% of millennials have at least one streaming video device, and more than 90% of millennials result to be subscribed to at least one streaming service (Tribbey, 2016). According to ComScore (2014), streaming/VOD platforms resulted to be selected as the main channel by 84% of the respondents, and it also found that millennials spent 48% more time on online platforms than average (Ryu & Park, 2018). The main target for both theatres and streaming/VOD platforms can be identified in millennials, especially the teenage/young adult segment. The viewers recognized as millennials represent the core audience upon which theatres tend to rely.

The sample elements are identified in: respondents age (millennials aged 18-32), to have watched a movie in a theater in the last year and to be subscribed to any streaming/VOD platforms (e.g., Netflix, Amazon video, Hulu.com, etc.). The last element concerning the subscription has been chosen to verify if the respondent can ponder and evaluate the two investigated experiences, the one provided by theatres, and the one affordable online. Before collecting data for the final dataset, the survey has been pretested. Nineteen questionnaires have been collected at the end of the pretesting phase. Two questions were deleted, and the remaining ones have been rearranged to provide future respondents with a fair use version of the questionnaire, according to feedbacks emerged from pretesting. As a sampling method, mall intercept was conducted. At the end of the data collection phase, the final dataset was composed of 485 surveys.

3.2. *Measurement Scales*

Four scales were used to measure data, one different scale for each section of the survey. The scales are based on four different existing scales (Table 1). These scales have been adopted for previous research concerning marketing literature and researches. The Brand Experience Scale, used for the first section, examines the brand experience as an internal subjective response, which concerns feelings, sensations, and cognitions of respondents about brand-related stimuli (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). The PDI (Purchase Decision Involvement) scale was used to investigate the movie genres, in the second section of the questionnaire. The PDI scale is structured to measure interests and concerns which consumers bring to bear on a purchase-decision task (Mittal, 1989). The CP (Components of Involvement) scale was adopted to measure the items of the third section. CP is commonly used to test consumers' involvement components concerning engagement and commitment related to a brand (Lastovicka & Gardner, 1979). For the last section of the survey, which concerns reviews, the utilized scale is the PI (Purchasing Involvement) scale. The PI scale results to be an effective tool to investigate the consumers' decision-making process, from pre-search to post-search evaluation, and to examine respondents' behaviours and attitudes towards purchasing (Slama & Tashchian, 1985).

To test the convergent validity of the current design, the "Pearson's product -moment correlation coefficient" was analyzed for each section of the questionnaire." (r). Convergent validity for both items related to theatre and the ones concerning streaming/VOD, were computed for each section of the survey to analyse the correlation

coefficient. In this way, the two variables analysed through correlation were: “Total Section – Theatre”, and “Total Section – Streaming/VOD”. Section 4 “Reviews” was analysed correlating the total score related to critics’ reviews with the total score concerning OCRs (Online Consumer Reviews), according to research hypothesis H4a and H4b.

Table 1. Measurement Scales

| Measurement Scale | Items | Cronbach Alpha |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Brand experience | 6 | .781 |
| Purchase Decision Involvement | 5 | .718 |
| Components of Involvement | 5 | .739 |
| Purchasing Involvement | 6 | .840 |

The first section of the survey presents a positive correlation, $r=.20$, with a small strength of the correlation. The strength of the correlation is due to items’ characteristics tested in the first section, which investigates the theatre’s physical evidence, and streaming/VOD services, according to research hypothesis H1a and H1b. Since the elements concerning both the viewing channels have different natures, a small strength of the relationship was expected for section 1. The correlation coefficient for Section 2 “Movie genre” is $r=.7$. Pearson’s correlation of the third section is $r=.8$, and, in the final section concerning reviews, the correlation is equal to $r=.67$. So, Pearson’s correlation analysis, regarding sections 2 -4, indicates high values of correlation with a large strength of the relationship between variables. Table 2 shows the results of the Pearson’s correlation analysis. Pearson’s correlation analysis, performed for each scale of the survey, indicates that the scales adopted for the current research present an acceptable level of convergent validity.

Table 2. Correlations

| Section 1 – Theatre’s physical evidence VS Streaming/VOD services | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------|---------------|
| | | Theatre | Streaming/VOD |
| Theatre | PearsonCorrelation | 1 | .196 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 485 | 485 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Streaming/VOD | Pearson Correlation | .196 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 485 | 485 |
| Section 2 – Movie genre | | | |
| | | Theatre | Streaming/VOD |
| Theatre | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .704 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 485 | 485 |
| Streaming/VOD | Pearson Correlation | .704 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 485 | 485 |
| Section 3 – Star power | | | |
| | | Theatre | Streaming/VOD |
| Theatre | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .753 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 485 | 485 |
| Streaming/VOD | Pearson Correlation | .753 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 485 | 485 |
| Section 4 – Reviews | | | |
| | | Critics reviews | OCRs |
| Critics reviews | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .668 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 485 | 485 |
| OCRs | Pearson Correlation | .668 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 485 | 485 |

3.3. *Confidence interval for the mean*

As this is an exploratory study, a means comparing analysis was performed to test the hypothesis and discuss the results concerning the target population. The dataset was analysed by examining the confidence interval for the mean for each statement of the four sections. A confidence interval (c.i.) is a range within which an unknown parameter of

the population falls. This range is strictly related to a particular level of confidence, which is 95% for this research (Xiao et al., 2019). In this study, the investigated unknown parameter of the population is the mean (μ). The results, which are presented as an interval with a lower and an upper value, indicate that there is a 95% chance that the confidence interval contains the true population mean. The confidence interval for a mean provides more efficient estimations of the parameter when the research is conducted on a large sample size, which also reduces the value of the standard deviation of the sampling distribution (Hannig, Iyer & Patterson, 2006). Data was analyzed through IBM SPSS.

4. Results

The first section of the research (Table 4) investigates the consumer's experience provided by theatres and streaming/VOD services. Statements 1, 3, and 5 concern theatres, while items number 2, 4, and 6 reflect the responses about online platforms. The three confidence intervals, regarding theatres, present a range which results higher than 4 "Somewhat agree" (item 1: c.i. = 3.97, 4.14; item 3: c.i. = 4.24, 4.40; item 5: c.i. = 4.10, 4.27). So, the population's mean tends to have a high level of approval related to theatres. Hence, theatres' physical evidence has a high impact on viewing channel choice. On the other hand, the items related to streaming/VOD services show a positive tendency of the population's mean, which is, however, situated between the values 3 "Neither agree nor disagree" and 4 (item 2: c.i. = 3.66, 3.81; item 4: c.i. = 3.43, 3.61; item 6: c.i. = 3.65, 3.84). According to results for the first section, theatres can claim a higher value of approval than streaming/VOD services, which are slightly above the central value 3. These results represent a first cue concerning the superior sensorial experience felt by viewers in theatres, notwithstanding the use of expensive and elaborated home-video systems.

The second section (Table 4), referred to the movie genre, presents similar results as the previous section. The first item of the section (item 7) provides a degree of approval related to both viewing channels, in order to measure how important is the movie genre when choosing between different consumption patterns. Item 7 has a confidence interval which goes from 3.86 to 4.05. Hence, the movie genre turns out to be highly evaluated by moviegoers during their decision-making process. Indeed, the population's mean for this statement is close to 4. As regards the other items about theatres attendance and movie genre (items 8 and 10), they show a confidence interval for the mean which goes from values around 3 to values around 3.5. The statements concerning streaming/VOD

channels (items 9 and 11) have a confidence interval level which tends to be between the values 2.5 and 3. So, there are more odds that the population's mean falls in a positive range for theatres, and in a lower one for online platforms, when moviegoers evaluate the movie genre.

Table 4. Confidence Interval Analysis

| | Mean | Std. Dev | Std. Er Mean | 95% C.I | |
|--|------|----------|--------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Consumer experience | | | | | |
| 1. Theatres make a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses | 4.05 | .926 | .042 | 3.97 | 4.14 |
| 2. Streaming/VOD services make a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses | 3.74 | .865 | .039 | 3.66 | 3.81 |
| 3. I find theatres interesting in a sensory way | 4.32 | .879 | .040 | 4.24 | 4.40 |
| 4. I find streaming/VOD services interesting in a sensory way | 3.52 | 1.003 | .046 | 3.43 | 3.61 |
| 5. Theatres appeal to my senses | 4.19 | .989 | .045 | 4.10 | 4.27 |
| 6. Streaming/VOD services appeal to my senses | 3.75 | 1.030 | .047 | 3.65 | 3.84 |
| Movie genre | | | | | |
| 7. In selecting from many types of movie genres you would say that.. | 3.95 | 1.065 | .048 | 3.86 | 4.05 |
| 8. How important would it be to you to view a movie in theatres, in relation to movie genre? | 3.36 | .966 | .044 | 3.27 | 3.44 |
| 9. How important would it be to you to view a movie on streaming/VOD services, in relation to movie genre? | 2.92 | 1.134 | .051 | 2.82 | 3.02 |
| 10. In choosing to attend theatres, how concerned would you be about the outcome of your choice in relation to movie genre? | 3.19 | 1.133 | .051 | 3.09 | 3.29 |
| 11. In choosing to use streaming/VOD services, how concerned would you be about the outcome of your choice in relation to movie genre? | 2.64 | 1.137 | .052 | 2.54 | 2.74 |
| Star power | | | | | |
| 12. Famous actors affect my viewing channel choice | 3.63 | 1.097 | .050 | 3.53 | 3.73 |
| 13. I definitely have a “waiting” for attending movies in theatres because of famous actors’ presence | 3.16 | 1.170 | .053 | 3.05 | 3.26 |
| 14. I definitely have a “waiting” for watching movies on streaming/VOD services because of famous actors’ presence | 3.12 | 1.117 | .051 | 3.02 | 3.22 |

| | | | | | |
|--|------|-------|------|------|------|
| 15. Attending movies in theatres helps me enjoying a star actor performance in a way that I would prefer | 3.68 | .993 | .045 | 3.59 | 3.77 |
| 16. The use of streaming/VOD platforms helps me enjoying a star actor performance in a way that I would prefer | 3.23 | .939 | .043 | 3.15 | 3.32 |
| Online consumer review | | | | | |
| 17. Reading critics reviews will help me make a decision when choosing the viewing channel | 3.12 | 1.283 | .058 | 3.01 | 3.23 |
| 18. Reading online consumer reviews will help me make a decision when choosing the viewing channel | 3.14 | 1.237 | .056 | 3.03 | 3.25 |
| 19. Critics reviews are relevant to me about movies in theatres | 3.36 | 1.162 | .053 | 3.26 | 3.46 |
| 20. Online consumer reviews are relevant to me about movies in theatres | 3.41 | 1.139 | .052 | 3.31 | 3.51 |
| 21. Critics reviews are relevant to me about movies on streaming/VOD services | 3.20 | 1.179 | .054 | 3.09 | 3.30 |
| 22. Online consumer reviews are relevant to me about movies on streaming/VOD services | 3.35 | 1.133 | .051 | 3.25 | 3.46 |

The “Star power” section (Table 4) provides the following results. The first item (item 12: c.i. = 3.53, 3.73) reflects the importance given by the sample to star actors when deciding between attending theatres or using online services. This value results lower than item 7, which measures the importance of the movie genre in section 2. The difference of the impact moved by the elements of star power and movie genre on the channel selection is deeper discussed later. The items investigating the stars acting concerning theatres (items 13 and 15) and streaming/VOD services (items 14 and 16) have a confidence interval level which tends to include the population’s mean around the central value of 3. The statement number 15, concerning the viewing of stars’ performance in theatres, has a confidence interval equal to c.i. = 3.59, 3.77. The sample has a positive evaluation of attending theatres, which are still considered as the best way to enjoy a star actor’s performance.

The fourth section of the study (Table 4), concerning critics’ reviews and OCRs (Online Consumer Reviews), presents an unexpected result. Indeed, both the items about critics’ reviews and OCRs show similar ranges of the confidence interval. Notwithstanding the selected viewed channel, both types of reviews reflect a population tendency which goes from 3 to 3.5. the item 17 and 18, related to the potential impact of both reviews on

viewing channel selection, have an estimated population 's mean which falls in similar ranges (item 17: c.i. = 3.01, 3.23; item 18: c.i. = 3.03, 3.25). Since OCRs are an essential element of online platforms, such as Netflix, while critics' reviews are more related to theatres, divergent results were expected in this section. Instead, reviews of different natures tend to be equally evaluated when deciding the consumption pattern for movies. These ranges of confidence interval may derive from reviews themselves, which generated divergent results also for previous research in the marketing literature.

5. Discussion

Theatres can still claim an enhanced viewing experience than online platforms, notwithstanding the last technological developments in home video systems. Moreover, theatres can provide a stronger impact on moviegoers' senses (Corbett, 2001). The results from the first section suggest that the sample has a high and positive evaluation of attending theatres, in relation to technological elements and symbolic values characterizing theatres. On the other hand, streaming/VOD services result less appealing, providing a minor emotional experience.

The symbolic and cultural values of theatres may be considered as an important and fruitful added value, which should be leveraged by theatre owners to enhance the quality of the experience and the service. It results important to steadily invest in developments and innovation concerning the technological elements available in cinemas, in order to be competitive in the entertainment market. According to Fithian (2018), if the release windows system will be disrupted, streaming/VOD platforms would not pose a threat to the theatrical industry. So, the abolition of the sequential distribution strategy will improve the financial and economic outputs of producers and distributors (Song et al., 2018), without threatening the theatres' exhibitions, which still represent an enhanced viewing experience featured by physical and symbolic values (Casetti, 2011).

The results from the "Movie genre" section suggest that this element is highly evaluated when selecting the viewing channel. Indeed, the statements concerning the approval of the movie genre in relation to theatres present a higher level than the ones regarding streaming/VOD services. The movie genre sets up the peripheral quality of films. The peripheral quality is composed of any artistic elements of movies around actors' performance, such as costume design, visually makeup, and the soundtrack (Zhuang et al., 2014). The peripheral quality of movies is a crucial element in provoking strong emotions to moviegoers, reaching, in this way, a high level of overall quality of the

product. Indeed, movies are recognized as an effective medium to enhance the responses to emotional stimuli of viewers. This impact on moviegoers' sense is due to the key element of immersion, which derives from the artistic cues of the movie genre (Visch, Tan & Molenaar, 2010). Since the population highly evaluates the movie genre in favour of theatres attendance, cinemas are still considered as the best way to enjoy the artistic elements of films such as the soundtrack, special features and the scenography. Findings from this study tend to agree with previous research on movies quality, which identifies theatres as the best viewing channel to appreciate the artistic elements related to movie genres (Kim & Kim, 2018).

Findings from this research indicate that the shrinking of the movie's release windows may not damage the box office performance. For that to happen, producers should design and produce the artistic elements of films to provide a high sensorial experience; in this way, the enhanced viewing available in theatres would be implemented, producing strong emotions on moviegoers. Millennials fond of any genres' aspects tend to attend theatres, which still represent the main source of profits for producers and distributors in the movie industry. Future research concerning the sequential distribution strategy should be conducted for different and specific typologies of movie genres (fantasy, horror, drama, historical, etc.). In this way, it could be possible to analyse the theatres' performance and the number of online connections during the film premiere.

Focusing on the "star power" effect, examined in section 3, the results provide divergent findings than studies to date. The involvement of star actors has always been recognized as a useful marketing tool to reach a positive box office performance (Smith & Smith, 1986). Moreover, the star power effect is defined in previous research as an essential core element of successful movies, enhancing the overall quality of the product (Lash & Zhao, 2016).

The results from this study indicate that the population's mean falls in a range slightly higher than the central value of 3 "Neither agree nor disagree". On the other hand, findings concerning the impact of movie genre on consumers' viewing channel choice show a degree of approval which tends to 4 "Slightly agree". So, when investigating the differences between theatres and streaming/VOD services, the artistic elements characterizing the movie genre have a positive and higher impact on moviegoers' decision-making process than star actors' presence. These findings, which result divergent from many studies to date, are strictly related to the results that emerged from

the first section of the research, concerning the experience provided to consumers by both the viewing channels. Indeed, the star actor's performance will be the same notwithstanding the consumption pattern adopted by viewers, while the artistic features constructing the peripheral quality of movies can enhance the consumer experience in favour of theatres rather than online platforms.

The statement referred to star actors' performance experienced through theatres is the higher valued item of the section. Hence cinemas are recognized as the best way possible to appreciate a star actor's performance. Future research needs to be done to establish whether the star power effect could have a significant impact on consumers' choice, investigating both theatres and online services. Moreover, future analysis of the sequential distribution strategy should also take into account the Oscar awards and nomination, which are defined as an important element of movies overall quality (Chang & Ki, 2005).

The results concerning critics' reviews and OCRs (Online Consumer Reviews), emerged from the fourth section of the study, indicate an impact of reviews which goes from 3 to 3.5. The population's mean revolves around the central value of 3, and it tends to 4. Indeed, part of the respondents tends to provide positive responses for both items related to critics' reviews and OCRs, while other respondents tend to evaluate the effect of reviews on viewing channel selection negatively. Another segment of the sample size answered positively for just one type of reviews rather than the other one. Consequently, these divergent responses bring the degree of approval for reviews in a range which is slightly above 3, showing a slow and little rising to 3.5. Since movies are hedonic products, reliable measurement of the impact of reviews on moviegoers' decision-making process remains elusive, also due to the developments of the online environment (Dellarocas, Zhang & Awad, 2007).

Furthermore, according to previous studies, the critics' reviews have a higher impact on consumers' decision-making process during the first steps of movies' life-cycle, concerning the premiere and the first release window of the sequential strategy (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997). On the other hand, OCRs represent a useful marketing tool to determine the long-term success of movies (Ulker-Demirel, Akyol & Simsek, 2018). Hence, critics reviews are a determining factor to reach a positive outcome from movies' debut, while OCRs are a leveraged tool to boost the life-cycle of films. Consequently, critics reviews are a crucial element to reach positive box office performances, while

OCRs represent an essential element of streaming/VOD platforms, such as Netflix and Amazon Video. So, future research concerning the disruption of the sequential distribution strategy in the movie industry should be mainly focused on critics' reviews.

Quite a few limitations need to be acknowledged in this preliminary study. Firstly, more robust statistical analysis should be provided, in order to test the data more accurately. The lack of empirical evidence and data regarding the same release date of movies for both the viewing channels, such as the number of sold tickets in theatres and the number of online connections on streaming/VOD services, is another limitation. Price sensitivity could also be incorporated in future studies.

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Online media channel choice for CSR communication

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Keywords: *CSR, communication, media channels, websites, newspapers*

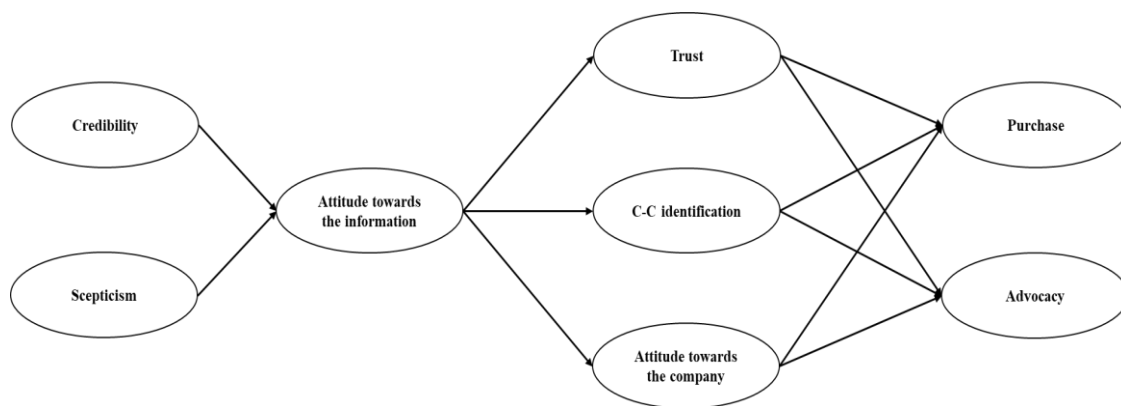
The communication of the activities companies carry out within the scope of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a matter of great transcendence for consumer CSR perceptions (Mercadé-Melé et al., 2017). By reporting on their CSR activities, companies can improve consumer attitudes and behavioral responses while they build corporate image and strengthen consumer relationship outcomes (Du et al., 2010). Nonetheless, to date, there has been little framework development for what makes CSR communication valuable from the consumers' perspective, and further studies are required along this line of research (Kim and Ferguson, 2014).

For example, research on the 'how to communicate' dilemma still lacks a depth exploration of the effect that media channel choice has on consumer responses to CSR communication (Mercadé-Melé et al., 2017, 2018). In this regard, some researchers have explored the differences in the effects of traditional (e.g., newspaper, television, radio, etc) vs. virtual/social media (e.g., social networks, blogs, etc) (Anselmsson and Tunca, 2019; Mercadé-Melé et al., 2017, 2018). Their findings suggest that the impact of media channel choice on consumer responses is significant and that traditional channels usually outperform social media (Mercadé-Melé et al., 2018). Nonetheless, research on CSR communication seems to have neglected the study of another relevant classification in media channel choice, which differentiates between controlled and uncontrolled media (Eisend and Küster-Rohde, 2011). In this regard, traditional marketing and communication theories argue that uncontrolled media (e.g., newspapers, third-party

experts) are more credible than controlled media (e.g., corporate website, social media) and, consequently, they are expected to report better results to companies (Anisimova et al., 2019). The lack of research along this line of study in the CSR context suggests that CSR researchers take this assumption for valid also for CSR communication. Nevertheless, some scattered exploratory research contradicts this idea (Morsing and Schultz, 2006) and even suggests that the opposite may be true for CSR communication (Kim and Ferguson, 2014; Skard and Thorbjørnsen, 2014).

We focus our study on this line of research to fill the existing gaps in previous literature. Basing our arguments on traditional marketing and communication theories, our research goal is to explore whether media channel choice affects consumer perceptions and attitudes towards CSR messages along with their attitudinal and behavioral responses to the company. For this purpose, we present the findings of experimental research in which we look for differences in consumer reactions to the same CSR message when presented to consumers through controlled (i.e., corporate website) or uncontrolled media (i.e., online newspaper). In doing so, we test the conceptual model presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model.



We designed a single-factor between-subjects experimental design with two treatment levels (i.e., corporate website vs. online newspaper) (Mercadé-Melé et al., 2017, 2018). The experimental factor was a piece of information on the CSR activities of a fictitious restaurant chain (i.e. Ecofood) over the last year, which was especially focused on the fight against childhood leukemia. The message conveyed that Ecofood had invested “x” amount of money to collaborate with the cause and it had achieved “x” results because of the collaboration during the last year. In treatment A, the CSR information was presented within the corporate website of the company, as part of the section “Support for Social Causes”. CSR information was presented in first-person narrating style (i.e., “we”), as if

someone within the company narrated the information. In treatment B, the CSR information was presented as an article written in the “Business” section of a fictitious newspaper (i.e. La Tercera). CSR information was presented in third person narrating style (i.e., “the company”), as if an independent journalist narrated the story. In both treatments, information about other key characteristics of the focal company and its CSR activities (e.g., numbers, figures) were kept constant to avoid potential confounding effects (Mercadé-Melé et al., 2017). We purposely used fictitious stimuli (i.e. CSR information, company and newspaper) to avoid that the participants’ knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions towards real companies biased the findings of the study. We used a non-probabilistic sampling procedure, controlled by quotas based on participants’ age and gender. The response rate was 64.3% and, after data collection and processing, 466 valid surveys remained. 226 participants evaluated the website scenario and 240 participants evaluated the newspaper scenario.

The findings suggest that the conceptual model is consistent across the two samples, although media channel choice affects the strength of several relationships in the model significantly. While consumer-company identification plays a stronger role in consumer responses to the CSR message when read in the newspaper, trust is more important for consumers when they evaluate the corporate website. Therefore, this paper contributes significantly to CSR communication practitioners because it provides them with useful information to assist them in choosing the best media channel based on their communication goals. The paper is also valuable to CSR researchers as it provides a hierarchy-of-effects model of CSR communication that is tested robustly against a representative sample of consumers at the same time that we clarify the role that media channel choice plays in the model by discussing useful new empirical evidence.

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Are podcast advertisements effective? An emerging economy perspective

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Keywords: *Podcasts, Podcast Advertising, Advertising Value, Attitude towards Ads (AaD), Attitude towards Brand (AB), Purchase Intentions, eWOM, Ad Placement*

Podcasts, an auditory medium streamed over digital platforms, have been a common part of consumer lives. The consumption of podcasts has seen a steady rise in the past decades. From 2014 to 2023, the market is set to increase at a 13.5% CAGR in India, the third-largest podcast consumption market after the USA and China (PWC, 2019). The rise is attributed to the spread of internet assisted digital platforms and increased smartphone usage. It has resulted in higher podcast advertising budgets by the brands. The advertising spends on podcast advertising in India is expected to be \$96 million in 2025. However, the advertising efficacy of such advertisements and their impact on consumer-brand relationships remains understudied.

The present study investigated the efficacy of podcast advertisements using the theoretical framework of advertising value suggested by Ducoffe (1995). It explored the impact of entertaining podcast ads (ENT), informative podcast ads (INF), and credible podcast ads (CR) on attitude towards the ad (AaD). Further, the effect of AaD on attitude towards the brand (AB) and purchase intentions was assessed. Literature has noted AB as an antecedent to brand electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). So, the effect of AB on e-WOM was also assessed. The moderating role of Ad placement, the position of the

podcast advertisements (pre-roll/mid-roll/post-roll ads) in the audio content, was assessed while studying the effect of podcast ads on AaD.

The data was collected through an online survey instrument with 26 measurement items. Apart from AaD, all the other constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale. AaD was measured with a seven-point semantic differential scale. The questionnaire was administered on 520 respondents and the data analysis was conducted for 389 valid responses. The sample of the study comprised of Millennials from two metropolitan cities of India. The sample consisted of students, teaching, and non-teaching staff from noted business schools of the country. The authors had maintained the adequacy of the sample with appropriate filter questions in order to have a representative sample set. The data was analyzed through the Partial Least Square approach- Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using Smart-PLS 3.0 software.

The results indicated the significant effect of entertaining podcast ads (ENT) and informative podcast ads (INF) on attitude towards ads (AaD) with high predictive precision. But, the credible podcast ad (CR) has no significant effect on AaD. The relationships between AaD to attitude towards the brand (AB) and AB to purchase intentions were found to be significant with moderate predictive precision. AB had a significant effect on e-WOM too but with weak predictive precision. The reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the measurement model were found to be appropriate. Lastly, ad placement didn't play the moderating role for the effect of podcast ads on AaD. Thus, the results empirically established that podcast advertisements were effective in creating consumer-brand relationships, while informative podcast ads were the most effective of the lot.

The study has advanced the academic literature by contributing to the literature of hybrid messages within the domain of integrated marketing communications. The academic contribution has also been noted with millennial consumers' attitude towards ads, attitude towards the brand, purchase intentions, and the formation of e-WOM. The advertisers and podcast platforms would be able to understand the cognitive and conative actions of the podcast consumers. Brands can approach podcast users with newer information and podcast platforms can auto-recommend information and entertainment-related ads for higher ad effectiveness.

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“The largest digital migration in history?”:

#wearedeletingwhatsapp versus #wearenotdeletingwhatsapp

WhatsApp privacy policy crisis in Turkey, brand trust and reaction of users

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Abstract

At the beginning of January, WhatsApp in Turkey announced that they had set a date for the approval of the “WhatsApp Confidentiality Agreement,” however, this caused strong reactions by users both on traditional media and social media as well as the governmental level. In the meantime, the period for the approval or disapproval of the Confidentiality Agreement has been extended to May 15, 2021 by WhatsApp. A great number of WhatsApp users subscribed to other applications especially right after the announcement. The purpose of the paper is to understand the attitudes and behaviors of WhatsApp users towards the brand, their trust level and explore the implications of the Confidentiality Agreement. Why and how WhatsApp users have reacted positively or negatively after the announcement of the agreement. The study aims to uncover the factors that affect the users’ decision to delete WhatsApp or continue using it and how WhatsApp has dealt with this situation. 50 semi-structured interviews are conducted with Turkish WhatsApp users. Moreover, a total of 20,000 tweets have been analyzed. The findings state that WhatsApp users in Turkey still trust the brand performance and even though they have concerns about the data privacy, they do not think that this will create a digital migration to other applications. They are in general sceptical about digital platforms and in the WhatsApp case, they see the negative effect of Facebook/Instagram. They do think that WhatsApp could have communicated with them more efficiently and they have articulated their anger towards WhatsApp for launching this agreement in Turkey, but not

in other countries. They used “Minimization”, “Justification”, “Bolstering”, “Differentiation” and ‘Denial’ response strategies.

Keywords: *crisis, crisis communication, reaction of users, WhatsApp*

1. Introduction

WhatsApp announced on January 4, 2021 that they had set a date-February 8, 2021- and until this date they asked from their users for the approval/disapproval of the “WhatsApp Confidentiality Agreement.” This has immediately caused strong reactions by the users. Some users were concerned that their data would be shared with other parties, but did not act, and some other users expressed their negative reactions to WhatsApp on social media and went further by deleting the application. Users have posted thousands of hashtags on Twitter #WearedeletingWhatsApp or #WearenotdeletingWhatsApp. During this period, which we can consider as a crisis for WhatsApp brand, some users accused the brand for acting inconsiderately, and other users reacted to WhatsApp by supporting the brand. There were mixed actions.

There were 42.3 million WhatsApp users in Turkey on January 3, 2021, but this number dropped dramatically to 40.3 million on January 13, 2021. 2 million people deleted WhatsApp application within 10 days. On the other hand, within these 10 days, other applications similar to WhatsApp increased the number of their users because of the crisis triggered by WhatsApp. For example, the number of users of Telegram in Turkey increased from 4.7 million to 14.1 million. The number of BIP users (Turkish messaging application) increased from 3.7 million to 9.1 million (Caliskan, 2020). The switch from WhatsApp to the other brands was witnessed not only in Turkey. The users of Telegram also increased in the world in January and the founder of Telegram, Pavel Durov, commented on this move in these words: “...witnessing the greatest digital migration in history.”

With the user reactions increasing in Turkey, WhatsApp acted upon this and they posted messages saying that they were protecting the privacy of their users (for example, WhatsApp does not share your contacts with Facebook, WhatsApp cannot see your shared location, WhatsApp cannot read or listen to your personal chats). They also gave advertisement on Instagram and postponed the privacy agreement for another 3 months.

The purpose of this paper is to understand why and how users reacted positively or negatively to the brand and what were the underlying motives for their actions. The working paper summarizes the results of the semi-structured interviews conducted with 50 Turkish WhatsApp users from 3 major cities of Turkey (Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara) to explore their brand perceptions and their reactions to the highly discussed Confidentiality Agreement. In the classification of users' reactions, Coombs (2016) crisis communication response strategies are used. The literature review of the paper is divided into brand trust and crisis communication.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Brand trust*

Increasingly, businesses are focusing more on developing long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with other businesses, customers, other organizations, and employees (Kennedy et al., 2001). Hiscock (2001) states that “the ultimate goal of marketing is to generate an intense bond between the consumer and the brand.” One of the key components of successful long-term relationships is building and maintaining trust (Kennedy et al., 2001).

Trust is conceptualized by Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) and in their conceptualization, trust exists when one party has confidence in the other party in terms of its reliability and integrity. Trust is related with confidence whereby in a relational exchange, one side does not take advantage of the vulnerabilities of the other side. Trust in a brand means that there is a high probability or expectation that the brand will produce positive outcomes for the consumer (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2005, p. 188). Trusting in brands goes beyond expectations of product features or performance and includes emotional appraisal as well (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013, p. 374).

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001, p. 82) define brand trust as “the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function.” Research conducted by Becerra and Korgaonkar (2011) concludes that beliefs about brand trust affect online intentions and is necessary to increase online sales.

Trust is based in part on processing past information. On the other hand, trust is a construct that focuses mainly on the future and ensures that the partner is motivated not to change the conditions of exchange (Gurviez and Korchia, 2003). Brand trust is very

sensitive as it is based on the beliefs of consumers. This makes brand trust vulnerable to major and sudden changes that are outside the control of the organization. An example to illustrate this is that consumers' exposure to new information is coming now primarily through the media, but not from the organizations (Yannopoulou et al., 2011). As stated by Gurviez and Korchia (2003), without trust, there cannot be a permanent relationship.

2.2. Crisis and public reactions

"A crisis, by its very nature, is a chaotic and demanding event often fraught with uncertainty and suffering" (Reynolds, 2006, p. 249). Yannopoulou et al (2011, p. 530) state that crises are inevitable, and organizations and brands cannot escape from crises for long. A good definition of crisis about its nature and consequences are provided in these words: "an organizational crisis is a specific, unexpected, and nonroutine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and simultaneously present an organization with both opportunities for and threats to its high-priority goals" (Ulmer et al., 2017, p.7). Crises differ depending on the type of crisis, the degree of responsibility attributed to the organization for the crisis, the degree of damage caused, the number of stakeholders involved, its industry, the present reputation and the history of the organization (Marsen, 2020, p. 164).

Effective crisis communication is crucial to the successful resolution of the organizational crisis (Kádárová et al., 2015). A fundamental function of crisis communication is to eliminate the unnecessary fear and reduce the uncertainty surrounding the situation by communicating both promptly and accurately about the crisis (Lee and Jahng, 2020, p. 985). Crisis communication aims to provide information that will help the stakeholders make sense of the situation (Van der Meer and Verhoeven, 2017, p. 527). From an organizational point of view, managing a crisis effectively is very important in terms of reestablishing control of the organizations, restoring the corporate image and regaining the stakeholders' trust (Marsen, 2020, p. 164).

Crises response of publics are critical to know because through this, we learn about the effectiveness of communication. The desired effects of crisis communication include minimizing the reputational damage caused by crisis, maintaining purchase intention, and avoiding negative word-of-mouth (Coombs and Holladay, 2014, p. 40). Research conducted by Dawar and Pillutla (2000) shows that consumers interpret the corporate

responses according to their previous expectations about the organization.

Consumers' reactions to crises are far from uniform. Different consumer reactions are mostly caused depending on the relationships established by organizations and brands with their consumers (Ma, 2020). People's attitudes and behavior in response to a crisis are not only affected by the crisis responsibility attributed, but also by the information they receive during a crisis (Bakker et al., 2018). Therefore, messages sent out from organizations should be strategically crafted. In addition to the voice of the organization during crisis, the development of social media has provided public places for people to make their voices heard about the crisis and crisis related messages (Coombs and Holladay, 2014, p. 42).

When rules and customs are not enough, people rely on trust and familiarity as primary mechanisms to reduce social uncertainty (Gefen and Straub, 2004). Crisis experts pay close attention to how key publics such as customers respond to crisis. Studies are conducted in marketing and public relations to understand how publics respond to organizational attempts and manage meaning during a crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 2014, p. 44).

Studies mention that people want to reduce their social uncertainty. In other words, they seek ways to understand, predict and occasionally try to control other people's behavior (Gefen and Straub, 2004). As it is the case with interpersonal interaction, the characteristics of the brand or organization can affect the consumers' reaction to the response strategy and its effectiveness (Li and Wei, 2016). The study by Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) shows that emotional signals embedded in crisis responses can affect corporate reputation by reducing feelings of anger and increasing acceptance of message.

3. Method

Interviewing is one of the important qualitative data collection methods and is widely used in field studies and ethnographic research (Qu and Dumay, 2011, p. 238). The interview requires more intense listening than normal conversations, and it carries respect as well as curiosity for what participants will say. The interviewers require skills for asking the unknowns and to uncover the incomprehensible (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 14).

In our study, semi-structured interviews are conducted with 50 WhatsApp users from three major cities of Turkey which are Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara. Table 1 in the Appendix shows the participant profile including gender and profession. The semi-structured interviews took place in the month of January. The sample consisted of a total of 25 females and 25 males. The youngest of the participants were 22 years old and the oldest was 52. The interviews took place through Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp. They were conducted with both video and audio. All the interviews were recorded with the approval of the participants except for two: these participants did not approve of the recording. The recordings were transcribed, and an analysis was made on the transcribed material on a thematic base.

The interviews lasted 30 to 75 minutes. The interview questions centered around two sections, and these sections had a specific focus. One was about the WhatsApp brand in general and the second group of questions were about the perception of the Confidentiality Agreement that was pushed to Turkish WhatsApp users in Turkey.

In addition to interviews conducted, a Twitter analysis has been made as well. A total of 20,000 tweets have been analyzed with the hashtag, we are deleting WhatsApp, and we are not deleting WhatsApp. The period was from 11 to 16 January 2021.

The findings are grouped around several themes. These are: “attitudes towards the WhatsApp brand”, “positive and negative evaluations of the brand,” “trust to WhatsApp brand,” “perceptions about the Confidentiality Agreement,” and “reactions to the Confidentiality Agreement.” The participants are also asked to visualize the brand as a human being and describe it to us. We were also interested in knowing how WhatsApp users evaluated the management of the Confidentiality Agreement by the WhatsApp brand. The study also evaluated the “response strategies of the WhatsApp users.”

4. Results

4.1. Attitudes towards the WhatsApp brand

Most of the participants had favorable attitudes to the brand. For them, WhatsApp was a “life facilitator” which allows them to communicate easily with others at their workplaces, with their friends and relatives. The brand was seen as fulfilling two major functions: one was that it was seen as a good communication channel for work and the other function attributed was the socialization function (“my arm and leg,” “my

confidant,” “my friend.”) Most of the participants declared that they had been using WhatsApp for a long time with the acquisition of the smart phones. WhatsApp had replaced the phone texting function and the people who have friends and relatives in other cities and abroad claimed that it was convenient for them to communicate with audio, visual and text.

WhatsApp was used heavily by the participants. Participants declared their use in terms of how many times they checked or how much time they spent. The maximum number of hours mentioned were 7 to 8 hours and the maximum number of entering was 50 in a day. The minimum usage time was 1 to 2 hours. Some participants also mentioned that when they had girlfriends, their usage time increased.

Few participants stated that their positive attitudes towards the brand changed with the Confidentiality Agreement in a negative way. The impact of Confidentiality Agreement on the users and their perception of what this means will be discussed later in the paper. From our sample, 19 people accepted the agreement by signing and 31 did not.

From the interviews, it was obvious that WhatsApp- in the eyes of the Turkish users- was a well- established brand. In the words of one participant, “when you go out to buy tissue paper, you ask for Selpak (a tissue brand in Turkey). WhatsApp is an application like this” (Hayat). For the participants, WhatsApp was a generic name for other applications. Another participant explained what WhatsApp means with this analogy: “An aunt in our neighborhood who looks out of the window and says she came, she left.” (Filiz)

The participants were asked to visualize the brand as a human being and describe it. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the WhatsApp brand as a human being, WhatsApp was seen as a female more than a male because the participants-laughingly- mention that women do communicate more. “Female because multi-tasked. Messaging, group calling, video calling, video sharing. If it had been us, we would have been a voice call only.” (Hakan). 9 participants considered WhatsApp as male and 18 participants mentioned that it was genderless or unisex. There were very few negative attributions made to the brand. (See Table 2).

Table 2. WhatsApp as a human being

| Personality Characteristics of WhatsApp Brand | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys being with friends • Social • Educated • Sharing • Intelligent • Talented • Imitate • Lead • Fast • Very active • Happy • Dynamic • Strong Communicator • Keeps secrets • Entertaining • Friendly • Sincere • Cute | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to problems • Without a problem • Sympathetic • Politically incorrect • Multi- talented • Boring • Practical • Creative • Loving • Bonds people • Smiling • Witty • Can do anything when needed • Dangerous • Detailed • Social • Active | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops himself/herself • Confidant • Talkative • Gossips • Good • Detailed • Keeps secrets • Utilitarian (On the surface to the user, but in reality to himself/herself) • Moderate • The person I share everything with • Talkative • Insensitive • Open to novelty • Has empathy |

4.2. Positive and negative evaluations of the brand

WhatsApp overall has been evaluated positively. The positive aspects mentioned related with the technical characteristics of the brand, such as easiness, fastness, practicality, good audio etc. It replaces other forms of communication and reaches out to many people easily. In terms of negative aspects, this is about confidentiality which will be discussed later. In the words of one participant, “I considered it as a secret keeper, but it turned out that it does not keep the secrets.” (Ceyhun). Some participants mentioned that being known on online and what time the messaging has been done are among the negative sides of the brand. Table 3 illustrates the positives and negatives of the WhatsApp brand articulated by the participants. Some positives are also seen as negatives such as data retention or story feature.

Table 3. Positives and negatives of WhatsApp brand

| Positives | Negatives |
|---|--|
| Fast Practical User friendly Very good interface Does not occupy too much space Works even with older versions of phones. Useful Unlimited messaging Location provider Easy to use Technological infrastructure Visual quality Creating a conversing chatting mood Always willing to do best Emojis Adapts to developments Little possibility of crash Group chats Accessibility to everyone End-to-end encryption Data transfer User has control Works fast even though Internet is slow No fee Usability at peak times (Earthquake) Story Ability to call from abroad Socialization Common use Access to instant information Data retention Quick return to customer complaints Responding to the needs | Data retention Making you known Story Easily accessible Nostalgic Your number is shared Number of people in groups Cannot be used in iPad Quality of photographs File size Makes an addiction and weakens the human relations The quality profile photo Confidentiality of your data |

4.3. Trust to WhatsApp brand

Trust was discussed along two dimensions. One was related with the functionality of the brand, and the other one was about trust to the brand within the confidentiality scope. The confidentiality issue had been addressed by the participants with trust to social media. The participants were in general very skeptical about social media. As stated by one participant “Nothing that is digital is trusted” (Ali). When asked to rate the trust to social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, BIP (Turkish brand) and so on, most of the participants replied to this question based on their usage of the

platforms and what they heard about it. In general, Twitter was the most trusted social media brand. The less used platform was Facebook, especially by the younger participants, and they claimed that this platform was not only the least trusted, but old-fashioned.

In the interviews, connection of WhatsApp with Facebook was brought up. The business connection of WhatsApp with Facebook and Instagram was already present in the minds of the WhatsApp users. They stated that they had been skeptical about WhatsApp even before the Confidentiality Agreement. Trust level for WhatsApp had dropped after the Facebook and WhatsApp users thought that the Cambridge Analytica Scandal could also happen with their data after the Confidentiality Agreement.

Not trusting was for granted, but this acceptance was also connected with how the users were using WhatsApp and social media. Most of the users said that what they did with WhatsApp and on social media was not a top secret, and thus they did not care about the trust issue too much. “What secret information do I have? I do not have any government secrets.” (Damla)

They also said that the legal frame was not yet ready in Turkey and that people were more concerned with what would happen if there was a legal issue. In the words of one participant: “...It is not about the ID and IBAN details that people are anxious about. They do not know to whom they will address it or to whom to go to. They do not know the legal process... They are sharing their IDs with an ice cream brand for a car.” (Yilmaz)

4.4. Perceptions about the Confidentiality Agreement

Interestingly, most of the participants did not read the agreement, very few read it partially and very few of them signed the Confidentiality Agreement. (19 people signed and 31 did not) When asked why they did not sign it, they mentioned the time extension given to them. They said that they would wait, and if WhatsApp insisted, they might leave WhatsApp. Also they thought that WhatsApp could step back.

The participants learned in detail about the agreement through the media, social media and discussed it with friends as well. The concerns about the confidentiality agreement was related with what WhatsApp would do with the information. Will they share my conversations, my photos and so on? Also, they were concerned whether their information will be used in courts for evidence. They were concerned about the theft of

their credit card information. They interpreted the act of WhatsApp as a personal threat to themselves with force. “Puts a condition.... it is now my arm and leg and tells me now not to come.” (Damla)

Moreover, participants compared Turkey with other countries, and they stated that WhatsApp would not have acted in this way in other countries and that they would not have been allowed to communicate with the users in this manner. “If the same event had happened in Europe, it would have been a crisis for WhatsApp.” (Ali) “They cannot put such a contract in action in Europe. In order to protect data, the state must enact legislation.” (Jale) Turkish WhatsApp users are angry to WhatsApp for this discrimination. They also expect legal actions from the government on data protection.

4.5. Reactions to the Confidentiality Agreement

The majority of the participants still continue using WhatsApp even though they uploaded other applications. The applications that the users mentioned are Telegram, followed by BIP and Signal. Very few participants had Telegram or BIP downloaded before, however, because of the confidentiality agreement, the other players were taken into consideration.

From the interviews, there was a distinction on WhatsApp usage at work and socially. The employers of the participants asked for downloading of other applications such as Telegram. “In our workplace, we formed a WhatsApp group. Our manager told us to download Telegram, but we still talk on WhatsApp.” (Filiz) They also added that for this shift to happen, the people that they did business with needed to switch to other applications. Even though other alternatives were suggested by some of the employers, the participants stated that it was not really practiced and that they were still using WhatsApp. WhatsApp addiction has been expressed: “We shifted my group with my friends to Telegram, but we forgot about this, and continued writing from WhatsApp, until someone got back to us from Telegram.” (Serhat)

WhatsApp users do not think too highly of Telegram. From the interviews, it was seen that it had popularity among university students, but this needs further investigation. “Telegram has become famous with some illegal things. It is popular among youth. We think we are doing something illegal (laughing).” (Guliz) In terms of trust, the participants mentioned that it was less for Telegram since one could enter without his/her name.

Telegram was also seen as insensitive to societal issues. “Telegram does not react on certain issues. When there are comments on gender equity, there is no reaction from Telegram.” (Toprak) One participant summarizes the reaction to the Confidentiality Agreement simply in these words: “If I have to delete WhatsApp, why would I trust Telegram? If WhatsApp is going to do this, why would not Telegram do the same?” (Eliz). The group size and the phone number not being mandatory were among the positive factors.

When the participants were asked if there was a digital migration now and if there would be one, most of the participants said that this was not the case and would not be. There are only 13 people who consider this as a digital migration and 5 people have not decided on this. 32 people state that this is not the case at all. They admit that at the beginning, there had been shifts to alternatives and that they used them, however they still continue using WhatsApp and not the other applications. “Telegram must liken itself to WhatsApp for a transition from Whatsapp to Telegram.” (Bade)

4.6. Evaluation of WhatsApp response

Most of the participants were not very much aware of how WhatsApp was reacting to this situation in Turkey. They did not consider this as a crisis for WhatsApp, but more so a crisis for themselves. They remember the extension of the Confidentiality Agreement and when asked why there was an action like this, most of the respondents claimed that WhatsApp needed time to think about it. Some people also suggested that this period could cool down the issue. “They delayed it for 3 months, very smart, I do not think this will be back to our agenda strongly again as we react quickly...”(Mert). Other reactions from the participants: “In other countries, WhatsApp gave advertising about data security, but in Turkey, I have not seen this in any newspaper. Late in informing us.” (Ugur)

The participants also think that the media and conversations among themselves elevated the tension. They also think that WhatsApp knows the Turkish society and how they might react. They describe the Turkish people as reactive. Then they forget about the issue they have reacted to and calm down. In the words of one participant, “Everything in our country lasts for 24 hours or 72 hours, then it is forgotten. WhatsApp has analyzed our society. If you know the Turkish society, and if you want to do something in this

country, first you need to get reaction. First watch what is happening, then you postpone it. After one month, WhatsApp will not be discussed any more.” (Hakan)

4.7. Response strategies of the WhatsApp users including Twitter analysis

Table 4 summarizes the five positive response strategies of WhatsApp users including the Twitter analysis. Johansen et al (2016) article used the strategies for Telenor case and we applied their work for WhatsApp. The response strategies are from Coombs (2015) work.

Table 4. Response strategies

| Response Strategies | Source | Examples |
|---------------------|------------|---|
| Minimization | Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They use our data for advertising. This is not too bad either, when I do not have time, and the brands reach out to me. (Ugur) • What will (WhatsApp) take from me? What information do I have, what government secrets do I have? (Damla) • I know they collect data, but I do not think they are using it with bad intentions. For advertising, they can use it, it is not an issue for me. (Eliz) • I am not a politician. I do not have much money in my bank account. If this had been the case, I would have been concerned (Gulgun) • My wife wanted to delete it. I told her what difference will it make whether WhatsApp reached my data or not. What secrets do we have? (Burak) |
| | Tweets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My 70 year old grandfather deleted WhatsApp. What is the issue, being watched. I said what happens if they read your messages, • There is no privacy in the digital world anyway. There are restrictions on access and use of information. WhatsApp panic is meaningless and without ground. • Why do you consider yourself so important? What have you got hidden in your phones? |

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Justification | Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I am torn between my data being sold or watching advertising, I would choose advertising (Gul) • WhatsApp does not show advertising. They need to make money and it is doing this by selling our data (laughing) (Gul) |
| | Tweets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now we are using WhatsApp without paying anything. Advertising is their income so let them use it. |
| Bolstering | Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Izmir earthquake, the phone lines were cut. I called my relatives from WhatsApp, and I trust it (Filiz) • My nephew is doing his master abroad. He felt so lonely during the pandemic, so we opened WhatsApp and he was having his lunch in front of us. (Damla) • I needed blood for my father during his illness. I found the blood donors through WhatsApp. 120 people wrote to me from WhatsApp asking where they could donate blood. This would not have happened anywhere else. (Begum) • During the pandemic, especially. My parents are old. I saw them through WhatsApp. My parents cannot use complicated applications, WhatsApp is very easy to use, they did not have any difficulties. They saw their grandchildren through WhatsApp, we also saw them and we were at ease. (Ece) |
| | Tweets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like WhatsApp in every way, and I would never leave it. • Why should we delete, it has become a part of our body. • Be comfortable WhatsApp. We have a pledge of loyalty. I will not forget your good deeds and I am not going to delete you any time. • I could not delete it, it is like my first child. |
| | Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I have to delete WhatsApp, why would I trust Telegram? If WhatsApp is going to do this, why would Telegram not do the same? (Eliz) • Initially people reacted. They were impatient. I think Telegram is less trusted. (Bade) |

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Differentiation | Tweets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is as if when you mention shoes with a friend on Instagram, a shoe advertisement suddenly appears. • The issue has become a mess without reason. If you are using these programs, your information is with these companies. • We will write messages that we do not want Americans to know from Telegram and messages that we do not want Russians to know from WhatsApp. |
| Denial | Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People attribute a lot of importance to themselves. They think that they are secret agents being followed. On the other hand, we are consumer groups. They are using marketing tools. (Gul) • I do not have any concerns, I am not interested in what has been said. The agreement came and I signed.... I do not have a problem with WhatsApp. (Rifat) • It is a conspiracy theory. (Eliz) |
| | Tweets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telegram, BIP, everyone has started escaping from WhatsApp now. You would think everyone was a CIA agent who had secret documents. • The person who sends his personal Turkish ID number because a Porche might be won from an ice cream stick says that WhatsApp will steal his personal information. • You think Mark Zuckerberg had nothing more to do than collapse into your photos and messages. Leave these things and deal with more important things. • This contract has been presented to everyone, but there is nothing wrong in this contract. |

Table 5 is a summary of the negative responses of WhatsApp users and Twitter analysis with examples.

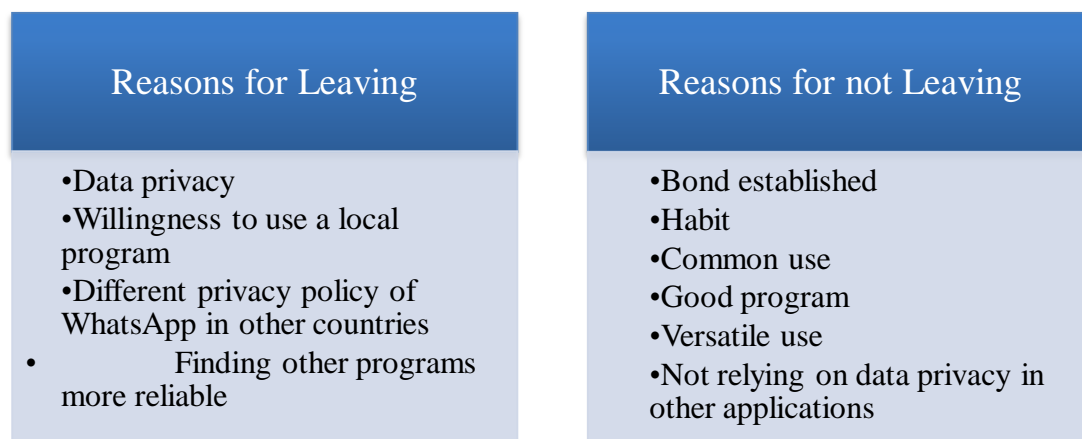
Table 5. Negative responses

| Response | Source | Examples |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Criticizing | Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very big country was not happy with this. (WhatsApp) Has not given an explanation.... They made us feel worthless. They acted as if the Turkish users are not important to them. We did not come across an explanation. (Ezgi) • Mark Zuckerberg and Kamala Harris had discussions. I do not trust this man. How did he share 8 billion data? He could not reply to this... The negative beliefs about Facebook transferred to WhatsApp and Instagram. (Güliz) • They responded late in crisis management. They are not successful. (Toprak) • They did not provide us with enough information. This brought distrust. (İnci) |
| | Tweets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WhatsApp cannot touch personal data in the European Union. The penalty for violating the EU regulation is 200 euros. • We do not accept a forced contract. Let's say we passed the security issue, but this treatment done to us. • The contract imposed by WhatsApp is against the Personal Data Protection Law. • They just do not understand this. You may underestimate yourself, by your data is precious, sweetie. |
| Recommending another company | Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I watched a video about the history of Telegram. I found Telegram more trustworthy. There is end-to-end encryption. The founder is going to another country in order not to give the data to Russia. (Jale) • I watched a video with my family. They showed the positives and negatives. It looks like Signal is the best. (Mira) |

| | | |
|--|---------------|---|
| | Tweets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delete the strangers' digital platforms, support the national ones. • I am leaving WhatsApp due to the new data policy it has implemented. New messaging program I use is #BIP • I have already installed Telegram. • We are shifting to Signal, by the way Signal sounds nicer. |
|--|---------------|---|

As seen from the table, findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews have been observed in the Twitter contents as well. Below figure (Figure 1) shows a snapshot of reasons for leaving WhatsApp or continuing to use it.

Figure 1. Reasons for leaving and not leaving WhatsApp



5. Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to find out the beliefs and attitudes of WhatsApp users about the brand and the new Confidentiality Agreement proposed by WhatsApp in January, 2021. It is seen that the participants have favourable attitudes towards WhatsApp. They have been using WhatsApp for a long time and frequently as well. In the interviews, a lot of positive features such as its speed, usefulness, practicality, being innovative providing an opportunity to talk to people from different countries comfortably and its interface are mentioned. In addition to the many positive features, a few negatives are mentioned: these are being easily accessible, deciphering people, and the poor quality of photographs when sent. It was observed that the participants

mentioned the positive features of the brand very quickly, one after another, whereas for the negative features, they had to think it over. It was also noticed that since the participants have been using WhatsApp application for a long time, and frequently as well, they have been habituated to the brand. One of the participants commented “WhatsApp is like an application that comes with a phone,” and another participant said, “when we get a phone, we upload WhatsApp first.” These powerful comments indicate the habit of WhatsApp application among the Turkish users.

The participants described the personality traits of WhatsApp with more positive features such as friendly, intelligent, talented, multi-directional, cheerful, dynamic, and entertaining. In addition to these positive features, some participants associated the brand with negative characteristics such as gossip, being reckless and dangerous.

When WhatsApp has been evaluated in terms of brand trust, it is seen that the participants generally make positive evaluations in the “Competence”, “Benevolence” and “Purchase Loyalty” dimensions of the Brand Scale developed by Li et al. (2015). WhatsApp is a very trusted brand in terms of doing its job efficiently, providing a good service, high performance, meeting expectations, following developments and paying attention to its customers. Participants rely on WhatsApp performance and its promises. Even those who stated that they could quit WhatsApp if they insist on the Confidentiality Agreement, expressed themselves in this way: “I cannot say anything negative for its performance.”

However, from the point of view of the “overall brand trust” (Li et al, 2015), the distrust towards all the digital channels reflected negatively on WhatsApp, especially after the new Confidentiality Agreement. Although the vast majority of the participants declare that they will continue using WhatsApp, discussions on data privacy will have an affect on them. Even for the participants who love WhatsApp, and appreciate its performance, a question mark has risen in their minds about data privacy. This could negatively affect the established good relationship between WhatsApp and its users. Only a small number of participants stated that they still trust WhatsApp and that they believe it will not use their data.

Some participants, on the other hand, regarded WhatsApp’s “use of data” for advertising purposes as very normal and emphasized that it is not something to be escalated. They even went further and said that they wonder why people are worried. For example, one of the participants stated: “Those who delete WhatsApp, have an account on Facebook. What is the point of deleting if you are going to use Facebook?” Because of the already

established trust in the performance of WhatsApp, it was observed that it is difficult to get rid of the application. The participants not only find WhatsApp, but other applications as not being reliable (in term of data privacy) and therefore this will also affect their continued use of the application.

Participants also expressed their views on how WhatsApp is handling the consumer reactions to the Confidentiality Agreement. Some participants emphasized that WhatsApp provides adequate information and thus eliminates their question marks. These participants stated that they saw the notifications in the status section of WhatsApp. Also some other participants criticized WhatsApp for its attitude in dealing with it. They pointed out that they should have informed users with more detailed explanations and different communication practices.

There are two basic question marks in the minds of participants. Firstly, they seriously criticize WhatsApp for trying to implement the Confidentiality Agreement in Turkey, whereas WhatsApp does not push this in the European countries. The second concern was for what reason/s their data would be used. While some participants see no harm in their data being used for advertising purposes, some mentioned their discomfort with it. It seems that these two concerns of the users need to be enlightened by WhatsApp.

It was noticed that the Cambridge Analytica Scandal faced by Facebook had an effect on the concerns of use during the WhatsApp Confidentiality Agreement process. In this context, it can be said that there is some sort of “Facebook Effect” on WhatsApp. Discussions have been made whether there will be a migration to other applications due to the WhatsApp Privacy Policy. Most of the participants think that there will not be a migration. The underlying reasons are that WhatsApp is loved and its performance is highly appreciated. It is accessible to everyone, offers quality service and there are also concerns that other applications can also use their data. Those who think that there might be a migration state that in the digital world, any migration can occur at any time. Some participants underline that migration can only occur if government agencies encourage the use of other applications and that there are masses leaving under these circumstances. Participants also state that digital migration from WhatsApp to other applications will be dictated by WhatsApp’s attitude. Some participants mentioned that they will leave WhatsApp if WhatsApp insists on the Confidentiality Agreement.

Participants used “Minimization”, “Justification”, “Bolstering”, “Differentiation” and ‘Denial’ response strategies regarding WhatsApp Confidentiality Agreement. In this

sense, it shows that the WhatsApp users can defend the brand they trust and they do not give up their trusted brand easily in crisis situations. In the Twitter analysis, it was noted that bolstering strategy was not very visible.

In the Twitter analysis, there were many connections to nationalism through WhatsApp. Applications have been linked to the country of origin and one major reason why WhatsApp should be deleted was linked to preferring national ones. CIA, FBI and secret agent words have been used in a comical way to illustrate that deleting WhatsApp because of the content does not make sense because they are not one of the mentioned.

There are many commonalities between the findings of the interviews and Twitter analysis. The sentences made were even alike. (Porsche and ice cream example mentioned in the interviews and the tweets.) This could be interpreted as the influence of the social media: people tend to think the way it is presented in the social media.

The way organizations deal with issues and risks can be strategically driven or not. Regardless of how the organizations approach these situations, the perception of the publics needs to be taken into consideration during the peak of crisis and aftermath. In addition to the organization choosing a response or a mixture of response strategies, the publics and the consumers may also bring their own response strategies to the issue. Observing and tracking the classification of consumer response strategies in crisis situations can also help organizations to see the impact of their organizational responses.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1. Profile of participants

| Name | Gender | Profession |
|--------|--------|---|
| Ali | Male | Advertising |
| Ugur | Male | Human resources |
| Serhat | Male | Advertising |
| Filiz | Female | Sales |
| Damla | Female | Administrative affairs specialist |
| Gulin | Female | Civil servant |
| Ceyhun | Male | Engineer |
| Bade | Female | Advertising |
| Eliz | Female | English teacher |
| Burak | Male | Manager |
| Mert | Male | Corporate communication specialist |
| Jale | Female | Customer experience department specialist |
| Hakan | Male | Nurse |
| Nazli | Female | Health institution manager |
| Zafer | Male | Journalist |
| Soner | Male | Health employee |
| Begum | Female | Marketing manager |
| Yilmaz | Male | Project manager |
| Neva | Female | Regional manager |
| Guliz | Female | Student |
| Okan | Male | Engineer |
| Nehir | Female | Engineer |
| Gulgun | Female | Execution tracking |

| | | |
|--------|--------|------------------------------------|
| Rifat | Male | Master student |
| Mirac | Female | Retired/pianist |
| Toprak | Male | Social media specialist |
| Hayat | Female | Fashion designer/Retired teacher |
| Ahmet | Male | Medical documentation (secretary) |
| Faruk | Male | Student (tourism) |
| Miray | Female | Lawyer |
| Lale | Female | Engineer |
| Aslan | Male | Public administrator |
| Orhan | Male | Student |
| Nilay | Female | Teacher |
| Osman | Male | Chemistry |
| Eren | Male | Human resources department |
| Ipek | Female | Banking and Insurance (unemployed) |
| Nilgun | Female | Accountant |
| Erkan | Male | Hairdresser |
| Burak | Male | Turkey representative of a company |
| Inci | Female | Teacher |
| Yilmaz | Male | Real estate |
| Gul | Female | Corporate communication specialist |
| Mira | Female | Software engineer |
| Irfan | Male | Physiotherapist |
| Defne | Female | Pre-school teacher |
| Aysel | Female | Helper |
| Berk | Male | Student |
| Ece | Female | Housewife |
| Nedim | Male | Customer relations representative |

Attitudinal and viral effects of a high emotional cause-related marketing ad. An integrative international approach.

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Abstract

This piece of research analyses how high emotional cause related marketing claims influences attitudes and viral behaviours such as sharing intention and e-WOM intention. To achieve this goal, we analyse the link between three blocks of variables: emotions (I), attitudes (II) and viral behaviours (III). A quasi-experimental approach is adopted; an international sample of 1232 respondents from Spain, England and Ecuador is exposed to a video viral cause marketing stimulus. An Structural Equation Model methodology allow us to quantify the level of influence of emotions in both generating positive attitudes towards the ad and the brand-cause alliance and in promoting viral behaviours such as sharing intention and intention to e-WOM about the brand and the cause. Preliminary results let us to confirm the strong link between emotions, attitudes and viral behaviours: First the role of emotions as an antecedent of attitudes; Second, the strong cohesion between the variables included in the attitude axis; Third, the role of emotions as an antecedent of viral behavior as well; Fourth, the role that attitudes play as antecedents of viral behavior; and Fifth, the intense link between the variables forming the viral consequences block.

Keywords: *Cause-related Marketing; Viral ad; Emotion; Attitude; Sharing Intention; eWOM*

1. Introduction

Emotions are a topic of great relevance for both science and marketing practice. The attribution of a specific emotional baggage to a brand has become an excellent and popular form of differentiation from competing brands (Hupp, Gröppel-Klein, Dieckmann, Broeckelmann, & Walter, 2008). But in addition, emotions also reinforce the long-term commitment to the brand (Keller, 2009). Roberts (2005) suggests that to connect emotionally with consumers, brands should evolve into what they call "lovemarks." "Lovemarks" are "super-evolved brands" that maximize their connection with consumers by creating strong emotional ties which revitalize their brand loyalty (Roberts, 2005).

Consumers are exposed to different marketing stimuli such as advertisements, packaging, positioning, events, etc ... that induce emotions which promote the desired responses from consumers (Lee, Andrade, & Palmer, 2013). Specifically, brand communication, in general, and advertising, in particular, represents an important emotional contact point between brands and consumers (Haimmerl, 2008). Affection plays an important role in the processing of advertising and brand messages (Micu & Plummer, 2010). In fact, favorability towards brands is strongly correlated with emotional content in advertising and not so much with real content real (Heath, Brandt, & Nairn, 2006).

2. Literature review

There are certain emotional stimuli that increase positive reactions to advertisements and the product being advertised (Strick, Baaren, Holland, & Knippenberg, 2009). That is why choosing the most appropriate advertising claim is a crucial issue when trying to create effective emotional advertising campaigns (Grigaliunaite & Pileliene, 2016). Advertising resources such as humor, eroticism, fear and love have shown to evoke emotions with positive consequences in recognition of the brand, in formation of attitudes towards advertisement and brand, as well as in purchase intention (Panda, Panda, & Mishra, 2013). And it has been proven that emotional messages are remembered more easily than emotionally neutral ones (Baird, Wahlers, & Cooper, 2007).

Emotion also influences consumers actions (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). Emotions

are the underlying force that allows viewers to connect with and respond to ads (Pochun, 2014; Sung, Vanman, Hartley, & Phau, 2016). For example, positive emotional responses can lead to positive attitudes towards advertising and improve behavioral intentions (Pochun, Brennan, & Parker, 2018). So that a highly emotional advertisement generates more positive and lasting attitudes compared to an advertisement with a low level of emotionality (Hamelin, Moujahid, & Thaichon, 2017).

2.1. Emotions and cause related marketing

Cause-related marketing is a type of corporate claim with great emotional appeal. In this regard, the advertising that promote the defence of a social cause have shown greater capacity to appeal to emotions in comparison with advertising that promote the sale of brand products (Sciulli & Bebkko, 2005). Likewise, positive emotions uniformly promote pro-social behavior in favour of a social cause (Cavanaugh, Bettman, & Luce, 2015). As a result, consumers tend to show their moral views by making consumption decisions which benefit both them and other members of society (Kim & Johnson, 2013).

In advertising, the emotional content characteristic of a cause-related marketing ad is key in order to capture public's attention (Porter & Golan, 2006). From the point of view of the emotional brand, brand strategies should focus on telling stories that inspire and captivate consumers. These stories should demonstrate a genuine understanding of consumer lifestyles, dreams and goals and convincingly represent how the brand can enrich their lives (Roberts, 2005). According to Pringle & Thompson (2001), consumers consider brands a promise or expectation of value that go further the brand name, logo, colors, packaging and design. This demonstrates brands incorporate a spiritual and ethical component that could be strengthen through corporate social responsibility actions such as cause-related marketing.

In the current context, the promotion of charitable causes and events is carried out through a combination of both offline and online activities, and in both contexts the emotions have proved to be influential in the results of the prosocial decisions supporting them. Charitable organizations and social causes need followers and for this purpose social networks are becoming fundamental tools to build larger and stronger support communities (Paulin, Ferguson, Schattke, & Jost, 2014). In fact, social networks such as Facebook are allowing not only that their users build relationships, collaborate and build trust but also help others more effectively and efficiently than in the past (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.2. Emotions and viral marketing

Advertisers are using visual ads in emotionally attractive video format to capture and retain viewers' attention and to avoid behaviors such as zapping (Kim & Johnson, 2013). Similarly, the use of strong emotional appeals motivates consumer participation by viralizing the video (Eckler & Bolls, 2011). The emotional tone of viral video ads is directly related to attitudes and intentions, so that ads that are perceived as pleasant are more effective in generating positive attitudes towards the brand and interest in sharing them in comparison to those that are perceived as unpleasant or coercive (Dafonte, 2014).

Viral marketing messages should build an emotional link between the campaign and the recipient to ensure that the virus spreads (Dobele, Lindgreen, Beverland, Vanhamme, & van Wijk, 2007). However, emotion is an important component of viral advertising sharing behavior for both senders and recipients of these types of messages. First, it has been empirically proven that senders of viral messages tend to experience positive emotions such as happiness, excitement or satisfaction when they share messages with contacts (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, & Raman, 2004). Second, it has also been proven that successful viral marketing campaigns trigger an emotional response in recipients (Dobele et al., 2007).

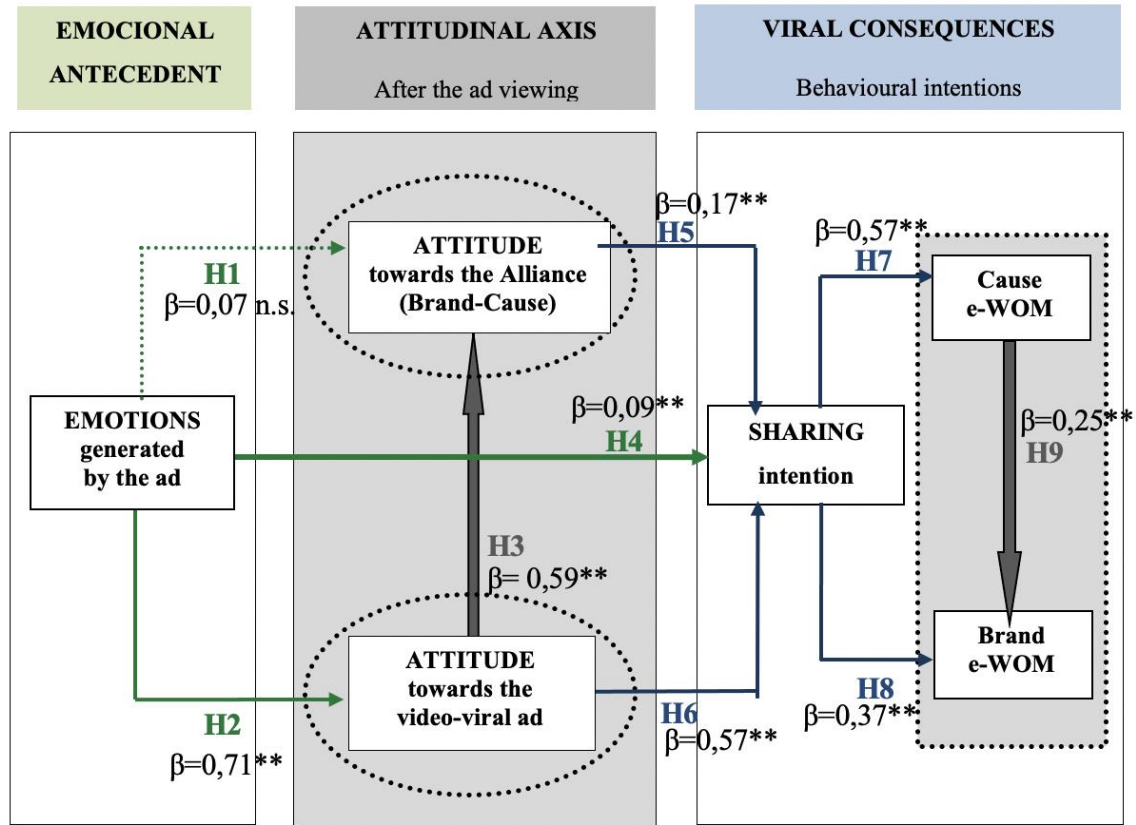
Viral marketing not only stimulates the intention to share videos, but also encourages the generation of eWOM, or electronic word-of-mouth, in an especially intense way through social networks. This is because users tend to contribute and share the content of relevant messages with their network of contacts (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Ho & Dempsey (2010) differentiate two user profiles especially prone to share and e-WOM online: consumers who are more individualistic (I) in the sense that they want to differentiate themselves from others, users who are more altruistic (II) and generously tend to help others by sharing relevant information.

3. Preliminary results

We reach the preliminary conclusions summarized in Table 1 as a result of a quantitative analysis based on a structural equations model composed by 6 different variables related to each other through a total of 9 hypotheses. The 6 variables are grouped into 3 interrelated blocks internally and with each other through the 9 hypotheses raised: the

block of the emotional antecedent (I), the central block or attitudinal axis (II), and the block of viral behavioral consequences (III) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Graphical description of theoretical model and hypothesis.



The analysis confirms eight of the nine hypotheses, with a significance level of 1%, which is shown by t indicators with values higher than 2.56 in those eight cases. In general terms, the analysis of results confirms: first, the role of emotions as an antecedent of attitudes [H2: Emotions towards the ad → Attitude towards the ad]; Second, the strong cohesion between the variables included in the attitude axis [H3: Attitude towards the ad → Attitude towards the Alliance brand-cause]; Third, the role of emotions as an antecedent of viral behavior as well [H4: Emotions generated by the ad → Sharing intention]; Fourth, the role that attitudes play as antecedents of viral behavior [H5: Attitude towards the Alliance brand-cause → Sharing intention; and H6: Attitude towards the ad → Sharing intention]; and Fifth, the intense link between the variables forming the viral consequences block [H7: Sharing intention → Cause e-WOM; H8: Sharing intention → Brand e-WOM; and H9: Cause e-WOM → Brand e-WOM].

These big relationships could be divided in a more detailed analysis of hypothesis one by one (see Table 1).

- One, it is denied that the emotions generated by the ad influence attitude towards the brand-cause alliance, rejecting H1 ($\beta = 0.07$ n.s).
- Two it is verified, however, that these emotions generated by the ad do influence attitude towards the ad, accepting H2 ($\beta = 0.71$ **).
- Three, it is confirmed that the emotions generated by the ad affect attitude towards brand-cause alliance, accepting H3 ($\beta = 0.59$ **).
- Four, the influence of the emotions generated by the ad in sharing intention is certified, so H4 is accepted ($\beta = 0.09$ **).
- Five, it is confirmed the influence of attitudes on viral behavior by the effect of the attitude towards the brand-cause alliance on ad sharing intention, accepting H5 ($\beta = 0.17$ **).
- Six, that same relationship between the attitudes-behavior blocks is proven by the influence of the attitude towards the ad in the intention to share it, so H6 is accepted ($\beta = 0.57$ **).
- Seven, the relationship between the variables of the viral consequences block is first observed by accepting H7 ($\beta = 0.57$ **) that ratifies the effect that ad sharing intention generates in the emission of e-WOM about the cause.
- Eight, a second link between variables of the viral consequences block is observed again when accepting H8 ($\beta = 0.37$ **) that evidences the effect that ad sharing intention generates in the emission of e-WOM about the brand, in this case.
- Nine, it is finally observed that e-WOM intention about the cause influences e-WOM intention about the brand, accepting H9 ($\beta = 0.25$ **).

Table 1. Summary of hypotheses and results.

| Hypothesis | Independent variable | Dependent variable | Result |
|------------|--|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| H1 | Emotions towards ad → | Attitude towards brand-cause alliance | Not supported |
| H2 | Emotions towards ad → | Attitude towards ad | Supported |
| H3 | Attitude towards ad → | Attitude towards brand-cause alliance | Supported |
| H4 | Emotions towards ad → | Sharing intention | Supported |
| H5 | Attitude towards → brand-cause alliance | Sharing intention | Supported |
| H6 | Attitude towards ad → | Sharing intention | Supported |
| H7 | Sharing intention → | Cause e-WOM | Supported |
| H8 | Sharing intention → | Brand e-WOM | Supported |
| H9 | Cause e-WOM → | Brand e-WOM | Supported |

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Disruptions of Public Relations in the Digital Age

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Abstract

This preliminary research aims to examine perceptions of public relations professionals with regard to the changes that are taking place in the PR industry following digital disruption. It strives to define the next stage of PR evolution and discuss future developments in both practice and theory. The semi-structured in-depth interviews resulted in thematic content analysis, depicting six main themes: changes that are shaping the public relations industry; changes in organizational identity and roles; current structural aspects of PR agencies; PR strategy vs. digital PR strategy; and predictions regarding the near and distant future. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: *public relations, digital age, disruption, social media, big data, communication experts; co-creational approach.*

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the current century, when Al and Laura Ries (Ries and Ries 2002) published their well-known book "The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR", it seemed that a new era had begun in which advertising was irrelevant and should be replaced by a better alternative, namely public relations. Nearly fifteen years later, new technologies, notably the Internet and social networks, have created rapid changes in consumer behavior and, as a result, significant changes in the structure of traditional communications, marketing, and marketing communications (Estanyol 2012). Consumers are changing from passive, anonymous bystanders to active players in the communication process (Estanyol 2012), organizations increasingly rely on technologies and big data (Zimand-Sheiner and Earon 2019) and the lines between public relations,

advertising and content marketing are blurring (Lahav and Zimand-Sheiner 2016). These processes can be referred to as “digital disruptions”.

The current study focuses on developments in the PR industry in an era of digital disruptions, especially in the private sector, and aims to examine how Israeli public relations agencies are adapting their organizational structure, business models, modes of operation and aspects of self-determination to the digital age. Thus, the main research questions are: 1) How do PR experts perceive changes in the industry?; 2) What impact does digital disruption have on the methods and models they employ?; 3) What new roles have been added to PR work practice?; 4) Why do PR experts change their profession definition from public relations to communication consultants, and what is the difference between the two?

Research into the evolution of the PR industry can provide insights into the roles it plays in the marketing communications arena (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006), clarify theoretical and practical implications for the public relations field, and as part of marketing communications, shed light on transformations undergone by the marketing industry in the digital age (Limor, Leshem and Mendelsis 2014). However, an in-depth study of the changes undergone in this field in the digital age has yet to be performed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 PR Evolution

PR is evolving both as a practice and an academic discipline (L'Etang 2013; Avidar 2011). From an academic point of view, the evolution of PR theory is affected by changes in the environment. Nowadays, scholarly discussions are revolving around developments in the digital era, which extends the need of organizations to develop their abilities, methods and applications for organization-public dialogue (Kent and Tylor 1998, 2002; Chen, Huang-baesecke and Chen 2020). These studies emerged from a co-creational approach which revolves around the organization-public relationship, in contrast to a previous functionalist approach, which concentrated in the organization, its values and mission (Avidar 2011). Chen, Huang-Baesecke and Chen (2020) suggest that the convergence of online and offline dialogue calls for further developments in the theory and practice regarding organization-public dialogue.

The debate surrounding the subject of the historical evolution of public relations practice originates with the use of different terms. While some relate to the beginning of the

practice using the term ‘public relations’, others relate to the beginning of ‘publicity’ and ‘public communication’ (L'Etang 2013). Thus, although the origins of the PR profession are assigned to various periods, the evolution of PR up to the digital age can be divided into seven main stages:

- (1) *The ancient stage* (also referred to as ‘proto-PR’) – messages written on brick walls (Watson 2014).
- (2) *Early birds* – the term PR was first used in the USA in the late 19th century (Cutlip 2013). Yet, it is claimed that the profession was born in that country around the turn of the 20th century, mostly as press agencies and publicity firms (Russell and Lamme 2016). This early stage is divided into two separate beginnings: a. Entertainment PR; and b. Product PR. The latter led to modern corporate public relations and corporate communications. In Europe and the UK the first news release was reported in 1910 and the first public relations agency was established in London in 1924 (Cutlip 2013).
- (3) *Establishment of public relations* – in the US between the world wars – mainly in larger organizations such as railways and transport, oil companies and some government departments. This stage is also characterized by the formation of PR associations, first in Finland, then in the US, as well as the introduction of the first codes of professional practice and ethics, which were adopted by many firms from 1965 onwards (Asunta, 2016; Seitel, 1998).
- (4) *International public relations* – after the Second World War, fostered mainly by European firms interested in promoting democracy by means of PR. Later on, major US consultancies began their expansion into Europe (Miller, 2014).
- (5) *PR focused on media relations* – as a reflection of journalists transferring into communication roles in the 1960s and 1970s (Avidar 2011).
- (6) *PR Expansion* – in the 1990s, rapid growth of ‘technology PR’ (also referred to as PR 1), a new PR skill utilizing e-mail and the internet (web 1.0) as communication and promotion tools (Alikilic and Atabek 2012).
- (7) Around 2001 the dotcom bubble and the growth of communication technologies temporarily slowed down PR growth. However, by the end of the 21st century PR played a significant role around the world (Seitel 1998; Bourne 2019)

The development of public relations as a profession is often described in the context of its environment, specifically in light of changes in the economic, media and political situation. Toledano (2007) adds the context of specific cultural developments as a factor in the historical process of public relations development. Thus, the current study focuses on the Israeli PR industry as a reflection of changes being undergone by the profession worldwide.

2.2 PR in Israel

PR practice was introduced into Israel by governmental and Zionist institutions in the early years of the state, but the private sector of PR agencies was only established twenty years later, in the 1970s (Avidar 2011); by 2014 453 PR agencies were registered in Israel (Lahav 2014). The most significant developments in public relations agencies started in the 1980s and were strengthened in the 1990s, mainly as a result of changes in the political, economic and media domains. It was the era of media expansion in Israel, which witnessed the development of commercial TV channels, local radio stations and newspapers (Limor, Leshem and Mendelsis 2014). The Israeli PR association, which was established in the 1960s, is nowadays under dissolution due to illegal conduct (Bein-Lubovitch 2019).

2.3 Disruption in PR practice

In organizational management, disruption is defined as a radical change in industry, processes or business strategies that generate uncertainty. Disruption might be the result of developments in technology, globalization, or other changes in an organization's environment (Zimand-Sheiner and Earon 2019). Disruption may be perceived as a threat since it often involves changes in business models, processes, organizational structure and even organizational identity (Tripsas 2009; Utesheva, Simpson and Cecez-Kecmanovic 2016). On the other hand, disruption might also provide an opportunity for growth and renewal, depending on the ability of the organization and its personnel to embrace innovation and change.

At the beginning of 21st century, the internet and social media were establishing their place as a focus of attention for the Israeli public, organizations and PR practitioners (Limor, Leshem and Mendelsis 2014), yet, early research studies regarding digital disruptions in Israeli PR industry demonstrated difficulties in adopting new practices, such as using the internet for an online presence (Avidar 2011) and the fear of

incorporating innovations such as the new media (Lahav 2014). Thus, in the context of disruption in PR agencies, the opportunity is to evolve into an electronic PR organization (Panopoulos, Theodoridis and Poulis 2018) also referred to as PR2.

3. Research method

The current study is a preliminary research with the aim of examining perceptions of public relations professionals concerning the changes that are taking place in the industry following digital disruption. It is a qualitative study consisting of semi-structured in-depth interviews that incorporate closed and open-ended questions, including follow-up questions investigating “why” or “how”. This research method is widely accepted when the goal is to reveal perceptions and personal perspectives of interviewees regarding the phenomenon in question (Newcomer, Harty and Wholey 2015). Since the PR industry in Israel is relatively small and homogeneous, the number of interviews scheduled amounted to fifteen, including twelve interviews with senior executives who have been engaged in the field for at least ten years and three interviews with junior managers in the industry with at least five years’ experience. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed by the researchers using a thematic content analysis method, which involved identifying, analyzing and specifying topics from across the data (Strauss, 1987).

4. Preliminary results

The first theme deals with the interviewees' perceptions of the changes that are shaping the public relations industry in Israel and their perception of whether these changes are for better or worse. *The second theme* concentrates on organizational identity, i.e. changes in the areas of activity definition described by the interviewees, as well as changes in the occupational definitions and roles. *The third theme* describes the structural aspects of the PR agencies, including new roles in the organization, new departments (and those that have been closed) and business models that support these changes. *The fourth theme* deals with strategy, mainly the concept of the difference between PR strategy and digital PR strategy, while the *fifth theme* focuses on new methods, tools and activities and measurement models. *The sixth and final theme* coordinates the interviewees' predictions regarding the industry's near and distant future. An analysis of the themes indicates that the main change perceived by the interviewees was the industry's shift from focusing on media relations to social media relations and to managing the relationship between

organizations and consumers. This change has implications for most of the other themes as well.

In relation to the co-creation theory in PR, preliminary results indicate that this theory is considered by interviewees to be highly relevant, since it allows a multi-level dialogue between the organization and its publics. Yet, the theory should evolve and take into consideration issues such as corporate culture and other corporate aspects since it seems that these aspects cause organizations to establish in-house public relations departments.

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Customer dissatisfaction as an antecedent of online complainants' desires: An ambivalent story

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Abstract

This study investigates how cognitions and negative emotions are involved when different types of customers (brand-attached vs. unattached) develop complaint desires (revenge vs. reparation) before voicing their discontent about a service failure online. More specifically, it shows that while attributions trigger the desire for revenge through an indirect, emotional route for both complainant types, the role of post-failure dissatisfaction differs dramatically: For brand-attached complainants, dissatisfaction affects the *revenge desire* negatively due the elicitation of inward-directed negative emotions (e.g., guilt). The same customers also rationally decide on their *reparation desire* – beyond any biasing emotions. Hence, this research sheds light on the complex role of customer dissatisfaction as a trigger of online complaining.

Keywords: *service failure, online complaining, social media, brand attachment*

1. Introduction and theoretical background

Following service failures, affected customers increasingly go online to voice online complaints on the involved brand's social media channels. Extant literature (e.g., Weitzl, 2019) demonstrates that the motives underlying this pattern range from vindictive desires (i.e., a desire for revenge: inclination to harm the company) to more constructive one, including the desire for reparation (i.e., a positive coping strategy by which complainants

demand a compensation from the brand). While literature on the existence of the two desires is both well-established and on the rise (e.g., Joireman et al., 2013; Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2019), surprisingly little is known about how complainants develop these two seemingly controversial but often co-existing desires. This research investigates the role of thoughts and feelings for explaining why online complainants voice a complaint on marketer-initiated social media sites and why they strive for specific goals.

Earlier research demonstrates that inferred failure attributions (i.e., inferred causes of the failure's circumstances) as cognitions are essential in affecting consumer reactions to service incidents (see Van Vaerenberg et al. [2014] for a review). This research implies that attributions can predict complaining desires via two routes: a direct cognitive route and an indirect emotional route (Joireman et al., 2013). The former suggests that complainants' cognitions of blame predict desires directly – regardless of any (negative) emotion. In other words, complainants 'unemotionally' decide how to cope with the failure. In contrast, the indirect emotional route suggests that discrete emotions are involved. Drawing on appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), we assume that in case the indirect route is active, complainants' blame attributions affect the level of dissatisfaction (i.e., an emotional state of mental discomfort caused by an insufficient return relative to the resources spent), which in turn affects anger (i.e., an outward-directed aggressive negative emotion that involves an impulse to respond towards the source of anger). This means that the two emotions can – in principle – mediate sequentially between failure-related cognitions and complaint desires. Having this said, this research argues that whether the direct or indirect route becomes effective depends both on the *kind of desire sought* (revenge vs. reparation) and the complainant's *pre-failure level of brand attachment* (i.e., mental bond connecting the consumer with the brand). We show that brand-attached complainants make their affect-based choice for revenge drastically different than their unattached counterparts. For these committed customers, their dissatisfaction extenuates their desire for revenge instead of cultivating it (i.e., dissatisfaction's duality).

1.1 Determinants of complainants' desire for revenge

Appraisal theory suggests that individuals are inclined to develop emotions following cognitive appraisals for something of importance. Instead of arguing for a failure

attribution → anger effect, we argue that customer dissatisfaction caused by the service failure mediates between the initial causal appraisal and anger. Dissatisfaction is described as a relatively undifferentiated emotion or as a general, unspecific emotional reaction to a negative incidence (Bougie et al., 2003). Nevertheless, dissatisfaction is regarded as a prerequisite for both specific emotions and emotion-related coping behaviors following consumption problems (see Figure 1a). Therefore:

H1. For brand-unattached complainants, the effect of failure attribution on the pre-webcare desire for revenge is (fully) mediated by customer dissatisfaction and anger. That is (a) failure attribution has a positive impact on dissatisfaction, (b) dissatisfaction has a positive impact on anger, and (c) anger has a positive impact on complainants' desire for revenge.

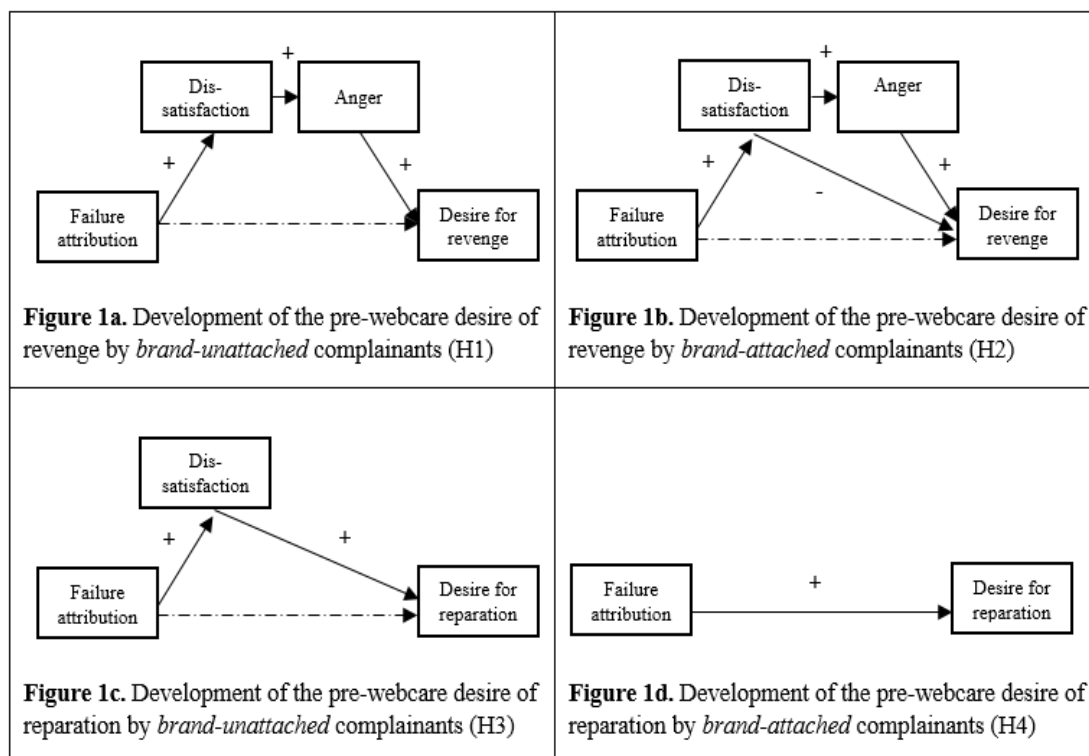
For brand-attached individuals, this research assumes a similar indirect emotional route (failure attribution → customer dissatisfaction → anger → pre-webcare desire for revenge) as for unattached persons. However, it is further argued that customers' dissatisfaction not only has a positive impact on anger (indirectly increases the desire for revenge), but also a negative direct impact on complainants' desire (see Fig. 1a). This ultimately implies a 'compensation effect', meaning that one can expect a smaller (unfavourable) net effect due to the opposing impacts of the two negative emotions on the revenge desire.

The unspecific emotion of dissatisfaction has been shown to trigger various specific negative emotions (Haj-Salem & Chebat, 2014). Basically, two types of emotions are elicited, namely outward negative emotions (e.g., anger) and inward negative emotions (e.g., guilt) (Smith et al., 1993). We argue that following a failure with a beloved brand, attached customers develop (parallel to outward-directed negative emotions) self-directed negative emotions – not because they attribute the cause of the failure to themselves – but they regard themselves responsible for trusting a faulty brand, being vulnerable to relational and transactional risks as well as being exploited because of this self-inflicted vulnerability by a close relationship partner (i.e., the 'friendly' brand). Extant literature demonstrates that dissatisfied customers can develop various inward or self-directed negative emotions because of self-blame such as guilt (Dahl et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2011; Kayal et al., 2017), shame (Yi & Baumgartner, 2011), and embarrassment (Lunardo & Mourangue, 2019). Reactions to guilt, for example, appear to be relatively constructive in that individuals seek control over the consequences of their self-inflicted actions

through rationalization or confession (Tracy et al., 2007), or engaging in some corrective action. Guilty individuals tend to take responsibility for their own wrongdoings and make amends accordingly. For the complaining context, this implies that attached consumers are likely to apply one of these amends and refrain from seeking revenge. This implies that customer dissatisfaction has a negative effect on revenge taking due to its stimulation of inward-directed guilt, but it has also a positive effect on revenge which is mediated by outward-directed anger. Hence, it is hypothesized:

H2. For brand-attached complainants, the effect of failure attribution on the pre-webcare desire for revenge is (fully) mediated by customer dissatisfaction and anger. That is (a) failure attribution has a positive impact on dissatisfaction, (b) dissatisfaction has a positive impact on anger, (c) dissatisfaction has a negative impact on pre-webcare desire for revenge and (d) anger has a positive impact on complainants' desire for revenge.

Figure 1. Illustration of research hypotheses



1.2 Determinants of complainants' desire for reparation

As mentioned, the *desire for reparation* is a complainant's constructive means to cope with a poor service delivery and to restore justice in a transactional relationship. 'Constructive' does not mean forgiving, but to demand adequate redress. Given that unattached complainants are more inclined to take affect-based negative measures against

the involved brand than attached ones (Matilla, 2004; Gregoire & Fisher, 2006), it is assumed that these individuals take an indirect emotional route (failure attribution → customer dissatisfaction → desire for revenge) to determine their personal level of redress seeking (Joireman et al., 2013). This means that their desire for reparation is particularly based on the negative emotion of dissatisfaction for brand-unattached complainants. However, the aggressive outward-directed emotion of anger – given the constructive nature of reparation – is not assumed to be involved (see Fig. 1c). Therefore, it follows:

H3. For brand-unattached complainants, the effect of failure attribution on the pre-webcare desire for reparation is (fully) mediated by customer dissatisfaction. That is (a) failure attribution has a positive impact on dissatisfaction and (b) dissatisfaction has a positive impact on the desire for reparation.

This research assumes that brand-attached individuals draw on the inferred failure attribution to rationally decide, regardless of any emotions, to which extent the brand should provide reparatory measures (Joireman et al., 2013; Grégoire et al., 2010) to restore the relational relationship (see Fig. 1d). This assumption is based on extant research demonstrating that post-failure desires can be triggered by cognitions alone, without any emotional involvement (Bechwati & Morrin, 2007). Attached complainants may take the cognitive route for reasons such as restoring the social order. This means that they focus on constructive, calculative ways to re-establish justice in their damaged but valued brand relationship. Knowing that the brand is responsible is enough and no further dissatisfaction is needed to educate the brand with a complaint. In this research, it is assumed that brand attachment immunizes consumers against considering negative emotions when seeking redress.

H4. For brand-attached complainants, failure attribution has a direct positive impact on the desire for reparation.

2. Empirical study

2.1 Method and procedure

For hypotheses testing, an online survey was conducted to investigate the population of interest – i.e., adult consumers who have personally experienced a service failure (e.g., unfriendly staff) in the recent past (< 6 months) and who have chosen to complain online directly to the involved brand via either Facebook or Twitter. Extant literature shows that

both social media channels are the prime communication outlets for brand-directed online complaints. Although an experiment would allow a cause-and-effect test of the evolving complaining desires and their consequences, it is not clear how to produce realistic service incidences and real consumer tensions (e.g., authentic emotions) in a laboratory setting that is also ethically justifiable. Therefore, conducting a survey that investigates retrospective negative brand experiences of real online complainants was deemed appropriate for this research. This approach is consistent with similar, well-published research on complaint handling (e.g., Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2009). An online access panel was used to invite respondents from both the US and Germany. 660 questionnaires were finally returned. After data screening and cleaning, the final sample included usable answers from 556 online complainants. Measures for the standardized questionnaire were taken from established academic literature. Their assessment by means of CFA yielded satisfactory psychometric properties (e.g., discriminant validity). Data was pooled after ensuring participants' homogeneity across countries (e.g., failure type) and complaint channels. 53.5% of respondents were male. The average age was 36.0 years ($SD = 10.20$). Together with their profession and education, the sample resembled typical social media users (Pew Research, 2016). Concerning failures types, defective products were the prime reason (32.9%) for complaining. This was followed by issues related to poor product/service quality (27.2%). All participants experienced a 'double deviation', which is the experience of a service incident followed by an unsatisfactory recovery attempt in a traditional complaint channel. Potential non-response bias was evaluated by applying an extrapolation method comparing early and late respondents and Harman's single factor test was used to assess the issue of common method variance.

2.2 Preliminary results

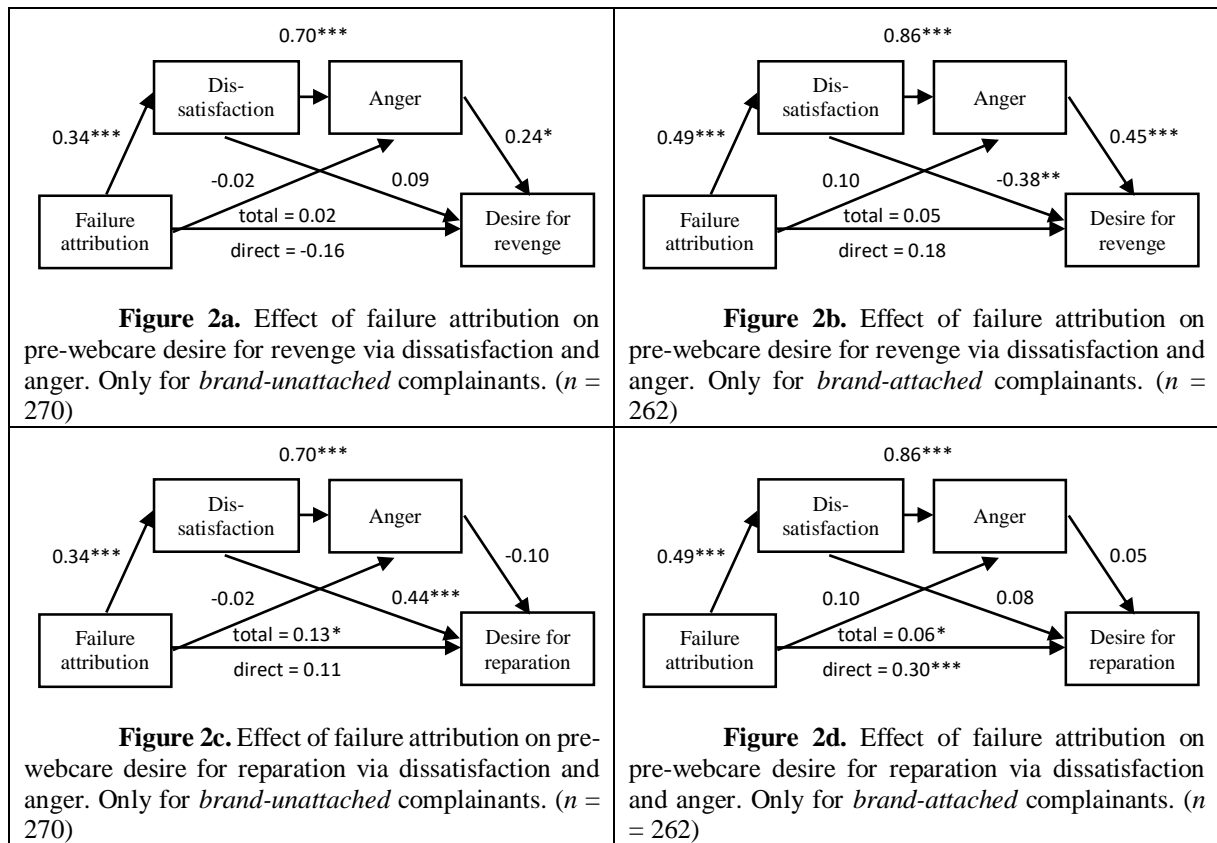
To test the mediation models proposed in H1-H2, model 6 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) was used. This SPSS macro applies an ordinary least squares regression-based path analytical framework for estimating the direct and indirect effects in mediator models. In this research, 10,000 bootstrap samples were used to estimate the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (BCIs), for making inferences about the indirect effects. In the first model, failure attribution was the independent variable, customer dissatisfaction was the first mediator, anger was the second mediator, and the pre-webcare

desire for revenge was the dependent variable. Prior brand experiences, failure severity, as well as age, gender and country were included as covariates. Two serial mediation models were run separately for brand-unattached complainants (H1; $n = 270$) and brand-attached complainants (H2, $n = 262$).

For the unattached condition (see Figure 2), the results showed no significant direct effect ($b = -0.16$, $p = 0.121$), but a significant indirect effect of failure attribution on the desire for revenge (indirect effect = 0.06, boot SE = 0.02, BCI [0.01; 0.12]). This indirect effect was mediated by the effect of the failure attribution on dissatisfaction ($b = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), which consequently increased anger ($b = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$), and ultimately resulted in a higher desire for revenge ($b = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$). This provided support for the process proposed in H1. The same analysis for brand-attached individuals, resulted in a significant indirect, negative effect of failure attribution via dissatisfaction (indirect effect = -0.19, boot SE = 0.08, BCI [-0.38; -0.07]), and an indirect, positive effect via dissatisfaction and anger (indirect effect = 0.19, boot SE = 0.06, BCI [0.09; 0.34]) on revenge desire. Specifically, dissatisfaction was predicted by failure attribution ($b = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$), and anger by dissatisfaction ($b = 0.86$, $p < 0.001$). More interestingly and in line with this article's arguments, however, the desire for revenge was negatively affected by dissatisfaction ($b = -0.38$, $p < 0.01$) and positively affected by anger ($b = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). H2 was thus supported.

H3 proposes – for brand-unattached complainants – failure attribution affects the desire for reparation, mediated by customer dissatisfaction. Again, this mediation was tested by using model 6, but now with the desire for reparation as the dependent variable. The results showed a significant mediated effect (indirect effect = 0.15, boot SE = 0.04, BCI [0.09; 0.24]). More specifically, failure attribution had a significant positive effect on dissatisfaction ($b = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) and the latter construct had a significant positive effect on the desire for reparation ($b = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$). No direct effect of the cognition on the desire was observable ($b = 0.11$, $p = 0.07$). This supported H3. Finally, also in line with H4, the results yielded a significant direct effect of failure attribution on the desire for reparation ($R^2 = 0.29$) for brand-attached complainants ($b = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$). No indirect effects via any emotion were identifiable.

Figure 2. Tested serial mediation models



Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

3. Discussion

Nowadays, service failure-affected customers increasingly voice their discontent about service incidents on brands' social media channels (e.g., Facebook brand pages). When complaining online, customers can have multifaceted motives ranging from vindictive to constructive goals. In this research, the emergence and the consequences of two pivotal complaint motives – namely, the desire for revenge (i.e., a negative problem coping strategy in which the complainant wants to harm the brand with the online complaint) and the desire for reparation (i.e., a positive problem coping strategy in which the complainant demands redress from the involved brand) – are both investigated.

While extant literature acknowledges that the two desires can arise due to a direct, cognitive route or indirectly via an emotional route, this research contributes by theoretically deriving and empirically showing that the way how the desires are formed depends on both the desire's type and the complainant's prior brand-attachment.

Findings suggests that unattached complainants form revengeful desires purely affectively and that dissatisfaction is an important mediator between failure attribution and anger, which ultimately triggers the wish to cause inconvenience to the involved brand with the online complaint (see Fig. 2a). Earlier research missed to include dissatisfaction in their conceptual models, which is particularly problematic in case of brand-attached complainants: The more these complainants are dissatisfied the more anger is felt, but also the less a desire for revenge is formed (see Fig. 1b). This research explains this effect by emphasizing the role of inward-directed negative emotions (e.g., guilt), which result from a self-reproach of forming close ties with an unreliable partner brand. This adds to the literature (e.g., Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2017) emphasizing the protective properties of close customer-brand relationships – even after a series of incidents.

The beneficial consequences of strong bonds become also evident when complainants form their desire for reparation: Here, attached complainants ‘coldly’ decide by making inferences about the failure’s circumstances to which extent compensation is appropriate to restore the relationship (see Fig. 1c), while unattached complainants consider the level of dissatisfaction (see Fig. 1d). Brand-attached complainants take the cognitive, calculative route for reasons such as teaching the brand a lesson, dissuading the brand from causing service failures in future, and restoring the social order. These findings suggest that demands for redress are purely formed by cognitions about the brand’s accountability for the failure (i.e., customer’s inferences about how much to blame the brand) and are beyond any distracting, negative emotions, which may bias the extent compensation is deemed appropriate.

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The evaluation of the consumer journey through omnichannel integration: A proposal of indicators

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Abstract

Consumers have changed the way they interact with companies. They use multiple channels before, during and after purchase. This process that starts with the consumers' interest about a product and ends after the purchase is known as consumer journey. Understanding the consumer journey over time is critical for firms and for such a journey to be successful, a proper integration of the company's channels is required. Although recent research is calling for attention about the need to develop integration strategies among channels, less effort has been devoted to propose a set of indicators to assess the level of such integration. With this aim, this paper proposes a set of indicators intended to measure the extent to which the omnichannel integration across multiple channels has been reached, with emphasis in the so-called firm's owned media (company brand pages on social network sites, corporate website and physical store). These indicators allow companies to assess the quality of the consumer experience in its interaction with the company.

Keywords: *omnichannel integration, consumer journey, indicators*

1. Introduction

With the widespread penetration of new technology in recent years, a new step in the consumer path to purchase has started to emerge (Muzellec and O'Raghallaigh, 2018). Nowadays, consumers interact with brands along a wide range of ways, and they undertake a high volume of consumption-related acts in this environment (Dimitriu and Guesalaga, 2017). Internet, social media platforms, and all the electronics devices (e.g., smartphones, smart TVs and smart watches) may influence consumers' opinions regarding brands and, in turn, alter the consumer decision-making process.

In this context, companies need to be more agile and flexible in adapting to the new order, and in satisfying the new consumers' needs regarding the communication and the buying process. These new consumers use multiple shopping channels to obtain the product or service they want at the right time and at the desired price (Rey-García et al. 2018). For example, consumers can become aware of a product on Instagram, obtain information about it in the physical store, buy it through the corporate website and file a complaint on Twitter. In sum, there is no doubt consumers' habits and shopping behavior have change, transforming their buying process (Melero et al., 2016). Consequently, companies need to better understand this new and dynamic environment as well as provide customers with a smooth transition from one channel to another.

As mentioned previously, the new paths followed by consumers when interacting with brands have led to , the concepts of consumer experience and consumer journey. The "consumer journey" refers to the experiences that the consumer lives from the moment where the need for a product is triggered until post-purchase. Understanding the consumer journey over time is critical for firms and for such a journey to be successful, a proper integration of the company's channels (e.g., website, social media, physical store) is required. The highest level of integration among channels is called the "omnichannel strategy". That is, the consumer journey will be satisfactory to the extent to which the company offers a positive experience to the consumers, meaning that they can easily switch channels any time they want without even perceiving it.

Although recent research is calling attention about the need to develop integration strategies among channels, less effort has been devoted to propose a set of indicators to assess the level of such integration. With this aim, this paper proposes a set of indicators to evaluate the channels that companies have full control over, called the owned media (Burcher, 2012), that is, company brand page on social network sites, corporate website

and physical store, in order to evaluate the extent to which the omnichannel integration has been reached, and, hence, the quality of the consumer experience in its interaction with the company.

2. The consumer journey

The consumer journey refers to the life cycle of a consumer from the moment of first contact to the ultimate purchase. This cycle includes end-to-end user experience, starting from an initial trigger, via several touch points, to a purchase decision, continue using the product or service, and finally being an advocate (Braun and Garriga, 2018). It has been also defined as “a description of customer experience where different touch points characterize customers’ interaction with a brand, product, or service of interest” (Wolny and Charoensuksai, 2014, p. 319). This definition introduces a key concept in order to explain the behavior of the digital consumer: the “touch points”. The ‘touch points’ are defined as individual contacts between the firm and the customer at distinct points in the experience (Homburg et al, 2015). For example, a consumer may have a touch point through the brand page on Facebook and another touch point with the seller in the physical store. Customers now interact with firms through a myriad of touch points in multiple channels and media, resulting in more complex customer journeys (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

In essence, consumers may now purchase online or offline or they may move seamlessly between online and offline sources of information. The consumer journey has been further altered by the newfound lack of boundaries between both the online and offline worlds. As a consequence, the consumer journey has become more complicated as consumers are likely to become exposed to multiple channels (e.g., social network sites, app, website, physical store) (Ghose and Todri-Adamapoulus, 2016). Thus, today consumers are no longer limited to the traditional journey across the marketing funnel stages of awareness, consideration, evaluation and action when completing a purchase decision (Hudson and Hudson, 2013). On the contrary, the increase in touch points has generated a disruption in the traditional purchase process.

In this context, it is very important that the company knows how to adapt quickly to the new channels that are emerging, being able to interact with the consumer through the different “touch points”. Thus, the company must be present effectively and decisively in

the different “touch points”, in order to guarantee self-management and access to the brand information. In this vein, the company must see digital platforms and consumer hyper connectivity as facilitators of the relationship with the consumer instead of considering them as a barrier to the development of its activities.

3. Omnichannel Integration

As mentioned earlier, consumers can use different combinations of online and offline channels to find information about products, make the purchase or even evaluate it afterwards (post-purchase analysis), which makes the consumer journey more complex to manage if we compare it with traditional purchase. This new pattern of behavior has led to the emergence of two tendencies: showrooming (search in store, buy online) and webrooming (search online, buy in store), which represent new phenomena in customer decision processes, where the number of “touch points” between the company and the consumer multiplies. In sum, the digital shopper has changed the retail industry forever. The explosion in potential customer touch points requires firms to integrate multiple business functions, including information technology (IT), service operations, logistics, marketing, human resources, and even external partners, in creating and delivering positive customer experiences (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

Business experts use the term *omnichannel* to describe a form of retailing that allows customers not only to shop across channels but also to interact with the brand anywhere and at any time, providing them with a unique, complete and seamless shopping experience that breaks down the barriers between virtual and physical stores (Verhoef et al., 2015). We nowadays observe a transition towards an omnichannel paradigm, defined as the synergistic management of all the channels and touch points available with the stakeholders (Rey-Garcia et al., 2018).

For consumers, a multichannel approach is most effective because it enables customers to evaluate and purchase goods either online or in-store through the use of different channels or by using a combination of channels at different points in the process (Mintel, 2015a). Omnichannel consumers are the result of a growing desire on the part of customers to interact with companies through all available channels. For that reason, some authors described consumers as *channel agnostic*, to the extent that they do not

mind buying in-store, online or via mobile as long as they get the product they want when they want it and at the right price (Aubrey and Judge, 2012).

The challenge for businesses, therefore, is to offer consumers a channel experience capable of meeting their demands. In the new omnichannel ecosystem, the different channels interact with each other and they are simultaneously and indistinctly used in the information search process and in further steps of the purchasing process (Rey-García et al. 2018). In fact, some authors such as Farah and Ramadan (2017) talk about the “omnichannel journey” to the extent that the digital revolution has redefined and altered the entire traditional buying process and the channels of contact with the consumer have multiplied.

Therefore, omnichannel management has become the new norm (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), and companies should adapt to this new reality.

4. A proposal of indicators to evaluate omnichannel integration

We proposed a set of indicators in order to evaluate the omnichannel integration of retailers, and to what extent they have the ability to offer a proper consumer journey. Thus, through these indicators we can evaluate whether consumer may move across channels without any disruptions. We identify those indicators that will be most informative to the marketer adopting an omnichannel perspective.

We focus on the channels that companies have full control over, known as the owned media (Burcher, 2012). The owned media have three main channels: 1) The company brand pages in social network sites, 2) the corporate website, and 3) the physical store. Indicators were obtained in three phases. First, researchers obtained a first list of indicators by directly observing the owned media of different firms. Second, three focus group were conducted with undergraduate Business students in order to check the previous list and to add missing indicators. Third, we tested the proposed indicators with 50 retailers from different sectors (cosmetics, fashion, technology, sport, restaurants).

Regarding social network sites, we proposed to analyze the level of omnichannel integration by focusing only in those social network sites with more users around the world: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube (Chinese social network sites were not included) (We are social, 2019). Proposed indicators for this channel are adapted to the characteristics of each platform (see Table 1) and measure aspects such as the availability

of a link to the website or information about shop locations. In addition, the number of posts and tweets with links to the website, and the number of posts and tweets referring to the physical store were also computed for a specific period of time. Based on these indicators, the following metrics may be computed:

$$\text{Website Post integration} = \frac{\text{No. of posts with link to the website in period } t}{\text{No. of post in period } t}$$

$$\text{Store Post integration} = \frac{\text{No. of post with reference to the store in period } t}{\text{No. of post in period } t}$$

Table 1. Social network sites indicators to evaluate omnichannel integration

| <i>Social networksites' indicators</i> | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | Youtube |
| Link to website | Link to website | Link to the website | Link to the website |
| Shops Location | - | - | - |
| Shopping Bottom | - | Shopping option in the post | - |
| Shop Section | - | Shop Section | - |
| Number of posts with a link to the website | Number of Tweets with link to the website | Number of posts with link to the website | Number of videos with link to the website |
| Number of posts with a reference to the physical store | Number of Tweets with reference to the physical store | Number of posts with reference to the physical store | Number of videos with reference to the physical store |

Then, to what extent the website is connected with the brand page of the company in social network sites and company website should be evaluated. Being a basic premise of the omnichannel strategy, it is necessary to evaluate whether it is possible to shop the products and services offered by the company online. Other indicators related with cross communication are the existence of links to the main company brand pages on social network sites, chatbox, email to contact with the company, or even the telephone number. The last group of indicators relate to the integration between the website and the physical store. We assume that there will be more integration when the website offers information regarding shop locations, information about the products inventory on the physical store,

the possibility of buying online and collecting the product on the physical store as well as returning on the physical store the products ordered online (see Table 2).

Table 2. Website indicators to evaluate omnichannel integration

| <i>Website indicators</i> |
|--|
| Shop online |
| Link to the social networks of the company |
| Chatbox |
| Email |
| Telephone number |
| Shop Locations |
| Information about the products inventory on the physical store |
| Collect in physical stores products buying online |
| Return on the physical store the products buying online |

Finally, indicators related with the integration of the physical store with the rest of channels should be evaluated (see Table 3). In this sense, physical stores have not always taken advantage of the opportunities that technology and digital transformation have given them. That is, physical stores have not undergone a deep process of digital transformation. Thus, we define some indicators related with the integration with social network sites. They are related to the presence of displays associated with social network sites, such as the mere presence of Facebook, Twitter or Instagram logos, the number of followers or even the invitation to join the company brand page on social network sites. Another group of indicators is related to the integration of the physical store and the website. For example, they evaluate the presence of online product reviews, QR Codes that allow consumers to jump to the digital world while in the store or even the presence of an invitation to join the website.

Table 3. Physical store indicators to evaluate omnichannel integration

| <i>Physical Store indicators</i> |
|--|
| Presence of social network sites logos in the physical store |
| Presence of invitation to join the company on social network sites in the physical store |
| Information about the number of followers in companies' brand page on social network sites |
| Presence of online product reviews in the physical store |

| |
|---|
| QR Codes |
| Presence of invitation to visit the website |

5. Conclusions

Nowadays, consumers are more and more demanding. They simultaneously use different channels to buy and communicate with the company, and they expect the experience to remain the same regardless of the channel they use. Companies should assure that the consumer journey of their customers is consistent across channels. Thus, companies should follow an omnichannel strategy in which all their channels are integrated. Therefore, this study proposes some indicators that measure the level of integration a company has on their owned channels. Specifically, the indicators assess the integration among the company brand page on social network sites, the corporate website and the physical store. These indicators have been successfully tested in retailers from different sectors such as cosmetics, fashion and sport. Through these indicators a retailer can be compared with its competitors, thus helping them to identify opportunities for improvement towards a true omnichannel integration.

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Luxury Brands and Integrated Marketing Communication: Towards a research agenda

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Abstract

The importance of luxury communication for building and maintaining a luxury brand has been acknowledged. Practices indicate that luxury brands have been successfully crafting messages to convey their brand meaning globally. However, research focusing on marketing communications practices in the luxury industry is still evolving, while the examination of luxury communication from an IMC standpoint is, to date, limited. In an effort to highlight the need for further research on the latter, this paper identifies areas for future research by synthesizing and reexamining extant knowledge on luxury communication through the lens of the four stages of integration in IMC.

Keywords: *Integrated Marketing Communication, Luxury Communication, Luxury Brands*

1. Introduction

The benefits of successful Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) for both consumers and firms have rendered it a topic of interest to both academic and practitioners. The contribution of IMC is fundamental to succeeding in several business aspects, including the cultivation of a corporate culture, the growth of strong brands as well as the management of digital media (Seric 2018; Kliatchko 2008). However, for IMC to reach its full potential for a company, a strategic orientation is required (Holm 2006). Numerous definitions have been developed for IMC and, despite their differences, they underline some key characteristics it possesses (Kitchen, Brignell, Li and Jones 2004).

Looking at IMC as a process, it combines different promotional tools and entails both tactical and strategic elements, whereas it pinpoints the necessity for clear and consistent messages. IMC is customer-oriented, makes use of new technologies and existing databases and is linked to relationship marketing (Šerić, Gil-Saura, and Ozretić-Došen 2015, 960). One of the most recent definitions describes IMC as:

“a tactical and strategic consumer-centric business process, boosted by advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which, on the basis of information obtained from customers databases, delivers a clear and consistent message through the coordination and synergies of different communications tools and channels, in order to nourish long-lasting profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders and create and maintain brand equity”. (Šerić, Gil-Saura, and Ozretić-Došen 2015, 960).

When it comes to implementing IMC, a company can face several challenges, due to the degree of integration that is required and to the barriers that need to be overcome within the company throughout the process (Dahl, Eagle and Low 2015). Hence, a company that is committed to fully adopting IMC needs to go through several stages. Schultz and Kitchen (2000, 62) identified four such stages: from tactical coordination of communication, to the redefinition of the IMC scope, to the use of IT to turn the information gathered about the customer into knowledge and finally to the assimilation on financial and strategic levels. It has also been noted that, in order to advance knowledge and practice in IMC, research should focus on examining evidence of IMC adoption in different industry sectors (Kitchen, Brignell, Li and Jones 2004). It is further noted that, as the practice of IMC is inextricably related to marketing and brand practices, it is worthwhile to explore the aspects of IMC that are especially relevant to specific industries or types of brands. In this direction, recent publications have focused on sectors such as fast-moving consumer goods (Dwivedi and McDonald 2018), higher education (Gordon-Isasi, Narvaiza and Gibaja 2020), fashion (Henninger, Alevizou and Oates 2017), football (Manoli and Hodgkinson 2020), to name but a few.

However, knowledge on how luxury communication can be integrated using the IMC paradigm is still limited. To the best of the authors' knowledge, only one paper explicitly focusing on IMC in the context of luxury branding was located (Beverland and Luxton 2005). Nevertheless, research dealing with specific aspects/ elements of luxury marketing communications, is expanding (cf. Kong, Witmaier and Ko 2020; Peluso, Pino, Amatulli, and Guido 2017). At the same time, it has been noted that the IMC concept is inextricably linked to the concept of the brand and the consumer (Kitchen 2017). The latter two

concepts also mirror the dominant areas that have attracted research interest when it comes to luxury marketing (cf. Ko, Phau and Aiello 2016; Shao, Grace and Ross 2019). This is hardly surprising, as the very concept of luxury relies on the defining characteristics of corresponding brands and the unique relationships that they develop with consumers (Kauppinen-Räsänen, Gummerus, von Koskull, C., and Cristini 2019). Given the established importance of IMC and the defining characteristics of luxury branding, it is reasoned that extending current knowledge is highly pertinent to contemporary marketing theory and practice. To address this knowledge gap, this study aims to summarily review and present extant research on luxury communication which could be potentially capitalized on to form an initial understanding of luxury communication from an IMC perspective. The rest of this paper is organized along these lines. First, current literature in luxury branding and luxury communication is examined through the lens of the different stages of IMC implementation; in this context, each of the stages in IMC adoption/ implementation is used as a framework to organize and synthesize extant literature. Within each stage, key themes are identified that hold promise as venues for further research and relevant research questions are formulated. Lastly, conclusions and implications are discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1. Tactical coordination of communication

According to Schultz and Kitchen (2000), the first stage required for IMC application refers to the need to communicate cross-functionally and interpersonally within the firm but also with external stakeholders. The critical points in this stage is that this is something that the company needs to do and adopt. It also underlines the need to create consistent communication through the promotional tools applied through the use of the same values and ideals.

Relevant research in this area initially falls within the topic of luxury advertising. The goal of luxury advertising is to recreate the dream, which is in some cases diminished by overt communication and easy accessibility (Kapferer and Bastien 2009). Freire (2012) found that some luxury brands include identity values of luxury (IVL) in their advertising messages; namely, craftsmanship, the use of raw resources, high opinion of craftsmen and their know-how, and indications of art-related mastermind.

Apart from advertising, the use of social media is another topic of interest in the area of coordinating and integrating communication. In fact, the importance of the inclusion of

various channels and tools has been frequently discussed. A significant dimension in this area is linked to the increased of digital strategies and social media in luxury communication. Dubois (2017) emphasizes that these new channels can have crucial impact on the success of luxury brands, yet there is the danger of fostering irrelevant associations which might dampen the established brand image, since luxury communication strategies aim to create, communicate and sell perceptions of status (Dubois & Ordabayeva 2015).

Consequently, relevant research questions that should be addressed in future research are:

RQ1: Which are the benefits of tactical coordination for luxury brand communication?

RQ2: Which are the company-specific and industry-related factors facilitating or impeding tactical coordination?

2.2. Redefinition of the IMC scope

The second stage refers to the importance of understanding the customer's point of view (Schultz and Kitchen 2000). Here, the firm has realized the need to gather information about their various stakeholders before designing and evaluating their IMC strategies, while it also embraces the necessity to be in line with the agencies with which it cooperates.

One of the issues discussed in this area arises from the global nature of these brands and in many cases the meaning attached to them differs cross-culturally. Liu, Perry and Warnaby (2016) emphasize how important it is for luxury brands to find an equilibrium on the global-local dilemma and keep a consistent brand image in all the markets they operate in. The difficulty to maintain levels of exclusivity and standardization is a crucial issue for luxury brands. It is suggested that seasonal advertising campaigns should be established on the concept of a global consumer culture positioning for the maintenance of an international luxury image (Alden et al. 1999). Moreover, other types of marketing communications can be adapted such as the design of a flagship store with a design that is relevant to the respective area, or the implementation of a PR strategy, aiming to further improve the brand's popularity and image. Chevalier and Lu (2010) have also stressed that luxury brands frequently adapt their marketing strategies to strengthen their brand image when setting up a retail store in another country. Al-Mutawa (2013) wanted to examine the effect of symbols created by the consumer on the brand's symbolic meaning and found that Muslim female consumers create "modestly sexy" images thus

reinventing meaning for western luxury fashion brands in Kuwait. The importance of consumer's discourse was also highlighted by Roper et al. (2013). They researched how the existence of discourses which undermine the prestige of luxury such as masstige and bling, renders luxury consumers to form a specific notion of luxury based on subjective, experiential, moral and artistic cues.

Another relevant topic here refers to luxury consumers' personal characteristics and differences, which could affect communication effectiveness. In this vein, Kim, Park, Lee, and Choi (2016) examine the retail shopping experiences for luxury fashion consumers and specifically how certain customer emotions affect one's assessment of the service and brand attitude. This depends on how familiar they are with the brand before and after entering the store. Klein, Falk, Esch, and Goluknovtsev (2016) have examined how pop up stores can be used to enhance experiential elements of the brand. They identified their effectiveness both for current and for new customers, while noting that the design of pop up stores can differ from the conventional retail design. Concerning potential individual differences in responses to communication at the point (or time) of purchase, it is interesting to note that Liu, Burns and Hou (2013) found that online and in-store luxury shoppers are motivated differently. Those who shop online are sensitive towards the price, are intrigued by the availability of items and trust online customer reviews more. On the other hand, those who shop in the physical store enjoy the shopping experience and interactions.

It is also interesting to see how several issues that are trending for luxury consumers in a given period can also influence how consumers personally relate to luxury. Joy et al. (2014) showed how luxury stores are essentially a mixture of traditions, including galleries and museums cues. These art-related elements are blended with the exclusive elements of luxury leading to the creation of the term "M(Art)World". This strategy is based on the use of aesthetic elements and leverages on the unique architecture and design of those buildings and places the objects like pieces of art and employees act as curators. Kapferer (2014) also discussed the use of art from luxury brands. He defines it as 'artification,' rendering "non-art into art", in order to deal with the volume problem. This requires significant time and resources from the company's perspective, and it is not something that can be easily achieved without the support of established artists or art institutions. The reason for investing in such a strategy is the association of the brand with something as wide-encompassing as art.

An additional area that is relevant to the redefinition of the IMC scope relates to brand meaning as shaped by marketing communications activities of luxury brands. Turunen and Leipamaa-Leskinen (2015) studied the meaning linked to customer experiences and identified the following topics: “Sustainable Choice, Real Deal, Pre-loved Treasure, Risk Investment and Unique Find” for second-hand luxury items. Interestingly, consumers can enjoy luxury without an élite element, such as symbolic value and authenticity. Cooper et al. (2015) also researched this area linking meaning and public relations. Specifically, corporate heritage brands are even able to deal with a communication crisis in case they established their corporate heritage. They also found that heritage custodianship and core brand competencies can significantly assist in managing corporate heritage.

From the above, the following research questions emerge:

RQ3: To what extent have prominent luxury brands redefined their understanding of customers to inform their strategic approach to communication?

RQ4: Which are the key characteristics of luxury consumers which crucially affect the effectiveness of IMC programs for luxury brands?

2.3. Use of IT to turn customer data to customer knowledge

During the third stage of IMC adoption, the company makes use of IT systems and databases on a global level, in order to implement that data in their decision making process and to take full advantage of the data they already possess (Cheng et al. 2017; Reto et al. 2017; Highfield and Leaver 2016.)

Apart from functioning as an additional medium/ channel of communication, social media offer substantial opportunities for firms to develop consumer knowledge. Luxury brands have managed to successfully reach and engage with their audience on digital media (Kim and Ko 2012; Phan et al. 2011). Social media can be an efficient tool in establishing relationships with consumers (Lee and Watkins, 2016). Up until recently, many underlined the viewpoint that most luxury brands still use their digital platforms in a conventional way, rather than as a way to increase engagement (Heine and Berghaus 2014). However, this changed due to the fact that having an online presence does not influence consumers’ perception of rarity and, thus, does not decrease the level of appeal, both for high- and low-involvement goods (Kluge and Fassnacht 2015). Ucock Hughes, Bendone and Pehlivan (2016) examined how the use of a platform by the brand Tiffany & Co. for a certain campaign encouraged sharing of their own stories and thus offers consumers the chance to connect to other consumers with similar stories. This strategy of

co-creation was suggested to be made available on various touchpoints and helps managers understand the customer's motivation to share their stories. However, there is also research that identifies certain negative aspects of co-creation. Indicatively, Fuchs et al. (2013) identified that co-creation can have negative outcomes for luxury brands, since consumers feel disappointed when the designer of a collection is not from the company but rather a typical consumer.

Several positive outcomes have been identified due to the investment in such technologies. Godey et al. (2016) have established the links between social media efforts from luxury brands and how this positively influences brand preference, price premium and loyalty. They underline that a holistic approach needs to be taken and that social media activities need to incorporate aspects of entertainment, degree of contact, level of being trendy, degree of being customized, and word of mouth. Various positive outcomes emerge on two aspects of brand equity. Lee and Watkins (2016) also examined the importance of social media for luxury brands and specifically, how video blogs affect consumer views. They investigated the effect that physical and societal appeal, and attitude of video blogger has towards para-social interaction and how this affects respective perceptions such as level of luxury, value, and brand-user-imagery fit as well as intention to purchase.

Thus, the research questions below are identified:

RQ5: To what extent have luxury brands transformed consumer data to actionable knowledge and insights?

RQ6: How do IMC campaigns/ activities of luxury brands evidence their reliance on consumer knowledge and insights?

2.4. Financial and strategic integration

In the last phase of IMC application, the firm is constantly evaluating the performance of their IMC campaigns in relation to ROI (Schultz and Kitchen 2000). In this stage, the importance of a strategic approach in luxury communication is the topic of interest. Although the importance of strategic communication for luxury brands is widely acknowledged (Mosca, Civera and Casalegno 2018), it seems that the actual degree of strategic and financial integration remains yet largely under-researched. Yet, in an era where increased importance is being placed on effectiveness and efficiency of marketing communications, it is interesting to investigate how investment on IMC can produce measurable returns for luxury brands by extending studies made in the context of luxury

branding. For instance, Kim and Ko (2012) have investigated the effects of social media activities undertaken by luxury brands on consumer equity, while Godey et al (2016) have found that such activities significantly affect brand equity. Hence, research can move forward by examining the extent to which luxury brands who have invested in long-term IMC efforts have enhanced their brand equity.

Thus:

RQ7: How is the effectiveness of IMC determined for luxury brands?

RQ8: Which is the impact of investment in IMC on luxury brand equity?

3. Conclusions and further research

Luxury brands are experts in establishing lasting relationships with their customers, leading to various positive outcomes such likelihood of repeat purchase behavior (Lee and Watkins, 2016). Despite the fact that major luxury brands have managed to maintain they place in the minds of the customers through the satisfaction of their psychological needs, there is, to date, limited research on IMC in the luxury sector. While reviewing extant literature in the luxury industry, it appears that academic interest has largely focused on issues pertaining to branding and consumer behavior, while research on advertising and other communications efforts by luxury brands is currently evolving; the key conclusion of this paper is that, although the IMC paradigm is highly relevant to luxury brands, there is yet scant evidence of published research dealing explicitly with this topic. However, we found that by critically re-interpreting insights from extant research in the wider field of luxury, there is room for further research in the intersection between IMC and luxury branding. It remains to be seen if future research will capitalize on these directions for further research.

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The role of office atmospherics on enhancing internal marketing effectiveness in fulfilling job satisfaction: an application to the shipping industry

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Abstract

Managers are continually adopting sensory stimuli in their integrated marketing communication strategies to influence consumers' behavior. However, marketing literature does not provide evidence of managers' and employees' responses about internal environmental stimuli and the effect on their behavior in the service sector. This research in-progress, examines how the use of atmospheric elements in the workplace can influence and enhance internal marketing effectiveness in fulfilling employees' job satisfaction. Using a mixed-method approach of interviews and questionnaires, employees in shipping companies will evaluate the use of sensory stimuli in their working environment and the impact on their level of satisfaction. Results obtained will be used to fill important theoretical and practical gaps.

Keywords: *atmospherics, sensory stimuli, internal marketing, integrated marketing, job satisfaction*

1. Introduction

The importance of working environment has been in discussion since the 1950's (Hoffman & Turley, 2002). Environmental psychologists discuss the influencing role of a context on the behaviors of both the employees and consumers (Hoffman & Turley,

2002). It seems that atmospherics entered the marketing literature in the 1970's and yet is a field under examination (Loureiro, 2019; Ballantine et al., 2015; Krishna & Schwarz, 2014; Turley & Milliman, 2000; Kotler, 1973). They can be defined as the targeted indoor and outdoor design that engage humans' senses for the achievement of a desired behavior (Petit et al., 2015; Kotler, 1973). In literature, atmospherics are mainly investigated in retailing (Roggeveen, Grewal & Schweiger, 2020; Smith & Burns, 1996) rather than the service industry. On the other hand, the field of service marketing turned the attention of various researches toward the employees' satisfaction and performance in a customer-oriented manner (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2010). It is widely accepted that employees are increasing worldwide, hence it is plausible that researches focus on their wellbeing (Wineman, 1982). The field of service marketing and work environment gained a great importance. In the marketing literature, it is supported that within a physical context where behaviors and actions occur, employees are influenced in terms of "satisfaction, productivity and motivation" (Bitner, 1992, p. 57). Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to examine the influencing role of atmospherics on managers' and employees' job satisfaction, which "still lack an up-to-date systematization of both theoretical and empirical findings" (Mari & Poggesi, 2013, p. 171). Retrieving managers and employees' responses, will be investigated if atmospherics influence their attitudes towards positive job experience. Furthermore, it will be examined whether atmospherics act as an incentive to strengthen the adoption of integrated internal marketing effectiveness. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is defined as "various marketing communication tools" that are relevant to "external and internal audiences" (Kitchen et al., 2004, p. 1419). Atmospherics in interaction with the internal marketing are employed as an integrated internal marketing strategy that affects employees' behavior and leads to "enhanced returns" (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015, p. 34). The current study contributes both to the integrated internal marketing and the sensory marketing literature, with the physical environment be considered as an element of the internal marketing mix (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Ahmed et al., 2003).

Shipping industries in Cyprus are reported to be of great importance with the island enjoying a leading position (PwC Cyprus, 2017; Cyprus Shipping Chamber, 2016). Drawing upon these statements and as no indicators were found for the investigation of the sensory stimuli in this context, shipping industry is selected to support this study. The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, to investigate the influential role of atmospherics

at the shipping workplace on employees affective and cognitive responses. Secondly, to detect the relationship between these internal responses in relation to the internal marketing effectiveness which will form the job satisfaction.

2. Literature review

There have been previous studies that provided the relationship between the atmospheric elements of a place and their influence on behavior. Given the extant research, as the main issue of the present study is to investigate the role of atmospherics on the enhancement of internal marketing effectiveness which leads to job satisfaction, the chapter of literature review is divided in the main relevant fields of the topic and research gaps are discussed.

2.1. *Atmospherics*

According to Kotler (1973, p. 50) atmospherics are defined as the “conscious designing of space to create effects in buyers”. According to this rationale, atmospherics can generally be about all those features physical or not, in a context, that aim on attracting consumers’ attention through sensory stimuli (Francioni et al., 2018). Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of atmospherics (Roggeveen et al., 2020; Hulten, 2019; Krishna & Schwarz, 2014; Spence et al., 2014) as the use of such stimuli is vital for sensory strategies to create unforgettable experiences (Ifeanyichukwu & Peter, 2018; Rowley & Slack, 1999). Such experiences can be defined as the sensory perceptions created after an exposure to sensory stimuli (Chen & Lin, 2018). Drawing upon this literature, for the study’s purpose, customers are turned into employees and the retail environment is turned into the service working environment. Even though the importance of an environment on the behaviors has been underlined through many researchers, the field of the relationship between the atmospherics and employees’ behavior is still in its infancy (Skandrani et al., 2011; Hoffman & Turley, 2002). As most of the studies have examined the role of atmospherics in retail context, the need for their examination in the service industry is raised (Hoffman & Turley, 2002). In the same vein, Davis (1984) has discussed that the internal environment of offices should be further examined and understood in the “aspects of management and organizational behavior” (p. 271). Employees are continually not been investigated and explored in relation with the atmospheric environment they interact daily, and is a field that has gained little interest (Skandrani et al., 2011; Bitner, 1992).

2.2 Internal Responses

In the environmental psychology field, Mehrabian and Russel (1974) introduced the Mehrabian-Russel (M-R) model indicating that individuals tend to have internal responses that work as moderators towards their behavior. This model is translated into emotional responses an individual has before a behavioral decision; approach or avoidance (Lucia-Palacios et al., 2016; Eroglu et al., 2003; McGoldrick & Pieros, 1998). These emotional responses are commonly known as the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) scale (Skandrani et al., 2011; Bitner, 1992). There have been numerous studies that analysed the emotional states from the PAD perspective, with pleasure and arousal dominating the influence (McGoldrick & Pieros, 1998). Other findings indicated that consumers, or employees in this case, are responding in both affective and cognitive ways (Skandrani et al., 2011; Eroglu et al., 2003). In 1992, Bitner in her research introduced the model further, indicating the physiological response as the third internal state after the exposure to a servicescape. However, the affective and cognitive responses remained stronger and mainly researched. The emotional/affective aspect, indicates whether the individual is pleased or displeased, the emotional state and mood. From the cognitive perspective, it engages the workers' beliefs and rationale towards an environment (Lucia-Palacios et al., 2016; Bitner, 1992). Hence, it is plausible to posit that the environmental stimuli in a work environment, moderate employees' emotional and affective responses which in turn, may enhance internal marketing effectiveness towards their job satisfaction.

2.3 Internal Marketing

In the late 1970s, Internal Marketing entered the marketing and service management literature with attention to the internal operations of the organization (Varey, 2000; Varey & Lewis, 1999). Internal marketing is proposed in various disciplines. It was originally proposed as an approach to service management which entailed the application of the traditional marketing concept and the associated marketing mix within an internal market (Varey, 1995, p. 40). It has also been proposed as a management approach motivating employees to examine their role and act with customer-oriented manner (Cowell, 1984). Furthermore, it has been evaluated as a model for implementing integrated marketing strategies. Employees' influence can be attained with the use of internal marketing mix or a set of controllable instruments inside the organization (Yildiz & Kara, 2017; Gounaris, 2006; Ahmed et al., 2003). Taştan and Davoudi (2020) indicated that workplace characteristics are among the antecedents of employee job satisfaction. Ahmed

et al. (2003) provided the system of internal marketing mix in which the physical environment is among its elements that shall be considered when implementing internal strategies.

In many service businesses, the quality, the trust and the commitment of the labor force have become a major source of competitive advantage (Andrew et al., 2020; Melewar et al., 2017; Ng, Fang & Lien, 2016; Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016). Yeum et al (2020) supported that internal marketing can facilitate firms to enhance their competitive advantage. This, attracted the interest of many researchers in the field of internal marketing (Gounaris, 2008; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000; Grönroos, 1995; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Berry, 1981). The internal marketing concept supports that the personnel of the organization is the first market. Organizations, while addressing the external objectives, they shall turn into their employees to motivate them, to support their needs and wants and train them for service-mindedness and customer-oriented behavior (George, 1990; Grönroos, 1990; Berry, 1981; Berry et al., 1976).

2.4 Job Satisfaction

Evidence indicated that the right use of atmospherics leads to satisfaction, where as a result consumers are evaluating retailers in a positive manner (Chen & Lin, 2018). From the employees' perspective, when job provides psychological benefits, employees develop strong bonds with their employer (George, 1990), forming a psychological connection with customers (Bhattacharya & Korschun, 2008). This integrates employees' work to a relational exchange and the interaction with customers works as a component of high job performance (Korschun, Bhattacharya & Swain, 2014).

Literature presents the effort of researchers to identify the mediating role of internal marketing on the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement (Mainardes, Rodrigues & Texeira, 2018; Bailey, Albassami & Al-Meshal, 2016). Internal marketing has been found to have a critical role for implementing sustainable strategies (Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008) and is one of the main antecedents of market orientation (Lings & Greenley, 2009; Lings, 2004). Berry and Parasuraman (1993) explained that when employees are satisfied, gaining value from the work they perform, this is mirrored into the external customers. Internal market orientation is seen as a prerequisite for satisfying customers by involving the employees' satisfaction (Panigyrakis & Theodoridis, 2009). Taking into consideration that external customers' satisfaction seems to be influenced by internal customers' (employees) satisfaction (Narteh & Odoom, 2015; Huang & Rundle-

Thiele, 2014; Czepllel & Rosenberg, 1977), internal marketing researchers look into two potential sources of competitive advantage: a) employees (Bailey et al., 2016; Ahmed et al., 2003) and b) the market orientation, since the internal marketing actions are decided from the perspective towards the final customer (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Naude, Desai & Murphy, 2003).

2.5 Shipping Industry

According to the PricewaterhouseCoopers' report, Cyprus is in a very competitive position in the shipping industry of Europe (PwC Cyprus, 2017, p. 2). Based on the shipping statistics, the island ensures a predominant position and in the shipping centre due to its both infrastructure, geographical position and tax regulations (PwC Cyprus, 2017; Cyprus Shipping Chamber, 2016). Presumably, this is what leads to the establishment and success of many shipping companies in the country, making the Cypriot maritime "one of the largest in EU" (PwC Cyprus, 2017, p. 4). Bearing in mind the above statements and statistics, there is a challenge investigating the role of the environmental stimuli on employees' behavior in such companies, that are stated as of great importance.

3. Research Questions

Based on the literature review and the purpose of this study, the following research questions are formulated to support the area of atmospherics, the dimensions of internal marketing and their interconnection;

3.1 Which and to what extent office atmospheric cues stimulate employees in shipping firms?

3.2. Which dimensions of internal marketing evoke positive feelings at the working environment?

3.3 Do positive feelings gained from the overall working environment enhance employees' job satisfaction?

4. Methodological Frame

A mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative) will be adopted to examine the relationship of atmospherics on the enhancement of internal marketing's effectiveness, from the employees' point of view. To achieve the objective of the study, managers and employees from shipping companies in Cyprus will be asked to participate in the study. Based on both, the overview of the existing literature that explored atmospherics effect on employees (Table 1) and the more recent literature on the field, a pilot study will be attempted as a trial of the interview protocol which will be developed. The overview of the existing literature indicates that there is a gap over the period of time. Since the last research on the field was from Skandrani et al. (2011), the goal is to adjust all the models and variables measured so far, to achieve the appropriate design of atmospherics. It is worth mentioning that, as the atmospherics in the field of retailing is in a continuous investigation, this study uses Turley and Milliman's (2002) model categorization for the better understanding of the environmental stimuli.

Therefore, the typology of the stimuli is divided into; exterior variables, interior variables, layout and design, decoration and human variables. As the authors of the present study aim to investigate environmental stimuli within the workplace of shipping companies, for the purpose of the study only the interior, layout and design and decoration variables will be measured. Semi-structured interviews will be employed addressing open-ended questions at the research area. Data obtained will be analysed to develop an adequate representation of items that will operationalize the content validity. Furthermore, a trial-run of the questionnaire will follow and a full-scale research instrument will be established. Data will be analyzed to examine (a) managers' perceptions towards the importance of office atmospherics, (b) employees' internal responses on their existing experience as resulted from the environmental stimuli and (c) the level of satisfaction gained from the environmental stimuli.

The conceptual framework is formed as follows in Figure 1;

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

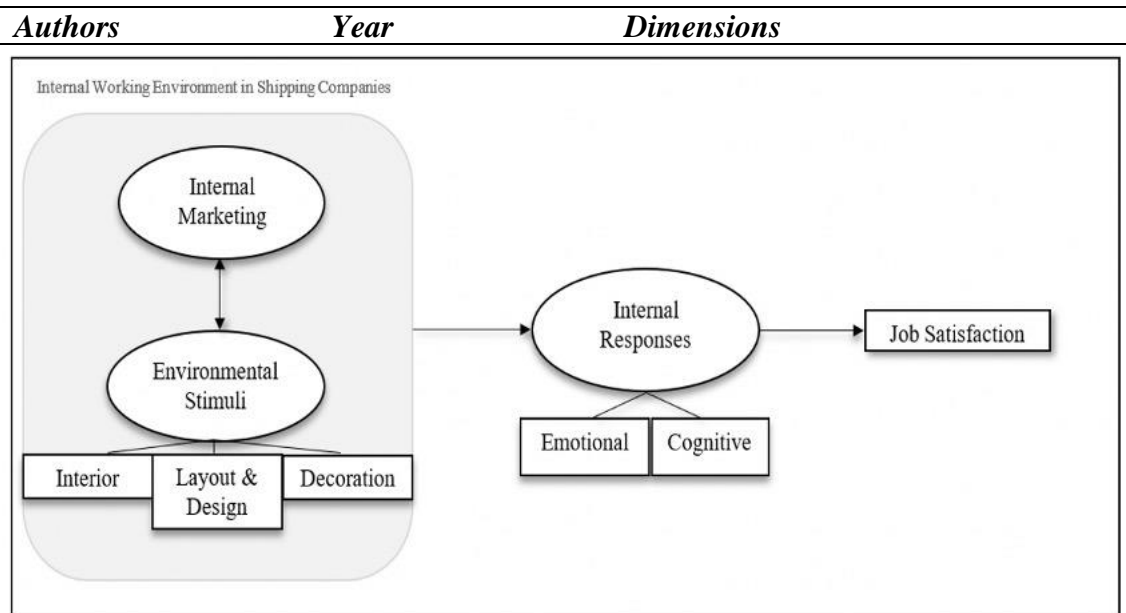


Table 1. Overview of the relevant research on atmospherics and employees

| <i>Authors</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Dimensions</i> |
|------------------|-------------|---|
| Weinman | 1982 | Physical Comfort Task Instrumentality Privacy and Social Interaction Symbolic Identification |
| Davis | 1984 | Physical Structure Physical Stimuli Symbolic Artifacts |
| Andrus | 1986 | Temperature Furnishing Music Layout Equipment |
| Bitner | 1992 | Ambient Conditions Spatial Layout and Functionality Signs, Symbols and Artifacts Service Typology and Environmental Dimensions |
| Hoffman & Turley | 2002 | Exterior Interior Others |
| Skandrani et al. | 2011 | Physical Factors Social Factors |

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Exploring users' responses towards Face Filters: Implications for social media and brands

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Keywords: *Facial filters, originality, aesthetic quality, interactivity, usefulness, enjoyment, behavioral intentions*

The development of Augmented Reality (AR), which superimposes digital content on the users' real surroundings (Flavián et al., 2019), is generating a new physical-virtual reality where consumers, products and companies interact in unprecedented ways (Javornik, 2016). Particularly, AR has been identified as an emerging trend that will determine the development of social media (Appel et al., 2020). Specifically, AR Face Filters (ARFF) use the device's camera to overlay visual and/or video content on users' faces (Appel et al., 2020). While Snapchat was the first social network site (SNS) to enable ARFF, Instagram and Facebook have recently got on this bandwagon (Neuburger et al., 2018). At early stages, ARFF were generic and mostly developed by the SNS. However, SNS currently allow brands, public figures, celebrities, and other popular creators to make original ARFF ([Spark AR](#)). Despite their increasing application, there is a lack of studies analysing the use of ARFF in customers' experiences on SNS. This study investigates the influence of ARFF characteristics on the users' perceived usefulness, enjoyment, and behavioral intentions towards the brand and towards using a SNS that enables ARFF.

Following the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), we consider the audiovisual cues presented to users as the stimuli (Eroglu et al., 2001). We distinguish between branded- vs. social media-featured

ARFF. Apart from the ARFF that social networks (Snapchat) create for their users' amusement, several brands (e.g. Adidas) are using ARFF to offer new ways of interacting with consumers. We analyse how these two types of ARFF affect the users' organismic reactions in terms of perceptions of originality, aesthetic quality and interactivity. Originality is the degree to which users perceive some contents as unusual, innovative and sophisticated (Casaló et al., 2018). Aesthetic quality refers to the vividness and visual appealing of the digital contents (Pantano et al., 2017). Interactivity is the users' capacity to modify and manipulate the contents that are displayed in the technology-mediated environment (Steuer, 1992). High-end brands can invest a great amount of resources to develop branded content. Thus, we expect that ARFF featured by brands will generate more positive organismic reactions than those featured by SNS. Specifically:

H₁: Branded-featured ARFF (vs. SNS-featured ARFF) will have a positive effect on users' perceptions of (a) originality, (b) aesthetic quality and (c) interactivity, of the ARFF.

The enjoyment-usefulness approach (Van der Heijden, 2004) suggests that the use of technologies can generate both utilitarian and hedonic organismic reactions. Perceived usefulness is the degree to which a particular technology will help users to perform their tasks (Kwon & Wen, 2010). Perceived enjoyment is the fun that users obtain with the use of a technology (Van der Heijden, 2004). Additionally, behavioural intentions (response) are regarded as a proxy of how users are planning to behave (Venkatesh et al., 2003). For brands, behavioural intentions refer to the probability that users will purchase or recommend the brand. As for social media, we consider users' intention to use SNS that enable ARFF. This research proposes that the features of the ARFF will add value to the experience with SNS (Appel et al., 2020) which, in turn, will foster users' organismic reactions and responses. Thus:

H₂: The perceived originality of a branded-featured ARFF will have a positive effect on users' (a) perceived usefulness, (b) perceived enjoyment, (c) behavioural intentions towards the brand and (d) intentions to use a SNS that enables the use of ARFF.

H₃: The perceived aesthetic quality of the branded-featured ARFF will have a positive effect on users' (a) perceived usefulness, (b) perceived enjoyment, (c) behavioural intentions towards the brand and (d) intentions to use a SNS that enables the use of ARFF.

H₄: The perceived interactivity of the branded-featured ARFF will have a positive effect on users' (a) perceived usefulness, (b) perceived enjoyment, (c) behavioural intentions towards the brand and (d) intentions to use a SNS that enables the use of ARFF.

Finally, when users enjoy and obtain useful benefits from their interaction with systems, they are prone to develop positive responses (Kwon & Wen, 2010). Previous research has found that users obtain both utilitarian and hedonic value when using AR-based tools (Hilken et al., 2017). Therefore, we expect that the positive impact of users' perceived usefulness and enjoyment of using branded-featured ARFF will translate into favourable behavioural intentions towards the brand and the SNS:

H₅: Perceived usefulness of the branded ARFF has a positive effect on users' (a) behavioural intentions towards the brand and (b) intentions to use SNS with ARFF.

H₆: Perceived enjoyment of the branded ARFF has a positive effect on users' (a) behavioural intentions towards the brand and (b) intentions to use SNS with ARFF.

The hypotheses will be tested through an online survey. Specifically, participants will be asked if they have ever used ARFF, and in that case, if the filters are featured by a SNS or a brand. The questionnaire includes multiple-item measurement scales adapted from previous literature for originality (Moldovan et al., 2011), aesthetic quality (Pantano et al., 2017), interactivity (Animesh et al., 2011), usefulness (Kwon & Wen, 2010), enjoyment (Van der Heijden, 2004), and behavioral intentions towards brands (Lu et al., 2014) and towards using SNS that enable the use of ARFF (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The results aim to offer interesting insights that may help researchers and managers to better understand how users perceive ARFF. Specifically, the comparison between SNS-featured and branded-featured ARFF are expected to show differences in perceived originality, aesthetic quality, and interactivity. These differences may be due to the fact that brands can invest a great amount of resources to develop sophisticated content. Second, the analysis will reveal which characteristics of the ARFF determine usefulness and enjoyment to a greater extent. Finally, behavioural intentions towards brands and SNS may be shaped differently. The analysis will show whether the utilitarian route (usefulness) or the hedonic route (enjoyment) is better for users to develop favourable intentions towards the brand and social media.

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Understanding the Concept of Time for Food Wellbeing

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Keywords: *time; food wellbeing; consumer decision journey*

Time is an essential part of consumer life. While it is so integral to everyday activities that it rarely gets reflected upon, time also comprises multitude of meanings that are eminently personal; including time allocation, time orientation, value of time and temporal framing (Adam, 1998; Carlson et. al., 2019). At its essence, time exists as an external phenomenon that is independent from the social context; though, recent studies suggest that it is the subjective experiences that give meaning to the objective notion of time (Carlson et. al. 2019; Strazdins et. al.; 2011). For instance, in a restaurant environment, waiting for a table will result time dragging and cause feelings of frustration whereas being served immediately will evoke positive emotions for the consumers (Maguire and Geiger, 2015; Durrande-Moreau and Usunier, 1999; Maister; 1985). In contrast, consumers will experience feeling rushed, if the waiter does not spend enough time with the consumer delivering the service. As such, consumers' subjective experience of time changes the consumption process and the awareness of time as a finite resource shape a lot of these experiences. This study argues that a holistic view of time will further our understanding on consumer wellbeing. Specifically, this paper merges literature on food wellbeing (FWB) and time, to answer a key question: how does consumers' experience of time influence food wellbeing (FWB)?

Introduced in 2011 by Block and her colleagues, FWB is defined as “a positive psychological, physical, emotional, and social relationship with food at both the individual and societal levels” (Block et. al., 2011). As opposed to viewing “food as health”, “food as wellbeing” “requires shifting from an emphasis on restraint and restrictions toward a more positive, holistic understanding of the role of food in a person’s overall wellbeing” (Block et. al., 2011). Furthermore, Block and her colleagues highlight the need for employing a multidisciplinary approach to FWB by demonstrating its strong connections to a number of academic fields other than marketing. Therefore, this study contributes to literature by offering an understanding of how time affects FWB.

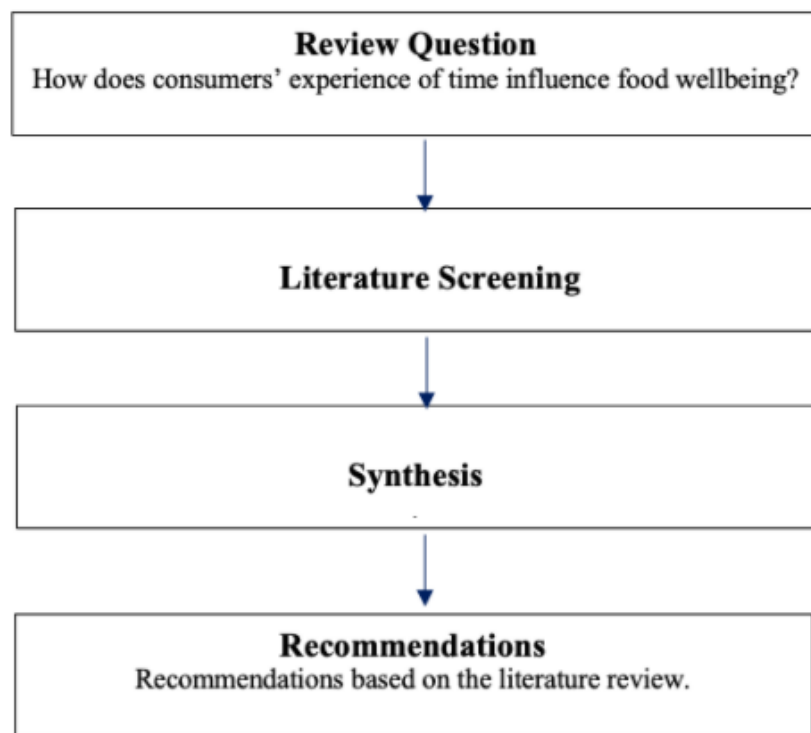


Figure 1. Methodology

Figure 1 above shows the steps used in this conceptual study to answer our research question. First, both FWB and time literatures were screened. Second, in order to understand how consumer experience of time can influence consumers relationship with food decision-making and consequently FWB, this study synthesised both literatures using Bublitz and her colleagues’ framework (Bublitz et. al., 2011; 2013). This

framework on FWB continuum offers an important approach to understand consumers' relationship with food and how offerings based on the notion of time can help or hinder the advancement along the FWB continuum. Finally, as time is fundamental to every consumption activity, this study suggests that adopting a temporal perspective towards consumer wellbeing is critical for marketers, academics and policymakers.

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The LW from the marketing perspective: analyzing its impact on the consumer response

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Keywords: Corporate social responsibility; Fair Trade; Living Wage; Prosocial and non-prosocial consumers; Marketing.

Extended abstract

Several studies reveal the positive impact of communicating CSR initiatives among consumers (e.g., Li et al., 2019; Baghi and Gabrielli, 2018). However, this impact may vary according to the type of initiative (Peloza and Shang, 2011; Tully and Winer, 2014). This makes it necessary to study each specific initiative. Furthermore, not all CSR initiatives have been approached with the same intensity by the academic literature (Peloza and Shang, 2011; Tully and Winner, 2014). Certain initiatives such as Living Wage (LW) have yet to be scrutinized despite their presence in the public domain (Werner and Lim, 2016).

The present study intends to evaluate, for the first time and through an experimental research, the impact on the consumer response (in terms of effectiveness) of communicating LW as a CSR initiative. This study has therefore carried out a comparative analysis with another social cause, Fair Trade (FT), a notion widely addressed in the specialized literature. This is a relevant comparison given the great similarities between the two. The analysis covers two key aspects of marketing captured through two means of measurement: a) self-reports to determine the effectiveness of these initiatives in increasing the perceived value of commercial proposals and b) an objective mean to evaluate the processing fluency of the initiatives. In this regard, the perceived value of the resources exchanged between companies and consumers leads to transaction consolidation and encourages repetition (Peloza and Shang, 2011). Likewise, processing fluency of a message is linked to favorable consumer responses such as credibility, preferences and choice (Song and Schwarz, 2008; Shapiro and Nielsen, 2013).

The findings of the self-reports reveal that both initiatives increase the perceived value of commercial proposals. The impact of LW on this type of response is, nonetheless, greater than that of FT. Furthermore, the application of an objective mean of measurement

indicates that each of these initiatives generate high processing fluency among prosocial consumers. The positive response by prosocial consumers to each initiative is consistent with the Regulatory Fit Theory (Higgins, 1997). In this regard, CSR messages generally fit with the goal's orientation of prosocials (Peloza and Shang, 2011; Ross and Kapitan, 2018). However, the most relevant difference of LW is its positive impact on non-prosocial consumer response, a segment whose goals are contrary to CSR messages (Peloza and Shang, 2011; Ross and Kapitan, 2018).

The results point to a decisive effect of the beneficiary's proximity beyond factors inherent to consumers, such as their personal goals. The daily dynamics of urban consumers, their personal relationships and their job aspirations are strongly linked to those of dependent workers. This is not the case of FT beneficiaries who are perceived as more distant. These results are substantiated by the Moral Intensity Theory (Jones, 1991) and the Construal Level Theory (Trope and Liberman, 2010). A closer proximity to dependent workers fosters the perception that their problems are morally more relevant for urban consumers and renders them more influential in the decision making. Likewise, their greater proximity leads to a more concrete representation of the situation of dependent workers, which facilitates processing and the subsequent decision of support.

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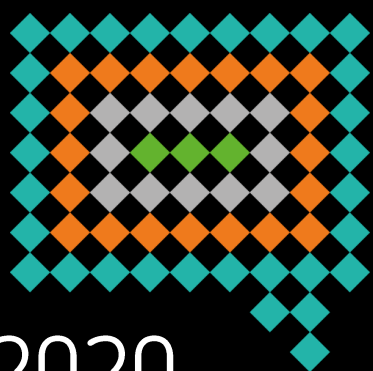


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