CMC2022
26th Corporate and Marketing Communications Conference

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
Editors: Ioanna Papasolomou and Yioula Melanthiou

"DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN LIGHT OF COVID-19"

Hosted by the University of Nicosia (Cyprus), School of Business, 18-20 April 2022

ISBN: 978-9963-711-95-6

Conference Sponsor

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
DEPUTY MINISTRY OF TOURISM

CYPRUS convention bureau

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword from the Conference Co-Chairs

Traditional marketing communications is still around us. It has been tried and tested ever since the early days of Marketing. Moving on to a digital era, new technologies are being introduced promising more effectiveness, efficiency, interactivity, and transparency.

While 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), viral and augmented reality (AR), and gaming are evolutions of technologies that have existed for more than 50 years in some cases, Blockchain is a new technology. People in marketing have surely heard of Blockchain, but what it does exactly and how it can improve marketing communications, is yet to be understood. Among other things, Blockchain can make things like personal information economy (PIE) become a reality. Because Blockchain can allow verification of personal identity, this can be extended for consumers to keep their data as they travel around the digital landscape, and they can make the decision about who can use their data, when and how. But although this seems quite beneficial for consumers, how will this affect a marketer's now far more complex route to communicating with its audience? 5G is far more powerful, faster, and smarter than the current standard. This new generation is promising to unleash the possibilities of augmented reality since it will now be cheaper and more energy efficient. Voice assistants will become the norm as we become truly immersed, which is what AR is all about, but are mobile advertisers ready to work voice conversations and voice-based advertising? Finally, the global gaming market was valued at €151 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach a value of €250 billion by 2026. Social influencers, the current hype in Marketing Communications, can make thousands with a single post and this is especially true with gaming influencers on YouTube. With a world going mobile mad, with males and females of all ages being social and gaming, with vast opportunities for inclusivity at all levels and video content richness, this too poses an important question to advertisers: *Are we ready?*

COVID-19 has hit the world in an unprecedented way and has impacted among others both locally and internationally the society, the economy, education, travel and the business sector. It certainly has stretched the overall physical and emotional requirements for most of us. For many if not all organisational members, the workload at least doubled because of the transition to remote learning, adjustments to constantly changing learning environments, planning for contingencies and a heightened struggle to balance work, life and family responsibilities.

The pandemic has already forced the whole world to rethink long-standing social values and life orientations. People and businesses have been forced to change their patterns of human interactions and utilize technology and new communication tools to remain connected, work and do their shopping. Consumer behaviour has changed. Some behaviours have changed for good such as the growth of e-grocery shopping and remote learning. The pandemic changed a generation of students. During the peak of lockdown nearly 1.6 billion children were out of classroom. Digital learning and the enhanced use of technology were utilised during the coronavirus transmission. The pandemic has also forced business leaders to re-assess and even change organizational constructs, structures, strategies and business orientations. Several companies shifted rapidly to online channels and utilised technologies to respond to the increased pressure and constant challenges posed by the constant developments related to the pandemic.

The topic of CMC 2022 looks into understanding how new technologies are challenging companies today, how new technologies have helped businesses to cope with the challenges created by the pandemic, how the pandemic has shaped the marketing and corporate communications fields, and how these new technologies could be used to offer businesses and customers a more direct and interactive way to communicate with audiences, and especially those new generation consumers who are intertwined with digital technologies. At this conference we seek to address questions including: will new technologies have sustaining or disruptive effects on organizations? How must new technologies be strategically approached and adequately embedded in the organizational structure in ways that will strengthen rather than damage their competitive advantage? What barriers might companies be faced with when adopting new technologies? And what are the ethical, social and long-term consequences that need to be addressed?

Professor Ioanna Papasolomou and Professor Yioula Melanthiou, April 2022

Note from the Conference Founder

It is my pleasure in these proceedings to thank the conference chairs Professor Ioanna Papasolomou and Professor Yioula Melanthiou for their excellent organisation. For the kind permission of the University of Nicosia to again host the delegates on this beautiful campus, amid the splendours of Cyprus. And, of course, for all the delegates who have shared their papers and insights with us herein.

The conference began in 1995 at Keele University in England when it seemed to me that there was a great need to bring together those from the marketing and corporate communications disciplines in what was intended to be - and became - a small-scale interactive, friendly, and participative conference. It has been held annually across Europe since that time. The conference is designed in such a way as to be low in cost but high in quality. It is likely unique in its structure, organisation, and non-profit nature.

The subject of the 2022 conference concerns digital technologies in light of COVID-19. Worldwide disruption from COVID-19 was unprecedented, with digital media being the main winner. Consumption surged and advertising spend followed, with these media buying trends likely to continue into 2021 and 2022. According to WARC (2022), a much greater focus on proximity to and understanding of customers and stakeholders is mandated - admittedly lessons that should have been learned long ago if we are to believe the main marketing and communication literature. Thus 2022 and 2023 will witness far greater analysis, planning and implementation in both communication domains to build and augment sustainable profitable relations (see Kitchen and Tourky, 2021; and Kitchen et al, 2021). ROI and ROCI will be the main focus of attention together with positive shifts in brand loyalty and overall brand value. In these continuing circumstances, integrated marketing and corporate communications will continue to enjoy a significant and needed role.

In an attempt to dimly peer into the future, problems that beset the world now, will continue into the future. COVID appears to be accelerating, economic turmoil as a result of the Ukraine/Russia war will continue to impact on business growth and communications; consumer needs must be brought to the fore and not (as they are now in many economies) treated with disdain. The economic fallout of current circumstances has yet to be determined. The accelerating refugee crisis shows no signs of abatement. In all of this, businesses of all types from multinational to SME's will need to become much more customer-focused, more customer-driven and communications will have to adapt and change accordingly. We have witnessed a massive decline in expenditure during COVID and now there are strong green shoots of recovery – perhaps even full recovery to pre-COVID levels, but with remarkable shifts toward digital and online activity.

In closing these brief words, the widening gap between academic research and business practice has to be narrowed and perhaps even closed. We academics cannot afford to keep incrementally building on the theoretical foundations of past knowledge. Businesses must learn and re-learn if necessary, the fundamental basic skills of marketing. As we move further into the third decade of the 21st century, the essence of marketing as means of creating exchanges that satisfy individual and corporate objectives must become customer-focussed and customer-driven, and the spearheading force will be communication (Kitchen and Tourky, 2022).

Professor Philip J. Kitchen, April 2022

References

Kitchen, P.J. and Tourky, M.E.A. (2022), Integrated Marketing Communications: A Global Brand-Driven Approach, 2nd edition; Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Kitchen, P.J., Tourky, M.E.A., Petrescu, M., Rethore, C. (2021), 'Globalisation, Marketing, Sustainability, Tourism and the Hand Mirror of COVID-19', Academy of Business Journal, March, 1, 9-27.

Kitchen, P.J. and Tourky, M.E.A.,(2020), 'Communications at a Crossroads: What Place for IMC in a post-COVID-19 Landscape?'; 2, (December), 7-17. Revista de Estudios Empresarials-Segunda, Epoca, Spain.

WARC (2021), COVID: One Year On: The Lasting Impact of Media Habits, April.

Does Customers’ Prior Product Knowledge Affect Perceived Sellers’ Connection to their Bundle of Needs, Goals and Preferences? A Study in the Used Car Sector

Olivier Mesly[a]

[a] *Marketing Department, ICN Business School, 86 Blandan, Nancy, France; Email: Olivier.mesly@icn-artem.com*

Abstract

In this article, we examine whether clients with various levels of product knowledge differ in their post-purchase assessment of the salespersons they negotiated with in consideration of their bundle of needs, goals, and preferences. The results of our research, which involved distributing a questionnaire and individual meetings with the 120 respondents, show that the more consumers know about the products prior to buying, the more likely they perceive that the sellers had cared for their bundle of needs, goals, and preferences, as reported in post-purchase assessments. This means that there may be an inherent bias in satisfaction surveys that are customary in the car selling industry, in North America at least: more knowledgeable customers tend to have a more positive view of the sellers. Certainly, for the latter, improving customer experiences by understanding and managing their customers’ bundles, especially in an economic sector where they are notoriously perceived negatively, can be of benefit. This may apply to many other economic businesses where consumers fear that hidden agendas loom behind their efforts, even when well intentioned. This potential improvement is not the sole effect of the sellers’ actions: it also depends on the customers’ knowledge of the products they intend to buy.

Keywords: *needs; goals; preferences; product knowledge.*

1.Introduction

In this article, we discuss how buyers with various levels of product knowledge prior to purchase assess, once in a post-purchase condition, the dealership’s used car salespersons they dealt with in regard to their bundle of needs, goals, and preferences (thereafter refer to as NGPs). This example could potentially apply to many different sales interactions involving products that have a significant weight in the consumers’ budget, where we posit the bundle has most significance. In other words, we ask the question: “Is there a positive linear relationship between the customers’ pre-existing product knowledge and the post-purchase sentiment that the sellers addressed their bundle of NGPs during the sale process?” Our research indicates that this is the case. We venture to say that this may have important economic consequences, as customers’ disconnection from their NGP bundle likely means that they don’t actually buy what they would have bought, and that they have rather endured a negative consumer experience. This would likely translate into a negative assessment of the salespersons when filling out satisfaction surveys. We suggest, based on our study, that customers who fill out such surveys may have a positive bias towards the sellers if they have appropriate prior product knowledge *independently* of the sellers' actions. The key variables of interest are that of prior product knowledge and NGP connection, which we review in the literature section below. In the subsequent section, we explain the research we conducted in the used car industry and examine the results. We conclude by highlighting the contribution of this paper: no study had so far investigated the concept of the NGP bundle nor its relationship to customers' product knowledge. For products that demand careful planning and judicious choices, a convincing sales and marketing effort likely gains from addressing all at once not only consumers' needs, but also their goals and preferences (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004), keeping in mind that customers' prior product knowledge will likely influence the perception of this effort.

2. Literature review

We chose to respond to our research question by investigating the used car sector because salespeople in this industry are notorious for having negative, predatory reputations (foe rather than friends — Grayson, 2007) by eagerly selling cars while hiding their defects[1], which buyers will discover soon after leaving the dealership, or worse, after the short-term guarantee expires (Bauer, Zavolokina, and Schwabe, 2019). By positioning our research under this lens, we attempted to maximize the conditions whereby customers would most likely have a negative bias towards the sellers from the onset, thus amplifying the contrast between positive and negative post-purchase perception of the sellers' efforts (DeCarlo and Barone, 2013).

The used car sector is demanding. For sellers, the global reputation for malevolence and planned product obsolescence makes it challenging not to appear deceitful to customers who, even when trying to be unbiased, are caught in the jaws of socially inlaid stereotypes (Hartman, 2006)[2]. The prospective buyers know little about how the coveted used car was maintained by the former owner. Unlike that for new cars, information on used cars can hardly be found in full through an internet search. Generally, car dealership websites provide a picture of the used car, a price, and basic information, such as the reading on the odometer. A visit to a dealership is necessary to develop a clear understanding of the given product. Thus, interactions with a salesperson are often required and crucial to the buying process. (Nowadays, new cars can be delivered to one's home without meeting with a car salesperson.) Buyers spend considerable time and effort visiting used car dealerships with apprehension and must remain vigilant every step of the way, fearing that the salesperson may give them the "runaround" and surreptitiously lead them to buy a vehicle they do not need or that does not correspond to their pre-set list of required attributes (Darke and Ritchie, 2007). This negative sentiment may be reinforced by the fact that used carpools are necessarily limited in terms of. Indeed, the number of cars available in the car dealership showroom or parking lot is often minimal. The cars all have some defects (e.g., past history of involvement in a car accident, rust, etc.) or are expected to have some defects. The probability of finding a used car that satisfies all of one's needs, goals, and preferences, given a limited budget, is low if not nil. Brands may not be a guarantee of quality, as a used car may have been badly maintained or even, as is the case in many former East European countries (to cite only one example), include a mixture of assembled, disparate parts. Such cars may pose a hazard once on the road, if not a severe threat in poor driving conditions. Thus, buying a used car may appear as a losing proposition from the onset.

---

[1] Used car salespeople are regularly compared to sharks or other kinds of predators in the general culture — newspapers, books, movies.

[2] See, for example, https://www.aada.asn.au/news/dealer-perception-does-not-reflect-reality/. Accessed July 1, 2021).

This situation may facilitate the emergence of sellers-buyers conflicts and aggravates fears that one could be making a poor buying decision. This is not the case for a mere kitchen mixer or lawnmower, for example, but it is for a product that will perform many functions, such as transportation to and from work and going on vacation. Family, friends, and neighbours will see the used car and possibly comment on it, or ride in it. There is thus a stigma associated with a used car, whose cost may represent a substantial share of one's budget; however, a used car's value will only decrease unless, by some unlikely miracle, it becomes memorabilia of sorts, in which case it is not truly a used car, but a collection item coveted by many eager buyers and connoisseurs. Thus, buyers have every reason, from their perspective, to feel as if they are prey when negotiating (or even prior to negotiating) with seller/possible "ruthless economic predators" (Tetlock and McGraw, 2005). The last thing that customers want is to be carried away from their initial needs, goals, and preferences and to experience misfortune, accompanied by an unpleasant debt. As put forth by Robbins and Miller (2004), "Social psychologists have determined that the processes, perceptions, judgments, and attributions that customers typically use to evaluate services are likely to be influenced by the degree of personalization or the type of relationship between the parties involved" (p. 96). A negative, if not appalling, interaction with the used car salespersons will likely discourage customers from wanting to buy a used car again, at least from the same car dealership (Bateman and Valentine, 2015). This could even affect intentions to buy a new car from the same vendor or even to switch brands (Gountas and Gountas, 2007; Guido, Pino, and Peluso, 2018). This process, of course, is not conducive to repeat business and limits dealerships' sales in the long term (Liljander and Roos, 2002).

In short, used car buyers are afraid to be sold a "lemon." This is so ingrained in the social psyche that in 1984, New York became the first US state to enact a so-called used car "lemon law." There are few economic sectors where this predator-prey game is felt with as much intensity from the start and where the concern of being lured is so intense (Lilly, 2020). Their feelings of being seen as prospective prey make buyers stressed and fearful of choosing the wrong product — used cars in the present article (Mishra and Das, 2018). Shrewd sellers who detect this deep sense of discomfort may even maximize their selling effort by displaying the appropriate level of ill-intentioned agility (Bourguignon, Boeck, and Alejandro, 2021). Hence, there is a strong possibility that no matter how hard used car salespersons try to please potential buyers, the latter will likely fill out the customary post-purchase satisfaction survey under the influence of a negative sentiment. Our research suggests that a more objective evaluation (e.g., in post-purchase surveys) could take place if the customers were to divulge in the survey their level of product knowledge prior to buying the used car, as this possibly puts them in a more conducive and open mood when negotiating with the sellers. If they feel the sellers know less than they do or can determine that the sellers are not telling the truth, the prospective buyers will likely walk out rather than commit to a transaction, never to fill out a post-purchase satisfaction survey.

NGPs and the possible disconnection from them (or connection with them) is a concept we introduce in this article. NGPs and the possible disconnection from them (or connection with them) is a concept we introduce in this article. Hence, there is no prior literature about this notion. The closest concepts are that of anchoring (connection) in behavioural finance (which does not address disconnection or dis-anchoring) and disassociation in psychology and psychiatry (DSM-V), but they are far off the subject. We describe NGPs as a bundle whereby buyers of products that have a significant weight in their budget (such as a car) do consider all three aspects as they relate to their purchases: their needs (a car to go to work), their goals (an affordable car they can resell at an estimated high value on the second-hand market), and their preferences (four doors, red, etc.) — Ratneshwar *et al.*, 2001. The closest concept to bundle is that found in marketing when presenting packaging, in the tourist industry, for example. But these packages are most build around preferences, not based on NGPs. Hence, we venture to say that our concept of NGPS bundle opens a new theoretical theme in the marketing literature. The notion of de-anchoring related to in the economic theory of inflation does not fit either with the concept of NGPs disconnection. More precisely, we posit that for certain kinds of products, NGPs are a "bottom-line bundle": all three aspects of needs, goals, and preferences must imperatively be taken into consideration at once and satisfied before a purchase is done. A wedding ring, for example, fills a social need (e.g., to display to others our matrimonial status), achieves certain goals (conveying love and commitment), and is carefully chosen for its attributes (diamond type, etc.) For a given groom, the bottom-line bundle will be a yellow diamond ring of a given size (to fit the bride's finger), bearing the name Cartier or Versace, nothing less. The bottom-line bundle is similar to the concept of "basic needs" found in the Kano model (Kano *et al.*, 1984), which has influenced a large number of creators of satisfaction surveys. It stipulates that customers experience three kinds of satisfaction (basic, performance-related, and hedonistic-related, i.e. excitement), along two main dimensions (satisfaction and ability to fulfil the needs).

Our concept of bundle is larger than this "basic needs" and proposes to include goals and preferences for certain types of products, those where costs and choice consideration are substantial, if not critical. Also, our framework is restricted to product knowledge and the bundle, not to satisfaction, a concern that can be reserved for future studies. Perhaps certain common experiences are symptomatic of the possibility of disconnection from NGPs: customers occasionally return home with a product they bought not knowing what motivated them, and at times return them to the store with no rationale to provide while begging for refund (Betts and Taran, 2003).

As mentioned, car dealerships are fond of post-purchase or post-service customer satisfaction surveys (in regards the purchase itself, these surveys concern mostly new cars, not used cars). A recent survey of some 3,000 US consumers who bought or leased a new or used vehicle by Cox Automotive[3] reports that both new- and used car buyers spend less time than before to go through the purchasing process. The explanation provided is that with COVID-19, would-be buyers had more time to spend investigating their intended purchases (especially online), collecting and analysing information prior to committing to approach the car dealerships. In 2020, 35% of buyers knew exactly they wanted at the beginning of the buying process, up from 29% in two years before, and they spent two hours less than before (13 versus 15 hours before). This made the purchasing process more efficient, and thus increased customer satisfaction, the report concludes.

These findings are not to say for certain that customers' prior product knowledge influences their level of post-purchase satisfaction as possibly explicated in typical survey questionnaires, but it hints in that direction. If, indeed, Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores computed in the car dealership industry depend in part on customers' characteristics such as prior product knowledge, this may influence the way these dealerships compete with each other, as they not only compete on sales volume but also on CSI data. This not only affects franchise operations but also head

[3]https://www.coxautoinc.com/news/cox-automotive-study-finds-car-buying-process-improved-during-covid-19-pandemic/. Accessed Nov. 1, 2021.

offices at various levels of business activities: marketing, inventory control, production, and quarterly or annual bonuses awarded to dealerships. Of relevance, according to industry standards, the American CSI (ACSI)[4] focuses on numerous elements of the automobile experience, but not on prior customer knowledge (among these usual elements are: comfort, drivability, dependability, features, gas mileage, handling, look, mobile applications, safety, space, style, technology, warranties, and Website). With so many attributes that may relate to customers' needs, goals, and preferences, it is little wonder that customers' product knowledge may facilitate the purchasing experience.

2.1 Hypotheses formulation

We formulated five hypotheses, as follows:

1) H_1*:* There will be a positive linear relationship (I^+) between the customers' prior product knowledge and the sensing that the used car salesperson had met their bundle of needs, goals, and preferences. [Consumers' Self-Reported Prior Product Knowledge→(I^+)→Post-Purchase Perception of Sellers' Connection to the Bundle].

2) $H_{2,3,4}$*:* There will be a positive linear relationship (I^+) between the customers' prior product knowledge and the sensing that the used car salesperson had met their bundle of needs (H_2), goals (H_3), and preferences (H_4). [Consumers' Self-Reported Prior Product Knowledge→(I^-)→Post-Purchase Perception of Sellers' Connection to NGPS, taken individually].

3) H_5*:* The creation of the concept of bundle seems statistically justified.

3. Method

From an agreement with a car dealership owner, we were able to distribute a questionnaire to two of its dealerships in a city in Eastern Canada, about 2 kilometres apart. The study was conducted over several summer months of 2019 to 2021. Distribution was done in person: the researchers hired nine MBA students to go to each dealership and approach clients in the waiting room who had bought a used car from the dealership in the last six months. Many of the customers were on their first visit back to the dealership for regular car maintenance since purchasing their used car. The respondents were willing to complete the questionnaire in person because they were waiting for their cars anyway and had little to do and because they wanted to help the students with their university project (as it was presented to them). We respected the ethical standards common in university settings, meaning that the respondents were free to answer, did not have to identify themselves, and would not be exposed to any harmful effects ("minimal risk" as referenced in scholarly research). The students were compensated for incurred travel costs and for their time and received a letter of recommendation noting their participation in the research project.

3.1 Experimental Design

We used an existing questionnaire that was first developed in 2010 in the car dealership industry and then improved in the following years (Mesly, 2010, 2021). It has five questions to test the buyers' product knowledge prior to buying the used car, and we added carefully designed three questions each for the perception that the salesperson took into account their bundle of needs, goals, and preferences (See Appendix). The bundle was calculated as the average of the nine

[4] https://www.theacsi.org/. Accessed Jul, 23, 2020.

questions related to the NGPs. Not to make the questionnaire too obvious, ten questions that did not relate to the variables of interest and satisfaction (which the respondents would have expected) were added, and the entire question set was arranged to the questions would appear randomly in the questionnaire. This customary research practice was meant to ensure the respondents would not try to answer to please the researchers, having guessed wat the research was about (a phenomenon similar to the well-known Hawthorne effect).

3.2 Measurement

The data collected were first entered in an Excel spreadsheet and then analysed using SPSS25. While data was collected on age, gender, and household income, we reserve the consequent analysis for another article with the aim of examining a different research question, that is, the role of socio-demographic in the relationship between prior knowledge and the NGP bundle. See Appendix for measurement items. We measured the psychological constructs using a 5-point Likert scale. We were meticulous in respecting the scale system devised by the original questionnaire and thus not using a dual scale system such as “completely disagree” spreading to “completely agree”, resorting instead to “do not agree at all” to “completely agree”, as disagreement is a different construct from agreement[5].

4. Results

The descriptive statistics for the variables of interest are in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (*N* = 120)

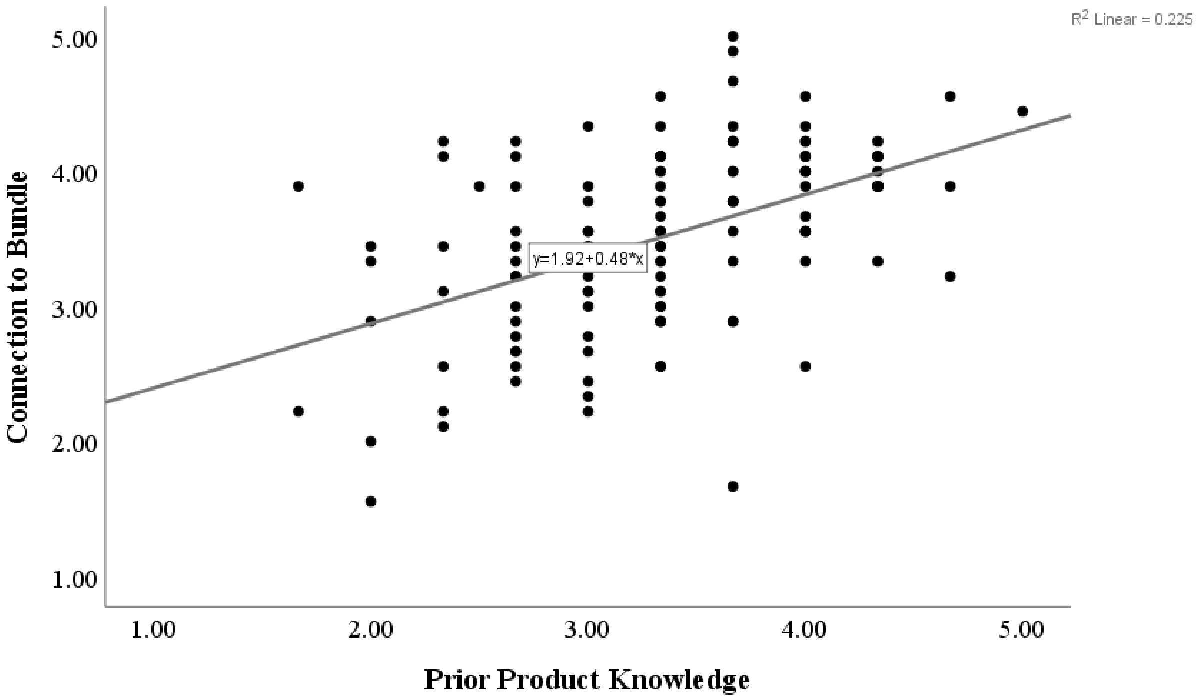
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customers’ Self-Reported Prior Product Knowledge	3.31	.68
Perceived Connection to Needs by Sellers	3.61	.84
Perceived Connection to Goals by Sellers	3.47	.91
Perceived Connection to Preferences by Sellers	3.42	.82
Bundle	3.50	.69

Note: The mean values all are in the rage of approximately 70% (e.g., 3.5/5), with goals having the largest value of standard deviation. The range of standard deviations among constructs (from .68 to .91) suggest that the sample population was not fully homogeneous, which is close to reality.

For H_1: [Consumers’ Self-Reported Prior Product Knowledge→(I^-)→Post-Purchase Perception of Sellers’ Connection to the Bundle], there is a significant positive linear relationship between customers’ initial product knowledge and the sellers’ perceived connection to their NGPs as suggested by an R^2 of .225, which means that nearly 23% of the variance in post-purchase assessment of the perceived connection to the bundle by the seller is explained by the customer’s self-declared prior product knowledge . The linear relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

[5] As an example, one may not love some (≈ do not agree at all) but that does not mean one dislike or hates that person (≈ completely disagree).

Figure 1. Reported Consumers' Prior Product Knowledge→(I^-)→Post-Purchase Perception of Sellers' Connection to the Bundle



Note: There is a (moderate) positive, significant linear trend between the variables of interest.

The linear regression is significant at *p*=.000 (F= 34.24, $df_{regression}$=1; $df_{residual}$ = 118), with the β coefficient at .478 and the intercept at 1.92 (both with *p* =.000). Table 2 summarizes the results for this regression and the ones for $H_{2, 3, 4}$.

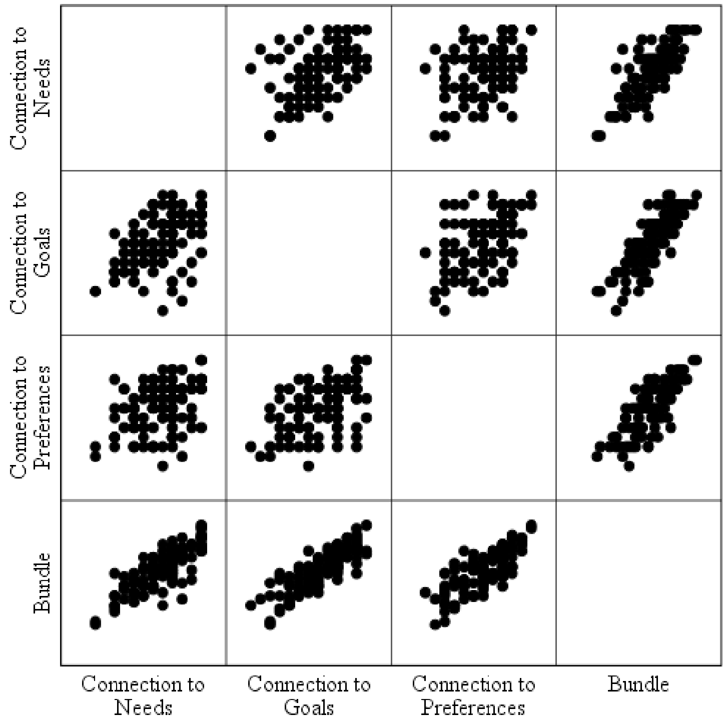
Table 2. General Results of the Various Single Linear Regressions

Hypothesis	R^2	*p*-value	F	Intercept	*p*-value	β coefficient	*p*-value
1	.225	.000	34.24	1.92	.000	.48	.000
2	.095	.001	12.44	2.35	.000	.38	.001
3	.170	.000	24.09	1.67	.000	.55	.000
4	.181	.000	26.00	1.74	.000	.51	.000

Note: Summary table of the core regression results, with all regressions being significant.

For H_2*:* [Consumers' Self-Reported Prior Product Knowledge→(I^-)→Post-Purchase Perception of Sellers' Connection to Needs], the R^2 is near 10, about half that R^2 for the relationship between prior product knowledge and the bundle. All regressions are significant. The assumption of the bundle of NGPs and the individual role of each of its components is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The Various Relationships among the Variables of Interest



Note: This figure offers a quick glance at the direction and strength of the relationships between the variables pertaining to the bundle.

Table 3 lists the levels of correlations between the components of the bundle.

		ConnNd	ConnGl	ConnPf	Bundle
Connection to Need	Pearson Correlation	1	**.505****	**.414****	.791**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Connection to Goals	Pearson Correlation	.505**	1	**.498****	.841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
Connection to Preferences	Pearson Correlation	.414**	.498**	1	.783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	120	120	120	120
Bundle	Pearson Correlation	**.791****	**.841****	**.783****	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Conn Nd= Connection to Needs; ConnGl= Connection to Goals; ConnPf= Connection to Preferences.

The values in bold characters testify to the logic behind creating the concept of the bundle. At various degrees, the components of the bundle interact with each other, in a positive, significant linear way. Customers likely evaluated their used car purchased based on the interconnected parameters of needs, goals, and preferences. For the sample population considered, the amalgamation of the NGPs under a single bundle seems justified (H_5): The R^2 for the bundle provides the slightly strongest explanatory link between the explained variable (prior product knowledge) and the explicatory variables. Customers' self-reported prior product knowledge influences the bundle, which consists of the average of each component of NGPs, and influences each of these components taken individually.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Going back to the wedding ring example and in line with the arguments developed about the used car experience, recall that we postulated that for certain products, especially those with a high market and/or sentimental value, the NGPs must preferably be treated as a whole (as a bundle). However, each component of the bundle has a different weight within it, especially when including customer prior knowledge in the equation. The latter plays a role with respect to perceived connection to needs, goals, and preferences by the seller. The fact that, in the used car sector, needs weigh less in our sample population may indicate that it was more concerned with fulfilling goals and preferences. The coveted product being a used car perhaps that meant that the need was simple (merely acquiring an affordable car) and what was left was to decide how to optimize the final choice given the attributes of the cars available in the dealership's parking lot or showroom. This appears normal in the circumstances: preferences are the most flexible criteria in choosing a product (Tian and McKenzie, 2001), with needs being the obvious *sine qua non* one. The pattern is slightly different for the existing (second-hand) housing market, for example, where the three components of the bundle may have a nearly equal weight. It remains in all cases though that the strongest relationship is when we consider prior product knowledge and the bundle, rather than when we considered prior product knowledge and each of the three components of the bundle taken individually.

Used car buyers proceed with their purchase based on three sets of criteria: their needs, goals, and preferences. Goals may relate to transportation to work, vacation areas, etc., all important aspects of one's life, but we mostly measured goals in terms of getting the best product for the best price (value for the money). As expressed by Chernev (2004) "… attributes compatible with individuals' goal orientation tend to be overweighted in choice" (p. 141). These attributes may be spread among hedonic and utilitarian (e.g., a nice car rather than a utility vehicle) as well as performance and reliability (e.g., speed), for example. We merely focused on the initial research question concerning the relationship between prior product knowledge by the customers and their post-purchase evaluation of the seller's connection to their needs, goals, and preferences; however, our results point to the possibility of extending the area of investigation by developing questions that address each element of the bundle in greater detail, for example among dimensions that car dealerships and their head offices seek to understand better, such as Web site use, for example.

The customers participating in our research were caught on the spot, so to speak, and could, after filling out the quantitative questionnaire, engage freely in discussions with the researchers about their consumer experience without adhering to a set scenario or being asked leading questions. This allowed us to get the pulse of their real feelings and to double-check their oral statements *versus* what they had responded in the questionnaire. Overall, the two modes of expression corresponded. Our written questionnaire relied on memory recall and focused on predetermined variables of interest, in stark contrast to the live exchanges. When expressing themselves during the informal discussions after filling out and handing the questionnaires to the researcher-students, many buyers emphasized the fact that they had reluctantly walked into the used car showroom or parking lot for fear of being “hooked” and “duped”. This confirmed our assessment that used car salespeople face a challenging negative bias on the part of customers. In both instances, the importance of fulfilling the expressed needs, meeting the purchase objectives, and finding the right attribute fit given the inventory of cars available was unequivocal. From the verbal communications we had, we sensed that our results are in line with previous findings: the better the information provided by the sellers, the more likely the clients will reach the right decisions and the least likely complaints will occur (Schwarz, 2004).

One noteworthy contribution of this article is the use of a form of research action, by which the researcher engages with the participants (in this case, after the questionnaire had been filled out, acting no longer as a researcher but more like, to the respondents, a person willing to listen and part of the car dealership staff, without claiming to be so). This technique (akin to focus groups in a sense), seldom used in conventional marketing research but employed more extensively in sociology, is valuable. Whereas most market and consumer research are based on questionnaires sent remotely without ever exchanging with the participants, this form of research allowed us to get a real, contemporary, and intricate feel for consumers’ sentiments. In particular, we could sense first hand whether they were complaining about their purchases or felt they had been taken advantage of by malevolent sellers. Its drawback, of course, is that it is time consuming and only a limited number of participants can be met.

The questionnaire allowed us to quantify, if only on an exploratory basis, what the clients said intuitively during the post-questionnaire phase and vice-versa: the latter shed light to the answers in the questionnaire. As an example, clients did not portray themselves as prey at any point, but used similar terminology such as “victim” or “fall for”. They did not either talk about connection or disconnection but referred to terms such as “understood”. Our research has allowed us to get a clearer, more precise, and subtler view of reality. We obtained significant statistical results (e.g., R^2 at 22.5%), which, while needing to be interpreted in the specific, limited context we examined, justify researching further, especially if in the end a more rewarding consumer experience can be achieved in the used car sector (or even other sectors where financial/budgetary stakes are high). We believe that the notion of NGP bottom-line bundle is particularly well suited under the following conditions: 1) products occupy a substantial share of the household budget; 2) the market contains frictions such that the market agents have negative sentiments or concerns about the coveted products; 3) consumers must decide what best combination they can get given what is available to them in terms of needs, goals, and preferences; 4) the products are not highly liquid, meaning that they are not easy to return or to sell once purchased; and 5) there is uncertainty about the quality or the appropriateness of the coveted products. These conditions make the consumers more wary of the transaction at hand. Evidently, our research presents limits, such as having focused exclusively on the used car sector and having resorted to a small sample; however, given the novelty of our framework, such limits compensated by the prospects of expanding consumer behaviour under the above-mentioned conditions. We feel that only a limited number of economic activities meet these criteria, one being the used car sector, of course, but also the “used” (existing) house sector. Another sector is that of art dealing, especially when suspicions of counterfeit or doubts about the artist’s career prevail. This remains to be further tested, but certainly we feel that our results have the potential to be generalized to some degree in various economic sectors.

6. Implications and Future Research

Our results indicate that it would be worthwhile investigating further with a larger sample population and across various business sectors the relationship between the product knowledge and the bundle. A thorough longitudinal study could also be performed to see, for example, the customers' sentiments after one or two years of having the car. In particular, we did not test the respondents prior to their purchasing a car and then afterwards, but resorted to their post-purchase assessment of their initial product knowledge and their memory. This, of course, does not make our study a longitudinal one, but it still prepares the path to future research, showing that this area of investigation may be worth it. In any case, a questionnaire that would be developed for the industry would likely not test customers prior to purchasing; it would most likely proceed the way we did, with a post-purchase assessment made by the respondents of their level of product knowledge before buying the car. Hence, our study presents some level of pragmatism and the questionnaire (Appendix) can likely find empirical applications.

The finding that consumers are potentially sensitive to needs, goals, and preferences all at once (as a bundle), at various levels of prioritization, can be put to use to enhance consumers' experiences, especially in economic sectors where there are strong pre-set biases. Training used car salespeople (or other salespersons) in recognizing and responding at once to these combined three levels of the buying experience while eliminating the likelihood of customers' disconnection seems to be an appropriate course of action.

References

Bateman, C., and Valentine, S. (2015). "The impact of salesperson customer orientation on the evaluation of a salesperson's ethical treatment, trust in the salesperson, and intentions to purchase." *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management 35*(2): 125-142.

Bauer, I., Zavolokina, L., and Schwabe, G. (2020). "Is there a market for trusted car data? *Electronic Markets 30*(2) 1-225.

Betts, S.C., and Taran, Z. (2003). "Prospect theory and perceptions of quality: Non-linear effects of quality comparisons on price in the used car market." *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal* 7(1): 3-10.

Bourguignon, B., Boeck, H., and Brashear. T.A. (2021). "Salesforce responsive roles in turbulent times: case studies in agility selling." *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing 36*(8): 1286-1299.

Chernev, A. (2004). "Goal-Attribute Compatibility in Consumer Choice." *Journal of Consumer Psychology 14(*1/2): 141-150.

Darke, P.R. and Ritchie, R.J.B. (2007). "The defensive consumer: Advertising Deception, Defensive Processing, and Distrust." *Journal of Marketing Research 44*(1): 114-127.

DeCarlo, T.E., Barone, M.J. (2013). "The Interactive Effects of Sales Presentation, Suspicion, and Positive Mood on Salesperson Evaluations and Purchase Intentions." *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management 33*(1): 53-66.

DSM-V, or *Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-V), 5th edition (2013). American Psychiatric Association. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Gountas, J., and Gountas, S. (2007). “Personality orientations, emotional states, customer satisfaction, and intention to repurchase.” *Journal of Business Research 60:* 72-75.

Grayson, K. (2007). “Friendship versus business in marketing relationships.” *Journal of Marketing 71:* 121-139.

Guido, G., Pino, G., and Peluso, A.M. (2018). “The impact of disgust on consumers' purchase intentions: an empirical assessment.*” The Journal of Consumer Marketing 35*(1): 105-115.

Hartman, K.B. (2006). “Television and Movie Representations of Salespeople: Beyond Willy Loman.” *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management 26*(3), 283-292.

https://www.aada.asn.au/news/dealer-perception-does-not-reflect-reality/

https://www.coxautoinc.com/news/cox-automotive-study-finds-car-buying-process-improved-during-covid-19-pandemic/

https://www.theacsi.org/

Kano, N., S., N., Takahashi, F., and Tsuji, S. (1984). “Attractive quality and must-be quality.” *Journal of the Japanese Society for Quality Control 14*(2): 39–48.

Kirmani, A., and Campbell, M.C. (2004). “Goal Seeker and Persuasion Sentry: How Consumer Targets Respond to Interpersonal Marketing Persuasion.” *Journal of Consumer Research 31*(3): 573-582.

Liljander, V. and Roos, I. (2002). “Customer-relationship levels – from spurious to true relationships.” *Journal of Services Marketing 16*(7): 593-614.

Lilly, J.D. (2020). “Psychological contract violation and the escalating cycle of mistrust.” *Journal of Business Strategy 37*(1): 29-43.

Mesly, O., Mavoori, H., and Racicot, F. (2021). “Too big to fail or too deceitful to be caught.*” Journal of Economic Issues LV*(3), 736-759.

Mesly, O. (2010). *Voyage au cœur de la prédation entre vendeurs et acheteurs.* Thèse de doctorat. Canada: Université de Sherbrooke.

Mishra, V, and Das, B (2018). Reducing Perceived Risk in Purchase of Uncertified Used Cars: Contributory Factors. IUP *Journal of Marketing Management 17* (1): 7-24.

Ratneshwar, S., Barsalou, L.W., Pechmann, C., and Moore, M. (2001). “Goal-Derived Categories: The Role of Personal and Situational Goals in Category Representations.” *Journal of Consumer Psychology 10*(3): 147-157.

Schwarz, N. (2004). “Metacognitive Experiences in Consumer Judgment and Decision Making.” *Journal of Consumer Psychology 14*(4):332-348.

Tashakkori, A., and Teddlie, C. (Eds.) (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research,* Sage, California, USA.

Tetlock, P.E., and McGraw, A. P. (2005). “Theoretically Framing Relational Framing.” *Journal of Consumer Psychology 15*(1): 35-37.

Tian, K.T., and McKenzie, K.(2001). “The Long-Term Predictive Validity of the Consumers' Need for Uniqueness Scale.” *Journal of Consumer Psychology 10*(3): 171-193.

Appendix — Questions in the Questionnaire (Core Constructs)

For needs:

1) The used car salesperson was familiar with my needs.

2) The used car salesperson respected my needs.

3) The used car salesperson understood my needs.

For goals (assumed related to cost since the product is second hand):

1) The used car salesperson did not try to sell me a car beyond the budget I had initially allocated.

2) The used car salesperson understood the financial limits I had in buying a used car.

3) The used car salesperson respected my goal of getting a good car at a good price.

For preferences:

1) The used car salesperson showed me cars that best reflected my preferences.

2) The used car salesperson provided me with valuable information regarding the attributes I was looking for.

3) The used car salesperson offered me solutions when I was not satisfied with the characteristics of the proposed car.

For product knowledge:

1) Before going to the used car dealership, I investigated thoroughly what kind of car I wanted to buy.

2) Before going to the used car dealership, I searched for valuable information about the used cars it had in stock.

3) Before going to the used car dealership, I laid down what I was looking for in consideration of my needs.

4) Before going to the used car dealership, I laid down what I was looking for in consideration of my budget.

5) Before going to the used car dealership, I laid down what I was looking for in consideration of what attributes I longed for in a car.

Maturity in Leaps and Bounds – Organisational Listening for Customer Engagement

Taina Erkkilä [a] and Vilma Luoma-aho [b]

[a] *Dept. of Corporate Communications, Jyvaskyla University School of Business and Economics, email: taina.h.erkkila@student.jyu.fi*

[b] *Dept. of Corporate Communications, Jyvaskyla University School of Business and Economics, email: vilma.luoma-aho@jyu.fi*

Abstract

Much of organisational development occurs during times of crisis when answers and solutions are urgently needed. The research presented in this paper suggests that, during such times, what matters for organisational legitimacy is understanding stakeholders' changing needs. This paper proposes that organisational listening become a core function for brands and organisations. Building on theories related to organisational listening, social media and stakeholder engagement in digital marketing, this article argues for incorporating mature online listening into the customer engagement in social media (CESM) framework introduced by Santini et al. (2020).

In the practise of organisational listening, organisations employ their processes, structures, technologies and skills to show attention to interpret and respond to their stakeholders. This article concentrates on listening on social media because changes have been most visible in this context due to the lack of gatekeepers, such as legacy media institutions. Times of rapid development make positive changes possible, but when development is rapid, unintended consequences can also follow. In the early years of social media, unintended consequences included banner advertising and targeted advertising, but during the pandemic, issues related to disinformation and spam have arisen.

The research described herein views organisational listening as a skill that develops from immature to mature. To illustrate our position, we chose two time periods during which organisational listening practices developed especially quickly. During the late 2010s, stakeholders were introduced to a direct route to brands made available through social media, and many unanswered customer service questions suddenly became visible and were subsequently addressed. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has put pressure on organisations' communication systems to respond to citizens' urgent concerns.

The analysis of both examples reveals that organisational listening matured significantly in a relatively short time. The illustrations show that organisations under pressure, despite their strategic objectives to promote two-way engagement, often resorted to one-way speaking and direct marketing on social media. However, the prerequisites of engagement, trust and satisfaction are only built if organisations listen. Our findings indicate that organisations rush to engage with stakeholders on social media using one-way speaking and direct marketing, skipping the vital stage of listening and establishing trust and relationships, without which listening cannot become strategic, nor can it mature to its full usage potential.

These results call for organisations to take a more strategic approach to organisational listening to attain their desired higher levels of engagement and conversion to action and to generate positive WOM. Modern technology can be used systematically for wider listening and for establishing relations with stakeholders online. However, listening activities must be strategically planned; the non-strategic use of listening technology does not guarantee success and may even backfire. We suggest that communication professionals embrace times of rapid change to best utilise the pressure put on their organisations, as the leaps in growth observed in the current research highlight the importance of communication and organisations' ability to mature more quickly in an environment of accelerated advancement.

Keywords: *social media, stakeholder engagement, organisational listening, public organisations*

1.Introduction

Much of organisational development occurs during crises, times when answers and solutions are urgently needed. During the late 2010s, customers and stakeholders were offered a direct route to brands and organisations through social media, and many unanswered questions regarding online services suddenly became visible and were subsequently addressed. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has put pressure on organisations' online communication function, as stakeholders seek answers to emerging questions regarding the pandemic.

Times of rapid development make positive changes possible, but when development is rapid, negative consequences can also follow. For example, new places for information quickly fill up, not only with information but also with disinformation and spam. This paper introduces organisational listening as a new core function for organisations in the current communication environment. Communication is a two-way process of listening, speaking and responding (Littlejohn and Foss 2009; Macnamara 2018;); organisational listening employs the organisation's processes, structure, technologies and skills to show attention to, interpret and respond to its stakeholders (Macnamara 2016). This paper concentrates on organisational listening on social media, which is becoming increasingly more important for stakeholder relationship management in private and public organisations (Crawford 2009; Dreher 2009; Maben and Gearhart 2018). As prior studies indicate, most organisations are present on social media, but their communication on these channels remains primarily one-way (Theunissen and Wan Noordin 2012; Macnamara 2016; Kent and Lane 2017; Watkins 2017); challenges to effective online listening include poor topic identification, inadequate answer formulation and slow response times (Brandel 2010; Canel and Luoma-aho 2019).

This paper identifies how organisational listening has matured in leaps and bounds and compares two time periods during which organisational listening developed with particular speed. The first occurred in the late 2010s when organisations adapted to the rapidly growing social media environment and addressed stakeholders' increasing demand for dialogue by introducing new platforms and measuring stakeholder interactions. The second occurred during the 2020s when the COVID-19 pandemic forced organisations to adopt new platforms to respond to urgent stakeholder needs.

Building on organisational listening, social media and engagement in digital marketing theory, this article proposes that listening on social media as a corporate communication strategy is a skill that matures, building a basis for engagement and action. In the first section of this article, we review research on organisational listening and summarise the literature on social media and digital marketing, focusing on stakeholder engagement. In the second section, we provide examples to illustrate the rapid development of organisations' social media listening using data collected in 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2021 from organisations under pressure to listen to stakeholders (2016–2017: airlines; 2020–2021: public sector organisations). Based on our analysis of these examples, we propose that trust and satisfaction, which are prerequisites for stakeholder engagement, are built by listening and engaging in dialogue with stakeholders online, thereby forming a basis for further relationship development.

2.Literature review

2.1 Organisational listening on social media

Couldry (2010) claimed a 'crisis of voice' exists in contemporary societies, but Macnamara (2016, 3) argued the real problem is the 'crisis of listening'. Social media has increased the potential for organisations to engage in two-way communication, to engage with various publics (Avidar et al. 2015, 215) and to manage their corporate reputation (Yaxley 2012, 431). Brandel (2010, 14) reported that challenges to social media listening include identifying appropriate discussion topics, determining responses and acting quickly. In an increasingly transparent environment, organisations must communicate honestly and ethically with the public, as mistakes are quickly mentioned in online discussions (Avidar et al. 2015). Organisational listening on social media is an active process that involves being present, observing and responding to stimuli through social channels (Brandel 2010) and has been defined as an architecture that 'comprises the culture, policies, structure, processes, resources, skills, technologies, and practices applied by an organization to give recognition, acknowledgement, attention, interpretation, understanding, consideration, and response to its stakeholders and public' (Macnamara 2016, 52).

Organisational listening on social media has been linked to positive outcomes, including the engagement necessary to develop long-lasting relationships and the identification of stakeholder engagement strategies that build trust, enable legitimisation and support corporate reputation and risk management efforts (e.g. Brandel 2010, Navarro 2018;Yaxley 2012;). Further, listening organisations are perceived as more authentic, and they receive more support from followers (Bentley 2010; Heath 2001; Kang 2014; Men and Tsai 2015). The success of brands and organisations in the social media domain requires participation, authenticity, resourcefulness and credibility (Barker et al. 2013).

2.2 Weaknesses in listening

The politics of listening concerns an organisation's strategic decisions on whether to listen, what and whom to listen to, what results are expected and with whom they should be shared (Macnamara 2016). Research indicates weak organisational listening has negative consequences for both the organisation and the stakeholder group involved. Organisations' reputations are endangered by a lack of organisational listening because the absence of data gathered through such measures organisations to underestimate stakeholders' expectations and depreciate their needs and wants (Taiminen et al. 2015, 736); moreover, it can negatively impact an organisation's reputation and success, resulting in financial costs, dysfunctional organisational communication and poor networking with communities (Burnside-Lawry 2011).

Nevertheless, many organisations still shy away from interaction through social media due to the challenges they encounter in identifying the right discussion topics, forming responses and responding quickly (Brandel 2010), especially when resources are tight and the number of comments is high (Macnamara 2020). However, as Valentini et al. (2012, 8) observed, social media does not exist without users. Furthermore, technologies do not create the listening or dialogue; they are tools to be used in the act of listening and interacting – tools that can be used poorly or effectively (Macnamara 2016, 265). To have a successful online presence, organisations must use the tools available through social media effectively. Additionally, Valentini et al. (2012, 8) opined that collaboration is the key public relations ‘mantra’ in social media environments.

The lack of a social media strategy, represented by underdeveloped policies, unclear goals and untrained staff, and the inability to use modern technology to measure social media outcomes and visibility also impacts organisations’ willingness to interact through social media (Barnes and Jacobsen 2014, 147). Further, organisations may fear triggering negative stakeholder reactions by appearing in the often grassroot-driven social media platforms with organisational messages.

Organisations often find one-way talking to be easier because the activity is similar to sharing a press release or posting an advertisement. Industry reports confirm that the topics that organisations prefer to address on social media are of little or no interest to stakeholders, while at the same time, organisations ignore most topics that stakeholders prefer (Freundt 2013). The challenge of social media for organisations is to combine the multiple functions of content creation: 1) sharing interesting content, 2) listening and managing questions and comments and 3) tackling disinformation, rumours and fake news. The ideal communication model calls for organisations to provide stakeholders with opportunities to engage in both positive and negative ways (Callison and Seltzer 2010; Kent et al. 2003; Seltzer and Mitrook 2007).

2.3 Models of listening

The Organizational Listening Competency Questionnaire (Burnside-Lawry 2012, 113) combines concepts from the listening competency, participatory communications and service; revealing that appropriate organisational behaviour, comprehension, corporate culture and speech conditions are related to effective listening during stakeholder engagement. Organisations can achieve better listening by increasing their ability to respond to ‘incoming messages’ (Burnside-Lawry 2012), as situational and contextual elements contribute to listening expectations and provide valuable perspectives on how competent listening practices are and are not achieved.

Macnamara (2016) listed eight key elements of listening for organisations engaged in the politics of listening, which relates to an organisation’s decisions on whether to listen, what and whom to listen to and whether and how to distribute the data gathered through listening (Macnamara 2016, 254–255). Listening structures and processes align daily listening with the organisation's work. Social customer relationship management (CRM), which combines social media data with enterprise applications (CRM / BI, or business intelligence), is becoming more popular. Social CRM generally comprises five fundamental processes: 1) mapping social profiles with stakeholder data, 2) monitoring social media, 3) managing (i.e. creating processes and rules), 4) implementing middleware (enabling data flow between dashboards and systems) and 5) measuring (using BI to identify trends, measure sentiment and so on) (Brandel 2010). Listening resources include professionals skilled in social media monitoring and analysis, customer service, reporting, consulting and correspondence processing. These functions already exist in many companies but often focus on disseminating information only one way.

The organisational listening competency combines the environment in which listening occurs with an employee's listening skills (Burnside-Lawry 2011, 149). Organisational responses to stakeholder questions and complaints are categorised into the following dimensions (Davidow 2003): timeliness, facilitation, redress, apology, credibility and attentiveness.

2.4 Listening is connecting

Online relationships with stakeholders can be established, developed and managed by listening and replying, such as through traditional communications. Social media is available for use to foster relationships between the organisation and its key stakeholders (Allagui et al. 2016, 21). Valentini, Kruckeberg and Stark (2012) noted that the role of public relations is to support both the public and organisations to build a community where dialogue and mutual understanding take place. In social media, stakeholders are often communicators themselves, creating and reacting to organisational content (Dellarocas 2003).

How an organisation manages complaints and feedback online is important, as those complaints and feedback can pose a risk to the organisation's reputation. Responding, apologising and active transferring of the complaint enhances the satisfaction of the complainant; moreover, effectively handling complaints opens the door to considerable opportunities to win complainants back as customers and even enhance the organisation's reputation among stakeholders (Einwiller et al. 2015).

However, many companies have not fully embraced the opportunities afforded by social media to interact with and assist their stakeholders because they prefer not to handle complaints publicly. As a result, social media teams are not empowered to address complaints and must ask the complainant to contact another representative of the organisation. Oftentimes, companies do not use response strategies that foster complaint satisfaction; they simply offer a corrective action, like thanking complainants for their feedback and asking them to contact customer service (Einwiller and Steiler 2015, 195, 201). Thus, social media has not increased transparency, as the quality of information is more important than all-inclusive information delivery (Taiminen et al. 2015, 736).

2.5 Digital marketing in social media

The importance of social media channels in managing relations has increased over the past few years, with a significant number of stakeholders eager to give their feedback or dialogue directly with an organisation. In practice, social media is regarded as a marketing channel to reach and engage the masses.

Social media related marketing research highlights the importance of engaging with stakeholders through social media, defining it as 'an adaptive, technology-enabled process by which firms collaborate with stakeholders and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders' (Kannan and Li 2017, 23), which closely resembles Macnamara's (2016) definition of organisational listening.

Marketing strategies aim to increase sales by leveraging social media stakeholder management, which involves mapping social profiles to stakeholder data, monitoring (listening to) social media, managing (creating processes and rules), implementing middleware (enabling data flow between dashboards and systems) and measuring (using BI to identify trends and measure sentiment) (Brandel 2010). Vargo and Lusch (2004) proposed viewing marketing as a type of technology rather than as the traditionally conceived ‘exchange of goods’. Martech is a well-established term today, but based on our findings, CommTech – Communication Technology is what is needed to manage listening among the growing number of online discussions taking place in multiple spheres. Arthur W. Page Society (2022) defined multiple stages in the CommTech progression. The lowest level is the ‘professional’ level, which is where social platforms are monitored and content performance and sentiment are followed to gauge reputation; it is also where companies are able to detect cyberattacks and fake news. The mid-level stage is the ‘pathfinder’, where audiences are segmented by demographics, interests and behaviours and where delivery is automated, content and campaigns are optimised and stakeholder journeys with sequential touchpoints are designed. The highest level is ‘pacesetter’, which is where the focus moves from digital communications to performance communications.

2.6 Stakeholder engagement in social media

In the field of marketing research, stakeholder engagement has been defined various ways, for instance, as an individual’s eagerness to interact in communities (Algesheimer et al. 2005) or as acting as a brand ambassador with brand-related content combined with affection and passionate, emotional behaviour (Baldus et al. 2015; Hollebeek et al. 2014; Obilo et al. 2020Paruthi and Kaur 2017;).

Stakeholder or customer engagement has substantial value for organisations (Santini 2020; Pansari and Kumar 2016); hence, big investments are made in social media to increase engagement by converting external stakeholders into brand ambassadors and messengers, facilitating interactions between the organisation and its stakeholders by forming communities and reaching bigger audiences (e.g. Sashi 2012); however, the actions may not always provide the needed results (e.g. Macnamara 2016; Santini 2020).

Stakeholder engagement is driven by positive emotions, but all relationships are built on trust and satisfaction. Santini et al. (2020) studied stakeholder (customer) engagement on social media and defined the customer engagement in social media (CESM) framework, which encompasses the following stages: 1) relationship formation, where trust and commitment impact satisfaction and positive emotion; 2) stakeholder (customer) engagement, which is built on trust, satisfaction and positive emotions; and 3) further stakeholder (customer) engagement, which converts into actions and word-of-mouth. Another model proposes affective, cognitive and behavioural as the stages in the engagement process (Bowden et al. 2016).

2.7 Creating trust and satisfaction

Industry reports confirm that the topics organisations prefer to talk about online are of little to no interest to their stakeholders, while at the same time, organisations ignore most of the topics their stakeholders prefer to discuss (Freundt, Hillenbrand, and Lehman 2013). Organisations are not always able to provide satisfactory replies to their stakeholders, for a plethora of reasons. If organisations respond in a way that does not meet the expectations of their stakeholders, they fail, which leads to the perception of organisational deafness, even if the organisation has, in fact, considered the views of its stakeholders. Macnamara (2016, 231) called for organisations to close this listening loop by introducing discussions on unmet expectations.

Listening helps organisations understand the perspectives of their publics, and it supports them in gaining their trust. However, no connection can occur if organisations do not follow through when their stakeholders utilise opportunities to interact with them (Callison and Seltzer 2010, 145; Kent, Taylor, and White 2003, 75; Seltzer and Mitrook 2007). Callison and Seltzer (2010, 145) recommended that organisations make themselves available for quality communication. Decisions regarding acceptable topics of discussion are not made by the organisation only; the participants in the dialogic process also contribute to the decision-making process (Theunissen and Wan Noordin 2012, 9). Wolvin and Coakley (1994) asserted that the listening competency includes behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions: knowing about listening, being willing to listen and engaging in listening behaviours with an attitudinal component. Gutierrez-Garcia et al. (2015) claimed that the heart of dialogue is a simple but profound capacity to listen, and Couldry (2009, 80) linked the practices of listening and speaking tightly together. Burnside-Lawry (2010) reported that organisations would better understand how to achieve good listening practices if they unified listening competencies with participatory communication criteria. Technology can support listening and facilitate stakeholder engagement; organisations may play a transformative role, replenishing social resources at the micro level by engaging ‘vulnerable’ stakeholders through corporate social media (Fletcher-Brown et al. 2020).

Companies increasingly are providing customer service through social media, helping stakeholders on a real-time basis. Customer service requires systematic listening. Gunarathne et al. (2018) studied three million tweets to seven major U.S. airlines on Twitter to investigate the drivers of differential treatment when customer service is delivered via social media; the researchers observed that the airlines were more likely to respond (and responded more quickly) to complaints from stakeholders who had more followers, which confirms the existence of a social media influence effect. Guo et al. (2020), who studied online customer service, argued social media adoption helps organisations absorb resources from external stakeholders (customers). These resources, including stakeholders’ feedback and ideas, support organisations in establishing better reputations and a competitive advantage. This ‘absorptive capacity’ of external stakeholders can take the maturity of listening to the next level, contributing to strategy, for example, through innovative processes.

3.Illustrative examples

3.1 Airlines and growing number of social media users

This first example illustrates how the social media organisational listening of 17 European airlines developed during a one-year period. An analysis of three combined datasets (company policies, results of a 2016 analysis of the companies’ Facebook and Twitter accounts and results of a 2017 analysis of the same) indicates that listening occurred across multiple social media channels. The results show that, despite airlines’ active social media usage, their focus on social media was (in January 2016) on one-way speaking, while stakeholder requests were forwarded to a separate customer service function. In early 2016, only 2 of 17 airline companies provided 24/7 service through social media. Furthermore, the maturity of organisational listening in social media was passive, as customer requests were only forwarded to another email or telephone or they were not replied at all online. non-existing if they were never replied to online.

Due to the rapid growth in social media’s popularity, just a year later, in March 2017, clear changes were visible: most airlines had streamlined their social media processes and had proactively used Twitter to listen and respond to stakeholders; several had incorporated 24/7 services via social media and had also deployed direct messaging services to their Facebook pages. Twitter was popular (used by 16 of 17 companies) for purposes such as handling questions from customers, informing customers about flight schedule changes and managing crises. The dialogue was open and transparent on social media, and when a matter could not be handled online, the process was still carefully described on the public channel. The social media team had become the customer service team. The channels were used proactively for listening and replying to all kinds of questions.

One of the most important topics of developing organisational listening through social media is engaging stakeholders by showing respect and empathy when listening; this can be done easily by creating a channel on social media that excludes all sales talk and advertisements (Kent and Taylor 2016), as the airlines did when establishing their Twitter customer service channels.

3.2 Public sector organisations and COVID-19 pandemic

The second example involves the recent and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, illustrating how key public sector organisations in Finland faced an urgent need to align their strategic communications with social media to respond to increased questions on the platforms. The data were collected in the winter of 2020–2021 through semi-structured interviews with 14 communicators from the key Finnish public organisations responsible for COVID-19 communications with stakeholders.

The maturity level of listening was higher in these organisations than it was for the airline organisations at their start phase. All had a presence on social media and had established strategic targets to increase online interactions, develop stakeholder relations or manage their reputation. These organisations were primarily engaging in one-way communications to improve customer satisfaction or create engagement. Soon after the pandemic struck, they realised posting vaccination guidelines and restrictions was not sufficient, as the number of questions, comments and followers on social media continued to grow by double digits to meet stakeholders' demand for information. Four of the seven organisations interviewed strengthened their social media teams to better manage listening activities. The results indicate the pandemic strained public organisations' communication skills, tools and aims, forcing them to align their social media practices rapidly and reactively by listening online and enabling useful content, thereby limiting opportunities for false or misleading content to develop. Once the listening function was organised and all questions had been answered, feedback grew more positive, and the number of followers increased remarkably. The results suggest further development of listening structures and processes is needed to enable the multivocal online discussion and strengthen trust and satisfaction among stakeholders.

4.Discussion

'Gradually, then suddenly' (Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*)

Maturity occurring in leaps and bounds describes how organisational listening developed during the times of change as discussed in this paper. In 2016 when the first examples were collected, not all organisations had social media accounts, and listening was conducted via regular customer feedback and surveys. The few existing social media channels were mostly passive – 'there was an account as you needed to be there' – and lacked a plan for regular content sharing. Next came the phase during which the account was used to post the user's own content, social media was just one channel among others and the popularity was measured with simple occurrences, such as 'likes'. In the second example, some public organisations were still passive or engaged only in one-way information-sharing on social media before the onset of the pandemic. However, stakeholder pressure forced them to move to the more mature level of active listening and replying.

Table 1. The four stages of organisational maturity of listening.

Missing: **No presence on social media**	**Immature:** **Passive presence**	**Developing:** **One-way communication**	**Leap**	**Maturing:** **Strategic listening**
no accounts or presence on social media	accounts on social media but no strategy, organisation or regular postings	account(s) on social media, one-way communication with marketing, info-sharing content. random replies		Some strategy in place, listening function established, active online presence and listening/replying to stakeholders even outside own accounts supported with technology

The biggest leap (black rabbit) occurred in both cases from the developing to the maturing during urgent times of change. Our key findings based on the two examples provided indicate that organisations rush onto social media platforms to use one-way speaking and direct marketing, striving to achieve engagement. They forget that the relationship must be established before social media engagement can occur. Such relationships are built on trust and satisfaction; organisational listening online plays a key role in facilitating both.

The public organisations handling COVID-19 questions and the airlines with their customer service focus all realised they could better engage stakeholders and create trust by establishing an architecture to support listening on their digital channels. Within 12 months, both had implemented listening functions and provided customer service via social media: public organisations replied to all comments and questions through their own social media accounts, and airlines utilised their channels, especially Twitter, for the same purpose.

We suggest that, to best utilise the pressure put on organisations during times of rapid change, communication professionals need to embrace these times, as the giant strides in listening maturity reported in this paper highlight the importance of communication and enabled organisations to mature more quickly than they otherwise would have. The development towards online listening is highly beneficial, as it appears to increase trust and transparency and to accelerate online listening and customer service in all organisations, which are incentives for high stakeholder trust and satisfaction. Santini et al. (2020, 1223) recommended that organisations allocate resources towards pleasant, satisfying touchpoints and observed that Twitter is the best channel for improving customer engagement via positive emotions and satisfaction.

Many organisations need a social media listening strategy that establishes the listening function. Modern technology can be used systematically for wider listening with limited resources and can make participation in strategically important discussions in multivocal public spheres possible. The systematic organisational listening culture is open but also needs guidelines, processes and skills to collect, analyse and utilise data effectively (Macnamara 2018; Maben and Gearhart

2018).

Table 2. Modified model following Santini, 2020: Customer engagement on social media (CESM) with examples of organisational listening activities.

Illustrative example:	**ORG. LISTENING:** **CONNECTION**	**RELATION FORMATION: SATISFACTION & TRUST**	**ENGAGEMENT:** **SATISFACTION & POSITIVE EMOTIONS**	**ENGAGEMENT :** **ACTIONS & WOM**	**MATURITY level**
Airlines and social media	Establishing accounts in social media, getting followers to the org. account	posting content and reacting to the feedback (still to email/phone) -> no trust /satisfaction yet	Twitter established as a customer service channel replying to questions and sharing info of flight delays etc. creates satisfaction	Not apparent	**Immature to developing**
Pandemic and social media	Listening started in org. channels as the no of followers rapidly growing	Satisfaction from the info shared and seeing the replies on the wall.	Getting replies to questions Finding the content and information shared interesting and helpful.	Useful content up-to-date, dialogue on the org. account, sharing content to spread the info	**Developing**

5.Implications

Development during times of crisis and change is challenging, as much effort and coordination is dedicated to surviving the change rather than to developing organisational functions. Nevertheless, we suggest that to best utilise the pressure put on organisations at such times, communication professionals should embrace these periods of rapid change, as the accelerated growth in the maturity of organisational listening highlighted in this paper emphasises the importance of communication and the ability of organisations to mature more quickly during times of crisis than at other times.

The results call for a more strategic approach to organisational listening for organisations to reach their desired higher level of engagement and conversion to action, prompting the following question: how can organisations ensure that times of change can, in fact, be exploited as strategic tools for organisational development?

Modern technology can be systematically used for wider listening and for establishing relationships with stakeholders online, but the non-strategic use of listening technology does not come with a guarantee of success and may even backfire. Taking on new technologies on the go remains a challenge, but once achieved, can significantly enhance the organisational maturity level of listening. These leaps and bounds in growth imply that management and communication and marketing professionals also develop accordingly so they can ask the right questions to glean the most useful information from the data available. As organisational listening becomes a new core function, changes are needed not just in training but in the practice of communication and marketing to best utilise this strategic skill.

References

Algesheimer, R., U. Dholakia, and A. Herrmann. 2005. "The Social Influence of Brand Community: Evidence from European Car Clubs." *Journal of Marketing* 69 (3): 19–34. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.69.3.19.66363.

Allagui, I., and H. Breslow. 2016. "Social Media for Public Relations: Lessons from Four Effective Cases." *Public Relations Review* 42 (1): 20–30.

Avidar, R., Y. Ariel, V. Malka, and E. C. Levy. 2015. "Smartphones, Publics and OPR: Do Publics Want to Engage?" *Public Relations Review* 41: 214–221.

Baldus, B. J., C. Voorhees, and R. Calantone. 2015. "Online Brand Community Engagement: Scale Development and Validation." *Journal of Business Research* 68 (5): 978–985. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.09.035.

Barker, M., D. Barker, N. F. Bormann, and K. E. Neher. 2013. "Social Media Marketing: A Strategic Approach." *Cengage Learning US South-Western*.

Barnes, N. G., and S. L. Jacobsen. 2014. "Missed eWOM Opportunities: A Cross-Sector Analysis of Online Monitoring Behaviour." *Journal of Marketing Communications* 1–2 (20): 147–158.

Bentley, S. 2010. "Listening Practices: Are We Getting Any Better?" In *Listening and Human Communication in the 21st Century,* edited by A. Wolvin, 181–192. Wiley-Blackwell.

Bowden, L.-H., V. Luoma-aho, and K. Naumann. 2016. "Developing a Spectrum of Positive to Negative Citizen Engagement." In *Customer Engagement: Contemporary Issues and Challenges,* edited by R. J. Brodie, L. D. Hollebeek, and J. Conduit, 257–277. Routledge.

Brandel, M. 2010. "Are You LISTENING?" *Computerworld* 44 (13): 13–15.

Burnside-Lawry, J. 2010. "Community Engagement in the Public Sphere: A Comparison of Participatory Communication and Listening Models as Methods for Evaluating Symmetrical Communication Between Organizations and Their Stakeholders." *LSE Conference 2008 (LSE Research Online Jan 2010, 1–23).*

Burnside-Lawry, J. 2011. "The Dark Side of Stakeholder Communication: Stakeholder Perception of Ineffective Organizational Listening." *Australian Journal of Communication* 38 (1): 147–173.

Burnside-Lawry, J. 2012. "Listening and Participatory Communication: A Model to Assess Organization Listening Competency." *International Journal of Listening* 26 (2): 102–121.

Callison, C., and T. Seltzer. 2010. "Influence of Responsiveness, Accessibility, and Professionalism on Journalists' Perceptions of Southwest Airlines Public Relations." *Public Relations Review* 36: 141–146.

Canel, M., and V. Luoma-Aho. 2019. *Public Sector Communication: Closing Gaps Between Citizens and Public Organizations*. Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119135630.

Couldry, N. 2009. "Rethinking the Politics of Voice." *Continuum* 23 (4): 579–582.

Couldry, N. 2010. *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism*. London, UK: Sage.

Crawford, K. 2009. "Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media." *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 23 (4): 525–535.

Davidow, M. 2003. "Organizational Responses to Customer Complaints: What Works and What Doesn't." *Journal of Service Research* 5 (3): 225–250.

Dellarocas, C. 2003. "The Digitization of Word of Mouth: Promise and Challenges of Online Feedback Mechanisms." *Management Science* 49 (10): 1407–1424. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.49.10.1407.17308.

de Oliveira Santini, F., W. J. Ladeira, D. C. Pinto, M. M. Herter, C. H. Sampaio, and B. J. Babin. 2020. "Customer Engagement in Social Media: A Framework and Meta-Analysis." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 48 (6): 1211–1228. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00731-5.

Dreher, T. 2009. "Listening Across Difference: Media and Multiculturalism Beyond the Politics of Voice." *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 23 (4): 445–458.

Einwiller, S. A., and S. Steilen. 2015. "Handling Complaints on Social Network Sites – An Analysis of Complaints and Complaint Responses on Facebook and Twitter Pages of Large US Companies." *Public Relations Review* 41: 195–204.

Freundt, T. 2013. "How B2B Companies Talk Past Their Customers." *The McKinsey Quarterly* 4: 12.

Gunarathne, P., H. Rui, and A. Seidmann. 2018. "When Social Media Delivers Customer Service: Differential Customer Treatment in the Airline Industry." *MIS Quarterly* 42 (2): 489–520. https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2018/14290.

Guo, Y., D. Fan, and X. Zhang. 2020. "Social Media–Based Customer Service and Firm Reputation." *International Journal of Operations & Production Management* 40 (5): 575–601. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOPM-04-2019-0315.

Gutierrez-Garcia, E., M. Recalde, and A. Pinera-Camacho. 2015. "Reinventing the Wheel? A Comparative Overview of the Concept of Dialogue." *Public Relations Review* 41: 744–753.

Heath, R. L. 2001. "Learning Best Practices from Experience and Research." In *Handbook of Public Relations*, edited by R. L. Heath, 441–444. Sage.

Hollebeek, L. D., M. S. Glynn, and R. J. Brodie. 2014. "Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation." *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 28 (2): 149–165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002.

Kang, M. 2014. "Understanding Public Engagement: Conceptualizing and Measuring Its Influence on Supportive Behavioural Intentions." *Journal of Public Relations Research* 26 (5): 399–416. https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.956107.

Kannan, P. K., and H. (A.) Li. 2017. "Digital Marketing: A Framework, Review and Research Agenda." *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 34 (1): 22–45. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3000712.

Kent, M. L., and A. B. Lane. 2017. “A Rhizomatous Metaphor for Dialogic Theory.” *Public Relations Review* 43 (3): 568–578. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.017.

Kent, M. L., and M. Taylor. 2016. “From Homo Economicus to Homo Dialogicus: Rethinking Social Media Use in CSR Communication.” *Public Relations Review* 42 (1): 60–67. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.11.003.

Kent, M. L., M. Taylor, and W. J. White. 2003. “The Relationship Between Web Site Design and Organizational Responsiveness to Stakeholders.” *Public Relations Review* 29 (2003): 63–77.

Littlejohn, S. W., and K. A. Foss. 2009. *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*.

Maben, S. K., and C. C. Gearhart. 2018. “Organizational Social Media Accounts: Moving Toward Listening Competency.” *International Journal of Listening* 32 (2): 101–114. doi:10.1080/10904018.2017.1330658.

Macnamara, J. 2016. *Organizational Listening: The Missing Essential in Public Communication.* Peter Lang Publishing.

Macnamara, J. 2018. “A Review of New Evaluation Models for Strategic Communication: Progress and Gaps.” *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 12 (2): 180–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1428978.

Macnamara, J. 2020. “Corporate Listening: Unlocking Insights from VOC, VOE and VOS for Mutual Benefits.” *Corporate Communications* 25 (3): 377–393. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-08-2019-0102.

Men, L. R., and W. S. Tsai. 2015. “Infusing Social Media with Humanity: Corporate Character, Public Engagement, and Relational Outcomes.” *Public Relations Review* 41 (3): 395–403. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.02.005.

Navarro, C. 2018. “Mastering the Dialogic Tools.” *Journal of Communication Management* 22 (1): 28–45. https://jyu.finna.fi/PrimoRecord/pci.emerald_s10.1108%2FJCOM-12-2016-0095.

Obilo, O. O., E. Chefor, and A. Saleh. 2021. “Revisiting the Consumer Brand Engagement Concept.” *Journal of Business Research* 126: 634–643. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.12.023.

Pansari, A., and V. Kumar. 2016. “Customer Engagement: The Construct, Antecedents, and Consequences.” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 45 (3): 294–311. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0485-6.

Paruthi, M., and H. Kaur. 2017. “Scale Development and Validation for Measuring Online Engagement.” *Journal of Internet Commerce* 16 (2): 127–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2017.1299497.

Sashi, C. 2012. “Customer Engagement, Buyer-Seller Relationships, and Social Media.” *Management Decision* 50 (2): 253–272. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251741211203551.

Seltzer, T., and M. A. Mitrook. 2007. “The Dialogic Potential of Weblogs in Relationship Building.” *Public Relations Review* 33 (2007): 227–229.

Taiminen, K., V. Luoma-aho, and K. Tolvanen. 2015. "The Transparent Communicative Organization and New Hybrid Forms of Content." *Public Relations Review* 41: 734–743.

Theunissen, P., and W. N. Wan Noordin. 2012. "Revisiting the Concept 'Dialogue' in Public Relations." *Public Relations Review* 38 (2012): 5–13.

Valentini C., D. Kruckeberg, and K. Starck. 2012. "Public Relations and Community: A Persistent Covenant." *Public Relations Review* 38 (5): 873–879.

Vargo, S., and R. Lusch. 2004. "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing." *Journal of Marketing* 68 (1): 1–17. doi:10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036.

Watkins, B. A. 2017. "Experimenting with Dialogue on Twitter: An Examination of the Influence of the Dialogic Principles on Engagement, Interaction, and Attitude." *Public Relations Review* 43 (1): 163–171. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.07.002.

Wolvin, A. D., and C. G. Coakley. 1994. "Listening Competency." *Journal of the International Listening Association* 8 (1): 148–160.

Worlds-most-used-social-media-platforms-2022.png (831×468) (smartinsights.com). Accessed 6 April 2022.

Yaxley, H. M. 2012. "Exploring the Origins of Careers in Public Relations." *Public Relations Review* 38 (3): 399–407.

Examining the Role of Social CRM Capability in Online Marketing Communication

Sheshadri Chatterjee [a], Ranjan Chaudhuri [b], Demetris Vrontis [c] and Alkis Thrassou [d]

[a] *Department of Computer Science & Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, West Bengal, India; Email: sheshadri.academic@gmail.com*

[b] *Department of Marketing, National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE), Mumbai, India. Email: ranjan@nitie.ac.in*

[c] *Department of Management, School of Business, University of Nicosia, 2417, Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: vrontis.d@unic.ac.cy*

[d] *Department of Management, School of Business, University of Nicosia, 2417, Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: thrassou.a@unic.ac.cy*

Abstract

Social customer relationship management (CRM) is software which can integrate different social media channels. Through the use of social CRM, employees can leverage social information of existing and potential customers; gain detailed market insights from their likes and dislikes; provide superior customer services; and help to communicate product information more efficiently and effectively to targeted customers. And as technology advances so does the interest among marketers, entrepreneurs, researchers, and scholars to understand the role and potential of social CRM capability within the online marketing communication. And yet, research on this topic is naturally scant. The present study aims to fill this gap, first through the development of a conceptual model using a focused literature review, the dynamic capability view theory, and the absorptive capacity theory. Subsequently, by validating the model using partial least squares structural equation modelling technique with 310 respondents from Indian firms. The findings demonstrate the significant positive impact of social CRM capability on online marketing communication evolution, elucidate the subject, and present its theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: *dynamic capability; business value; social CRM; absorptive capacity; online marketing communication*

1.Introduction

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a critical marketing process that helps firms match their potential customers' needs and expectations (Itani et al., 2020). Technology evolution has given rise to several CRM applications, like electronic CRM (ECRM) and mobile CRM (MCRM), with the new addition being social CRM (SCRM) (Harrigan et al., 2020). SCRM is perceived to be the most novel application compared to other types of CRM, given that most people are now using social media – an enhanced phenomenon in view of the recent pandemic (Covid-19) situation and its consequent social distancing effects (Souri et al., 2019). Inexorably, many firms are now using social media platforms, integrating these with their existing relationship management application to improve their CRM system (Harrigan et al., 2020).

The basic principle of CRM is to communicate with customers more effectively for improving the online marketing communication activities (Berthon et al., 2012; Wei et al., 2021). SCRM is not simply a new tool, but it is considered to be a new strategic approach for enhancing customer interactivity and improving marketing communication activities. Benefiting both customers and firms (Hasani et al., 2017), SCRM is interpreted as “the integration of customer facing activities ... to engage customers in collaborative conversations and enhance customer relationships” (Trainor et al., 2012, p.319). Firms’ marketing activities, through the assistance of online communication, have long been considered an important part of firms’ promotional mix (Adegoke, 2004; Krishnamurthy, 2006). Under present conditions, SCRM improves online marketing commination activities and business value, as customers are informed effectively and promptly about the latest styles, attributes and advantages of the firm’s products and services, so enhancing, motivating, and facilitating the purchase process.

In this context, the firms need to improve their knowledge repository by enhancing their abilities to identify and assimilate new innovative business ideas to improve their products and service quality (Tindiwensi et al., 2020; Chatterjee and Chaudhuri, 2022). This highlights customer information as a vital resource of a firm, which needs to be collected, assimilated, and transformed for firms to action by improving their absorptive capacity (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Zahra and George, 2002). And though the above are nothing new, research on their application in the contemporary dynamic market environment is lacking. Particularly, extant literature does not document how the simultaneous influence of firms’ SCRM activities and absorptive capacity could impact their online marketing communication capability for yielding better business value. In this vein the aim of this study is to address the following research questions (RQs).

RQ1: How could the social customer relationship management capability influence online marketing communication?

RQ2: Does the absorptive capacity of the firm influence online marketing communication activities?

2. Literature review and theoretical underpinning

SCRM is considered a multidimensional construct which is comprised of social media usage and traditional CRM applications (Wongsansukeharoen et al., 2015). SCRM is an important marketing theme emerging from the expansion of the usage of social media platforms for business activities (Alalwan et al., 2017; Kulshrestha & Kulshrestha, 2022). Researchers and practitioners have therefore turned their attention from the traditional CRM applications to SCRM applications (Harrigan and Miles, 2014; Ahani et al., 2017).

Prior studies are seen to have focused on the abilities of CRM applications in marketing and in improving firm performance (Wang & Kim, 2017; Foltean et al., 2019). However, the impacts of SCRM on the online marketing communication process are still understudied. Again, studies have demonstrated that efficient knowledge management practices, which include knowledge acquisition, assimilation, and applications, are the key factors a firm has to improve its business value (Roberts et al., 2012; Mariano & Walter, 2015). In this context, Cohen and Levinthal (1990) introduced the concept of absorptive capacity, which they defined as “the ability of a firm to recognize the value of new, external information, assimilate it and apply it to commercial ends" (p.128). Results of 289 absorptive capacity-related studies that we reviewed highlighted that the three most important dimensions of absorptive capacity, proposed by Cohen and Levinthal (1990), are recognizing, assimilating, and applying information for various purposes (Lane et al., 2006).

Firms' absorptive capacity could impact their online marketing communication abilities. The extent and nature its impact have not been exhaustively studied. Online marketing communication process helps to concentrate personalized or segmented communication to the end users (Durkin & Lawlor, 2001). Advancement of internet and mobile technology has created the need for a new approach towards marketing communication which could ensure centralized communication management, which includes corporate messages sent directly to various audiences (Semenik, 2002; Smith, 2002).

Studies have also demonstrated that online marketing communication increases creative thinking, helps to provide more consistent communication, and can improve clients' return on investment, which eventually improves the firms' business value (Kitchen et al., 2004). Business value includes that which determines the well-being and health of a firm in the long run (Kim et al., 2017; Giacomarra et al., 2020; Chatterjee et al., 2021c).

The present study has utilized dynamic capability view (DCV) theory (Teece et al., 1997) and absorptive capacity theory (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). Scholars conceptualize firms' capabilities as highly valued attributes which the firms are required to possess (Schreyogg and Kliesh Eberl, 2007). Dynamic capability of a firm is called a "higher order capability". It is considered an extension of resource-based-view for explaining the performance and competitive advantage of a firm in the highly dynamic market environment (Eckstein et al., 2015). Dynamic capability (DC) is interpreted as the firms' "ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external resources/competencies to address and possibly shape, rapidly changing business environments" (Teece, 2012, p.1395).

DC may be conceptualized in three dimensions, which are sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring, or transforming, capabilities (Teece, 2014). With sensing ability, a firm can identify, develop, codevelop, and assess appropriate technological opportunities to meet the customer needs. A firm's seizing ability allows it to appropriately mobilize the essential resources towards fulfilling customers' needs and taking advantage of business opportunities impacting its business value. Transforming ability is construed as an ability of a firm to recombine its resources and capabilities to accurately react and respond to market changes (Fainshmidt and Frazier, 2016). All these capabilities help firms to accurately identify suitable business opportunities.

In this context, in the era of advancements in information and communication technology (ICT), firms that can properly use social CRM application capability to impact their online marketing communication abilities have dynamic capabilities. SCRM capability helps them to properly apprise potential customers of the latest product designs and service offerings through an online channel, therefore improving their business value. Thus, the need to communicate with potential customers through online channels is seen to be essential to improve firms' overall health, and it could be explained through the DCV theory (Teece et al., 1997).

However, by this logic, it is argued that to communicate the latest product and service information to customers, firms must possess such valued information and dynamic capability. They need to possess appropriate knowledge for such dynamic capabilities, which they acquire and assimilate from external sources by developing knowledge management activities. Then, with their realized capacities, firms need to transform and apply such knowledge to potential customers in the form of the latest, updated information. This concept corroborates the essence of absorptive capacity theory (Zahra and George, 2002), which can be conceptualized by its three salient dimensions, which are recognizing, assimilating, and applying information.

3. Formulation of hypotheses and development of conceptual model

The inputs from the literature review and the theories helped us to identify the antecedents of firms' online marketing communication ability, which is perceived to improve business value. The antecedents will be explained here, and hypotheses will be formulated to help develop a theoretical model.

3.1. Social CRM capability (SCC)

People are increasingly using social media sites, and, as a result, social networking has become part and parcel of their daily life (Papasolomou et al., 2014). Such increased usage of social media has revolutionized the intensity of interaction between customers and firms, resulting in huge business opportunities (Evans, 2012). Thus, social CRM capability (SCC) of a firm helps it to meet the needs of customers in the dynamic market environment. As such, SCC is considered a dynamic capability, as envisaged in DCV theory (Teece et al., 1997). SCC can monitor customers effectively by analysing their feedback and use behaviour, and it could provide customers with product and service information through the online platform (Schultz et al., 2012; Chiu et al., 2012). SCC is construed to impact firms' business activities for gaining benefits (Lee and Phang, 2015). It is perceived that SCC impacts the online marketing communication process of firms. Accordingly, it is hypothesized as follows.

H1: Social CRM capability (SCC) positively impacts the online marketing communication capability (OMC) of the firms.

3.2 Absorptive capacity (ACA)

Absorptive capacity (ACA) is closely related with the knowledge management process, comprising acquiring, assimilating, and finally applying knowledge. The ACA of a firm is considered a dynamic capability for improving its performance, innovativeness, as well as knowledge repository (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). ACA is perceived to play a critical role in managing firms' business, by acquiring new knowledge with the help of their change management ability (Trichterbom et al., 2016). ACA demands information quality, which refers to "accuracy, reliability, relevance, adequacy, ease of access, and timeliness of information shared across the supply chain" (Lusiantoro et al., 2018, p.254).

ACA comprises three abilities of recognition, assimilation, and application, which help firms to acquire the latest business information and to quickly transform such information for customers. The best way to transform and disseminate information is by using an online network. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is developed.

H2: Absorptive capacity (ACA) of a firm positively impacts its online marketing communication capability (OMC).

3.3 Online marketing communication capability (OMC) and business value (BVA)

The development of new communication technology with modern database applications (McKim, 2002), the introduction of interactive marketing and direct marketing processes

(Durkin and Lawor, 2001), and the increased fragmentation of media audiences with the saturation of media channels (Smith, 2002) have brought a new paradigm to online marketing communication. This requires a strategic response to business needs.

Also, people's social conditions and lifestyles have changed in the postmodern society (Proctor and Kitchen, 2002; Manuel et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2020). The interactivity, transparency, and power of the internet are perceived to have forced firms to adopt a proactive–reactive attitude towards the online communication process and to combine continuity and consistency in the business process along with customization and flexibility (Gurău, 2008, Chatterjee et al., 2021b).

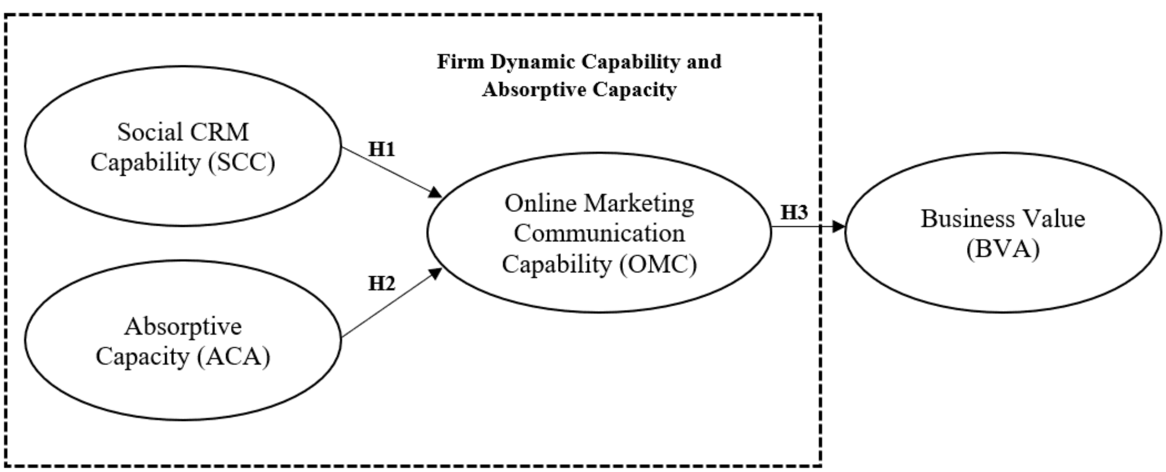
Online marketing communication is interpreted as being "the strategic coordination of all messages and media used by an organization to collectively influence its perceived brand value" (Keegan et al., 1992, p.631). Duncan (2002) subsequently modified and expanded this definition: "A cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and their stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to those groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialog with them" (p.8).

Thus, OMC gives an opportunity to firms to enhance their relationship with customers to improve their CRM activities, which is perceived to impact their tangible and intangible assets, thereby prompting better business value (Beverland and Luxton, 2005, Chatterjee et al., 2021a; Arfaoui et al., 2020). In terms of the above discussion, the following hypothesis is developed.

H3: Online marketing communication (OMC) of a firm positively impacts the business value (BVA) of the firm.

All these hypotheses help to develop our theoretical model, which is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The conceptual model (Adopted from DCV and ACA theory)



4.Research methodology

To test the hypotheses and to validate the conceptual model, the partial least squares structural equation modelling technique was preferred, because it helps to analyse an exploratory study like this (Peng and Lai, 2012). It can analyse data which are not normally distributed (Kock and Hadaya, 2018), and this technique does not impose any sample restrictions (Willbay et al., 2015). This procedure involves quantification of the responses from respondents to a survey against a structured questionnaire. The quantification was done with a 5-point Likert scale, with anchors at "Strongly Disagree" (SD), marked as 1, to "Strongly Agree" (SA), marked as 5.

4.1Research instruments

Based on the extant literature and theories, questions were prepared in the form of statements. The layout of the items was kept simple and ambiguous and leading questions were precluded. The questions were pretested, and the outcome helped in the correction of some questions and formats to enhance their readability. Next, a pilot test was conducted to assess the contemplated response rate. From the outcomes of the pilot test, some questions were modified and some of the questions were dropped which did not completely explain the corresponding constructs. Finally, opinions from some experts who have expertise in the domain of this study helped to enhance the comprehensiveness of the items. In this way, 26 questions were fine tuned.

4.2 Data collection strategy

To target the respondents, a list of firms was obtained from the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), Mumbai, India. Initially, 50 firms were randomly selected. On verification, it was ascertained that 31 of these 50 firms have used SCRM and OCM. The top executives of those 31 firms were requested to allow their employees to take part in the survey. All these executives were apprised that the aim of this study was purely academic, and that the participants' anonymity and confidentiality would be strictly preserved. After prolonged persuasion, eventually top executives of 27 firms agreed and provided the details of their employees. Employees who work in activities related with social customer relationship management were selected, for a total of 643 people. All were provided with response sheets, which contained the 26 questions. The employees were requested to respond within the two months (February – March 2021). They were also provided with guidelines on how to fill in the response sheets. Within the stipulated time, 324 responses were received, out of which 14 responses were found vague on scrutiny. Analysis was done with the inputs of 310 respondents against 26 questions, details of which are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Information of the respondents (N=310)

Category	Particular	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	191	61.6
	Female	109	38.4
Firm types	Service firm	21	77.7
	Manufacturing firm	6	22.3
Hierarchy	Senior manager	31	10.0
	Midlevel manager	118	38.1
	Employees (non-managers)	161	51.9

5.Analysis of data and results

5.1 Measurement properties and discriminant validity test

To ascertain the convergent validity of each item, the loading factor (LF) was assessed. To measure validity, reliability, and internal consistency of each construct, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha (α) were determined. All the estimated values are within the allowable range. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Measurement properties

Constructs / Items	LF	AVE	CR	α	t-values
SCC		0.85	0.89	0.92	
SCC1	0.90				22.11
SCC2	0.94				27.12
SCC3	0.87				36.13
SCC4	0.89				37.04
SCC5	0.95				35.11
SCC6	0.96				26.01
ACA		0.86	0.90	0.94	
ACA1	0.96				24.17
ACA2	0.94				37.47
ACA3	0.90				32.01
ACA4	0.95				27.26
ACA5	0.85				19.91
ACA6	0.86				29.21
ACA7	0.90				22.11
ACA8	0.95				27.29
OMC		0.87	0.92	0.95	
OMC1	0.95				23.11
OMC2	0.90				26.17
OMC3	0.95				35.48
OMC4	0.94				39.17
OMC5	0.89				26.17
OMC6	0.95				27.14
BVA		0.84	0.87	0.90	
BVA1	0.90				26.11
BVA2	0.89				25.21
BVA3	0.91				39.37
BVA4	0.87				29.07
BVA5	0.86				31.12

It was observed that the square roots of all the AVEs are greater than the corresponding bifactor correlation coefficients, satisfying the Fornell and Larcker criteria for verifying discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The results are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Discriminant validity test (Fornell and Larcker criteria)

Constructs	SCC	ACA	OMC	BVA	AVE
SCC	0.91				0.85
ACA	0.26	0.93			0.86
OMC	0.19	0.27	0.93		0.87
BVA	0.38	0.34	0.33	0.92	0.84

5.2 Common method variance (CMV)

Since the data have been collected from the survey, there is a chance of common method variance (CMV). As a pre-emptive measure to mitigate the risk of CMV during survey, the respondents were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality would be preserved. Also, during the pre-test, the questions were corrected, and some formats were modified so that the respondents could clearly understand the questions without difficulty.

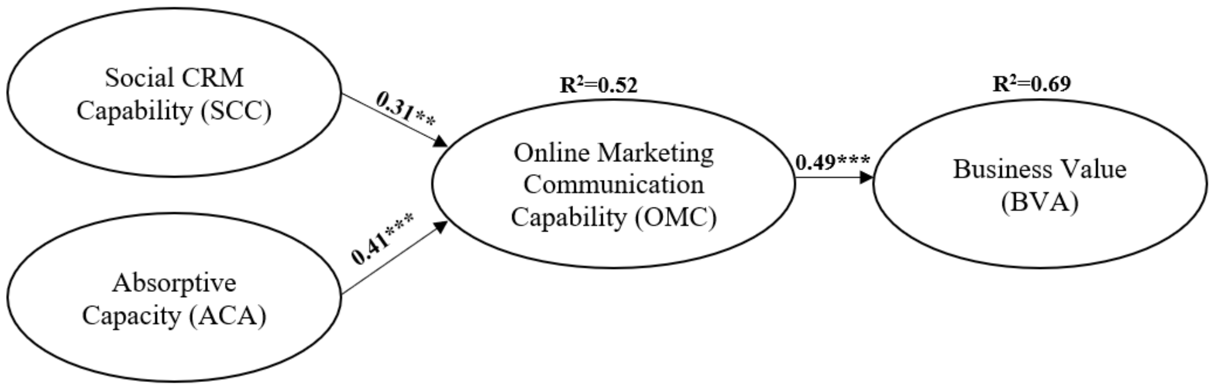
To assesses the severity of CMV, the statistical process of Harman's Single Factor Test (SFT) was performed. The factor that emerged was 22.61% of the variance, which is less than the highest recommended value of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Hence, CMV could not pose a major concern in this study.

5.3 Hypotheses testing

To test the hypotheses, the SEM technique was performed with the bootstrapping procedure considering 5000 resamples. For measuring cross-validated redundancy, the Q^2 value was estimated with separation distance 7. The Q^2 value emerged as 0.054 (positive), confirming that the model has predictive relevance (Mishra et al., 2018).

To verify the model fit, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was considered as a standard index, and its values came out to be 0.032 for PLS and 0.062 for PLSc. Both are less than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), indicating the model is in order (Mishra et al., 2018). This process helped to estimate path coefficients, R^2 values, and p-values. The conceptual model after validation is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Validated model (SEM)



6. Results and discussion

The present study has formulated three hypotheses, which have all been supported. The results demonstrate that SCC and ACA could impact OMC significantly and positively, since the path coefficients are 0.31(**) and 0.41(***). The results also highlight that OMC could impact BVA significantly and positively, since the path coefficient is 0.49(***). So far as coefficients of determination are concerned, SCC and ACA could simultaneously explain OMC to the tune of 52% (R^2=0.52), and OMC could explain BVA to the extent of 69% (R^2=0.69), which is the explanative power of the model.

The present study highlights that increased internet penetration has made the online information easily available to all kinds of audiences. This has reinforced the necessity for including consistent customer communication in the design, planning, and execution of OMC (Hart et al., 2000). The present study emphasizes the need for firms to possess the ability to use SCRM to facilitate the use of an online marketing communication system. In this context, it was observed that SCC significantly and positively impacts OMC of firms. This concept has been supplemented by another study (Diffley and McCole, 2015).

The results demonstrate that, through an online marketing communication process, the latest information regarding new products and services can be communicated to potential customers. Thus, it is essential that firms acquire necessary information from different sources, assimilate that information, and transmit it to customers through an online communication system. This practice comes under the concept of firms' absorptive capacity, which also received support from another study (Campos-Climent and Sanchis-Palacio, 2017). The present study demonstrates that OMC significantly and positively impacts the BVA of the firms, which was duly supplemented by another study (Krishnamurthy and Singh, 2005).

6.1 Theoretical contributions

The present study provides several theoretical contributions to the body of knowledge of the marketing and communication literature. From this study, we observe that new technologies like SCRM and OMC have ensured more efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and interactivity of the firms' business activities for improving business value. No studies before have nurtured how SCRM ability and absorptive capacity could simultaneously impact OMC, which could improve

BVA. But the present study has thoroughly investigated the business prospects of firms, touching all these salient aspects.

DCV theory (Teece et al., 1997) is extended in the present study, which argues that SCRM and ACA of firms possess the sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities, which are considered the basic components of dynamic capability. These abilities help firms to respond and react accordingly to the changing market environment. In the context of disseminating information through online marketing communication platforms, the present study argues that firms initially need to recognize the necessity to acquire knowledge from different sources, and then to assimilate and transmit it through online platforms. This is corroborated by absorptive capacity theory.

A study by Alshamaila and Papagiannidis (2013) investigated and inferred that SMEs in northeast England benefitted by adopting cloud computing. The idea behind this study was extended more broadly in the present study to consider all kinds of firms that could benefit by using online platforms when they develop their social CRM capability and absorptive capacity, which adds value to the extant literature.

6.2 Implications to practice

The present study is able to provide several implications to practitioners. This work demonstrates that SCRM could significantly and positively impact OMC. This implies that managers of the firms must focus attention on improving their infrastructural capabilities, including offering necessary training to their employees so that they can efficiently use social CRM platforms in their firms. Also, designers and developers of SCRM platforms should be cautious to ensure that the system infrastructure is not too complex for the end users and employees to use the system efficiently.

The present study highlights that ACA significantly and positively impacts OMC. This suggests that employees must improve their skills and expertise so that they do not encounter any problem to recognize external potential opportunities. They should also be able to interact with existing and potential customers and transmit relevant information to them using their firms' online communication systems. To improve the employees' expertise level, proper training is required to enhance their absorptive capacity, which can improve the business value of the firms.

The present study demonstrates that online marketing communication significantly and positively impacts firms' business value. This implies that the managers and leaders of the firms should always be watchful to improve the infrastructure of their firms and to make the firms' online communication system flawless. Thus, to experience the benefits of OMC, the management of the firms should focus their attention on these issues. The infrastructure must always be sound and modern. Attempts need to be made to ensure that employees can effectively use their firms' social CRM capability to trap the external opportunities in a more efficient way.

6.3 Limitations and future scope

The present study has several limitations. For one, the results depend on cross-sectional data, inviting defects of causality between the constructs, which also produce endogeneity defects. To eliminate these defects, future researchers should conduct a longitudinal study.

Also, the results of this study depend on inputs from respondents in India, which could cause external validity defects. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers should collect data globally to project more generalizable results.

The present study has utilized DCV theory, which suffers from the defects of context-insensitivity (Ling-Yee, 2007). This theory is not able to identify the optimum conditions in which OMC could exhibit the best results. Future researchers should attempt to identify the optimum conditions (Dubey et al., 2019). The theoretical model of this study has an explanative power of 69%. It is suggested that future researchers should verify if including other boundary conditions and constructs could improve the strength of the proposed model.

References

Adegoke, Y. 2004. "Web Still Fastest Growing Channel in Marketing Mix." *New Media Age*, 22: 12-14.

Ahani, A., N.Z.A. Rahim, and M. Nilashi. 2017. "Forecasting Social CRM Adoption in SMEs: A Combined SEM-Neural Network Method." *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 75: 560-578.

Alalwan, A.A., N.P. Rana, Y.K. Dwivedi, and R. Algharabat. 2017. "Social Media in Marketing: A Review and Analysis of the Existing Literature." *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7): 1177-1190.

Alshamaila, Y., S. Papagiannidis, and F. Li. 2013. "Cloud Computing Adoption by SMEs in the Northeast of England." *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 26(3): 250-275.

Arfaoui, N., M. Hofaidhllaoui, and G. Chawla. 2020. "Social Performance of the Company: An Explanation Centralized on the Social and Technological Factors." *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 15(1): 102-126.

Berthon, P.R., L.F. Pitt, K. Plangger, and D. Shapiro. 2012. "Marketing Meets Web 2.0, Social Media, and Creative Consumers: Implications for International Marketing Strategy." *Business Horizons*, 55(3): 261-271.

Beverland, M., and S. Luxton. 2005. "Managing Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Through Strategic Decoupling: How Luxury Wine Firms Retain Brand Leadership While Appearing to be Wedded to the Past." *Journal of Advertising*, 34(4): 1-15.

Campos-Climent, V., and J.R. Sanchis-Palacio. 2017. "The Influence of Knowledge Absorptive Capacity on Shared Value Creation in Social Enterprises." *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 21(5): 1163-1182.

Chatterjee S., & Chaudhuri R. 2022. "Adoption of Artificial Intelligence Integrated Customer Relationship Management in Organizations for Sustainability". In: Vrontis D., Thrassou A., Weber Y., Shams S.M.R., Tsoukatos E., Efthymiou L. (eds) Business Under Crisis, Volume III. Palgrave Studies in Cross-disciplinary Business Research, In Association with EuroMed Academy of Business. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76583-5_6.

Chatterjee, S., R. Chaudhuri, and D. Vrontis. 2021a. "Antecedents and Consequence of Social Media Marketing for Strategic Competitive Advantage of Small and Medium Enterprises: Mediating Role of Utilitarian and Hedonic Value." *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, In Press. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2021.1954070.

Chatterjee, S., R. Chaudhuri, D. Vrontis, A. Thrassou, S.K. Ghosh, and S. Chaudhuri. 2021c. “Social Customer Relationship Management Factors and Business Benefits.” *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 29(1): 35-58.

Chatterjee, S., R. Chaudhuri, D. Vrontis, and R. Piccolo. 2021b. “Enterprise Social Network for Knowledge Sharing in MNCs: Examining the Role of Knowledge Contributors and Knowledge Seekers for Cross-Country Collaboration.” *Journal of International Management*, 27(1): 100827.

Chiu, C., C. Ip, and A. Silverman. 2012. “Understanding Social Media in China”. *McKinsey Quarterly*, available at: www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/understanding-social-media-in-china (Accessed on 9 November 2021).

Cohen, W.M., and D.A. Levinthal. 1990. “Absorptive Capacity: A New Perspective on Learning and Innovation.” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35: 128-152.

Diffley, S., and P. McCole. 2015. “Extending Customer Relationship Management into a Social Context.” *The Service Industries Journal*, 35(11/12): 591-610.

Dubey, R., A. Gunasekaran, S.J. Childe, C. Blome, and T. Papadopoulos. 2019. “Big Data and Predictive Analytics and Manufacturing Performance: Integrating Institutional Theory and Resource Based View.” *British Journal of Management*, 30(2): 341-361.

Duncan, T. 2002. *IMC: Using Advertising and Promotion to Build Brands*. McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.

Durkin, M. and M.-A. Lawlor. 2001. “The Implications of the Internet on the Advertising Agency–Client Relationship.” *The Services Industries Journal*, 21(2): 175-90.

Eckstein, D., M. Goellner, C. Blome, and M. Henke. 2015. “The Performance Impact of Supply Chain Agility and Supply Chain Adaptability: The Moderating Effect of Product Complexity.” *International Journal of Production Research*, 53(10): 3028-3046.

Evans, D. 2012. *Social Media Marketing: An Hour a Day*, 2nd ed., John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY.

Fainshmidt, S., A. Pezeshkan, M. Lance Frazier, A. Nair, and E. Markowski. 2016. “Dynamic Capabilities and Organizational Performance: A Metaanalytic Evaluation and Extension.” *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(8): 1348-1380.

Foltean, F.S., S.M. Trif, and D.L. Tuleu. 2019. “Customer Relationship Management Capabilities and Social Media Technology Use: Consequences on Firm Performance.” *Journal of Business Research*, 104: 563-575.

Fornell, C., and D.F. Larcker. 1981. “Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error.” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1): 39-50.

Giacomarra, M., M. Crescimanno, G. Sakka, and A. Galati. 2020. “Stakeholder Engagement Toward Value Co-Creation in the F&B Packaging Industry”. *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 15(3): 315-331.

Gurău, C. 2008. “Integrated Online Marketing Communication: Implementation and Management.” *Journal of Communication Management*, 12(2): 169-184.

Harrigan, P., and M. Miles. 2014. “From e-CRM to s-CRM. Critical Factors Underpinning the SOCIAL CRM ACTIVITIES of SMEs.” *Small Enterprise Research*, 21(1): 99-116.

Harrigan, P., M.P. Miles, Y. Fang, and S.K. Roy. 2020. “The Role of Social Media in the Engagement and Information Processes of Social CRM.” *International Journal of Information Management*, 54: Article e102151.

Hart, C., D. Neil, and F. Ellis-Chadwick. 2000. “Retailer Adoption of the Internet – Implications for Retail Marketing.” *European Journal of Marketing*, 34(8): 954-74.

Hasani, T., J. Bojei, and A. Dehghantanha. 2017. “Investigating the Antecedents to the Adoption of SCRM Technologies by Start-Up Companies.” *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(5): 655-675.

Hu, L., and P.M. Bentler. 1999. “Fit Indices in Covariance Structure Modeling: Sensitivity to Under Parameterized Model Misspecification.” *Psychological Methods*, 3(4): 424-453.

Itani, O.S., M.T. Krush, R. Agnihotri, and K.J. Trainor. 2020. “Social Media and Customer Relationship Management Technologies: Influencing Buyer-Seller Information Exchanges.” *Industrial Marketing Management*, 90: 264-275.

Keegan, W., S. Moriarty, and T. Duncan. 1992. *Marketing*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Kim, J., J. Lee, and S. Kim. 2017. “The Efficacy of Cause-Related Marketing Within a Social Network: The Effects of Congruency, Corporate Credibility, Familiarity of Cause Brands, and Perceived Altruistic Motive.” *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 23(5): 429-455.

Kitchen, P.J. 1999. *Marketing Communications: Principles and Practice*. International Thomson Business Press, London.

Kitchen, P.J., J. Brignell, T. Li, and G.S. Jones. 2004. “The Emergence of IMC: A Theoretical Perspective.” *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44(1): 19-31.

Kock, N., and P. Hadaya. 2018. “Minimum Sample Size Estimation in PLS-SEM: The Inverse Square Root and Gamma-Exponential Methods.” *Information Systems Journal*, 28(1): 227-261.

Krishnamurthy, S. 2006. “Introducing E-MARKPLAN: A Practical Methodology to Plan e-Marketing Activities.” *Business Horizons*, 49(1): 51-60.

Krishnamurthy, S., and N. Singh. 2005. “The International e-Marketing Framework (IEMF): Identifying the Building Blocks for Future Global e-Marketing Research”, *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 22 No. 6, pp. 605-10.

Kulshrestha A., and Kulshrestha S. 2022. *Transformations in the Social Sector During the Covid-19 Crisis in India: A Perspective*. In: Vrontis D., Thrassou A., Weber Y., Shams S.M.R., Tsoukatos E., Efthymiou L. (eds) Business Under Crisis, Volume II. Palgrave Studies in Cross-disciplinary Business Research, In Association with EuroMed Academy of Business. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76575-0_6.

Lane, P.J., B.R. Koka, and S. Pathak. 2006. “The Reification of Absorptive Capacity: A Critical Review and Rejuvenation of the Construct.” *Academy of Management Review*, 31(4): 833-863.

Lee, S.-Y.T. and Phang, C.W.D. 2015. "Leveraging social media for electronic commerce in Asia." *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 14(3): 145-149.

Ling-Yee, L. 2007. "Marketing Resources and Performance of Exhibitor Firms in Trade Shows: A Contingent Resource Perspective." *Industrial Marketing Management*, 36(3): 360-370.

Lusiantoro, L., N. Yates, C. Mena, and L. Varga. (2018). "A refined framework of information sharing in perishable product supply chains." *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 48(3): 254-283.

Manuel, E., S. Youn, and D. Yoon. 2014. "Functional Matching Effect in CRM: Moderating Roles of Perceived Message Quality and Skepticism." *Journal of Marketing Communications,* 20(6): 397-418.

Mariano, S., and C. Walter. 2015. "The Construct of Absorptive Capacity in Knowledge Management and Intellectual Capital Research: Content and Text Analyses." *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 19(2): 372-400.

McKim, B. 2002. "The difference between CRM and database marketing." *Journal of Database Marketing*, 9(4): 371-385.

Mishra, A., S.S. Maheswarappa, M. Maity, and S. Samu. 2018. "Adolescent's eWOM Intentions: An Investigation into the Roles of Peers, the Internet and Gender." *Journal of Business Research*, 86: 394-405.

Papasolomou, I., A. Thrassou, D. Vrontis, and M. Sabova. 2014. "Marketing Public Relations: A Consumer-Focused Strategic Perspective." *Journal of Customer Behaviour,* 13(1): 5-24.

Peng, D.X., and F. Lai. 2012. "Using Partial Least Squares in Operations Management Research: A Practical Guideline and Summary of Past Research." *Journal of Operations Management*, 30(6): 467-480.

Podsakoff, P.M., S.B. MacKenzie, J.Y. Lee, and N.P. Podsakoff. 2003. "Common Method Biases in Behavioural Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5): 879-903.

Proctor, T., and P.J. Kitchen. 2002. "Communication in Postmodern Integrated Marketing." *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 7(3): 144-154.

Roberts, N., P.S. Galluch, M. Dinger, and V. Grover. 2012. "Absorptive Capacity and Information Systems Research: Review, Synthesis, and Directions for Future Research." *MIS Quarterly*, 36(2): 625-648.

Schreyögg, G., and M. KlieschEberl. 2007. "How dynamic can organizational capabilities be? Towards a dual process model of capability dynamization." *Strategic Management Journal*, 28(9): 913-933.

Schultz, M., E.C. Malthouse, and D. Pick. 2012. "From CM to CRM to CN2: A Research Agenda for the Marketing Communications Transition." *Advances in Advertising Research*, 3: 421-432.

Semenik, R.J. 2002. *Promotion and Integrated Marketing Communications*. Thomson Learning, Cincinnati, OH.

Smith, P.R. 2002. *Marketing Communications: An Integrated Approach*. 3rd ed., Kogan Page, London.

Souri, A., A.M. Rahmani, N.J. Navimipour, and R. Rezaei. 2019. "Formal Modeling and Verification of a Service Composition Approach in the Social Customer Relationship Management System." *Information Technology & People*, 32(6): 1591-1607.

Teece, D.J. 2012. "Dynamic Capabilities: Routines Versus Entrepreneurial Action." *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(8): 1395-1401.

Teece, D.J. 2014. "The Foundations of Enterprise Performance: Dynamic and Ordinary Capabilities in an (Economic) Theory of Firms." *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 28(4): 328-352.

Teece, D.J., G. Pisano, and A. Shuen. 1997. "Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management", *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7): 509-533.

Tindiwensi, C.K., J.C. Munene, A. Sserwanga, E. Abaho, and R. Namatovu-Dawa. 2020. "Farm Management Skills, Entrepreneurial Bricolage and Market Orientation." *Journal of Agribusiness in Developing and Emerging Economies*, 10(5): 717-730.

Trainor, K.J. 2012. "Relating Social Media Technologies to Performance: A Capabilities-Based Perspective." *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 32(3): 317-331.

Trichterborn, A., D. Zu Knyphausen-Aufseß, and L. Schweizer. 2016. "How to Improve Acquisition Performance: The Role of a Dedicated M&A Function, M&A Learning Process, and M&A Capability." *Strategic Management Journal*, 37(4): 763-773.

Wang, Z., and H.G. Kim. 2017. "Can Social Media Marketing Improve Customer Relationship Capabilities and Firm Performance? Dynamic Capability Perspective." *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 39: 15-26.

Wei, S., F. Zhu, and X. Chen. 2021. "Do Stressors Stifle or Facilitate Employees' Innovative Use of Enterprise Systems: The Moderating Role of IT Mindfulness." *Information Technology & People*, 34(3): 955-977.

Willaby, H.W., D.S.J. Costa, B.D. Burns, C. MacCann, and R.D. Roberts. 2015. "Testing Complex Models with Small Sample Sizes: A Historical Overview and Empirical Demonstration of What Partial Least Squares (PLS) Can Offer Differential Psychology." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 84: 73-78.

Wongsansukcharoen, J., J. Trimetsoontorn, and W. Fongsuwan. 2015. "Social CRM, RMO and Business Strategies Affecting Banking Performance Effectiveness in B2B Context." *The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 30(6): 742-760.

Yang, J., J. Basile, and O. Letourneau. 2020. "The Impact of Social Media Platform Selection on Effectively Communicating About Corporate Social Responsibility." *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 26(1): 65-87.

Zahra, S.A., and G. George. 2002. "Absorptive Capacity: A Review, Reconceptualization, and Extension." *Academy of Management Review*, 27(2): 185-203.

The Product Involvement Effect on Thought Elicitation and Attitude Strength in The Online Environment

Polyxeni (Jenny) Palla [a], Evdoxia Kyriacou [b] and Anna Zarkada [c]

[a] *Department of Marketing and Communication, Athens University of Economics & Business, Athens, Greece; Email: palla@aueb.gr*

[b] *Department of Public Communication, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus; Email: evi.kyriacou@cut.ac.cy*

[c] *Department of Public Communication, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus; Email: anna.zarkada@cut.ac.cy*

Abstract

The online attitude formation process has become a critical issue not only for academics but also for practitioners. An emerging question is whether the level of product involvement acts as a moderating variable in online attitude formation and attitude strength. The current work seeks to examine whether the level of product involvement presented in a website acts as a moderator on thought elicitation and attitude strength. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is utilized to support the experimental design. The results of this survey have provided some initial insights into attitude formation and attitude strength towards the brand.

***Keywords**: online advertising; thought elicitation; attitude strength; ELM; persuasive communication*

1. Introduction

The Internet is considered one of the most important digital media in people's everyday lives; the internet offers connective abilities increasingly adopted by organizations and individuals (Ngini, Furnell, and Ghita 2002). Thrassou and Vrontis (2009) pointed that electronic marketing is considered as the most important element of change in the new marketing communication arena. This view was totally corroborated during the COVID-19 period. Changes in media habits and media consumption reflect changes in promoting a product or service online (R. Taylor 2020). Electronic marketing and commerce became even more important than in the recent past (Pew Research Center, 2021). Internet users in March 2021 are referred to as 5,168,780,607, representing 65.6% of the world population, indicating a growth of 1,331.9% from 2000 (Internet World Stats 2021).

As stated by Thrassou and Vrontis (2009) the business-consumer relationship is more that co-existence one; it’s a symbolic one. Therefore, consumer research in the online environment is fundamental. Attitudes are considered as an important aspect of consumer’s behaviour. Also, attitudes towards the brands and the advertisement, directly affect consumers’ intention to purchase (Ilicic, Kulczynski, and Baxter 2018). Attitudes could be defined as pre-existing evaluations towards a brand, or a product associated in memory. Consumers tend to hold positive or negative attitudes towards brands. Attitudes make consumers buying decisions easier. Without consumers' attitudes would probably have to re-assess every brand in every purchase occasion (Shrivastava et al. 2021). The online attitude formation process has become a critical issue for academics and practitioners (Belanche, Flavián, and Pérez-Rueda 2017; Choi 2020; Ha and Lennon 2010; Eslami and Ghasemaghaei 2018; Peng et al. 2019). According to Havard, Ferrucci, and Ryan (2021), consumers' attitudes are affected by the type of the content they receive. An emerging question is whether product involvement acts as a moderating variable in online attitude formation and attitude strength. The current work seeks to examine whether the level of product involvement presented in a website moderates thought elicitation and attitude strength. We employ the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to support the experimental design. This survey has provided some initial insights into attitude formation and attitude strength towards the brand.

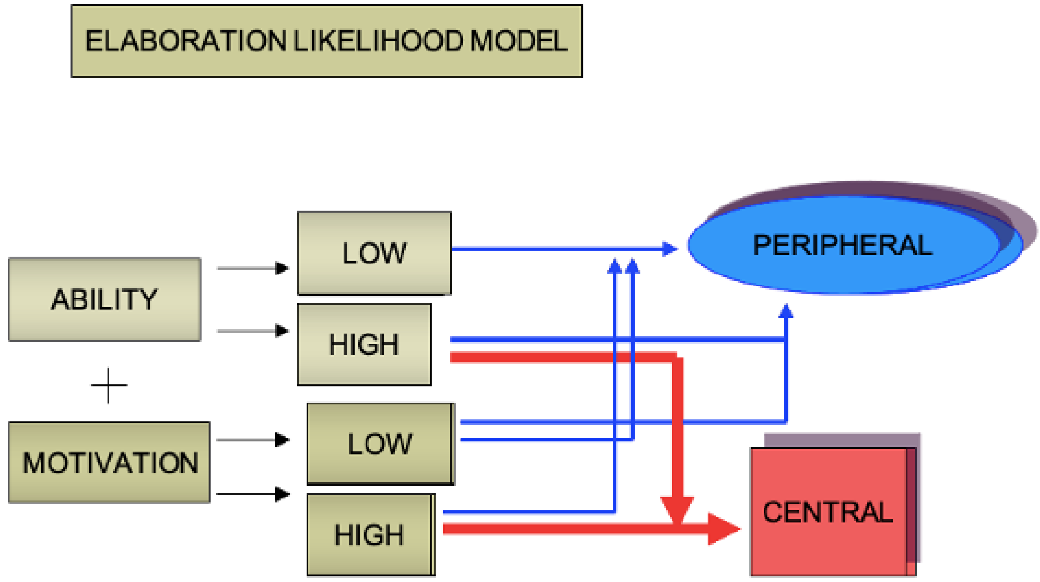
The current work seeks to examine whether the level of product involvement presented in a website acts as a moderator on thought elicitation and attitude strength. In doing so, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is utilized. The ELM (Petty and Cacioppo 1979) has been proposed as a framework for conceptualizing persuasion and attitude change related to advertised products and services. Elaboration is proposed as an important attitude attribute that predicts strength (Luttrell and Sawicki 2020). Under the ELM individuals process the provided information from the communication outcome either under the central or the peripheral route. The attitudes resulting of the central route tend to be relatively strong; more effortful-based attitudes are more resistant to persuasion (Horcajo and Luttrell 2016), persistent over time (Haugtvedt and Petty 1992), and demonstrated attitude-behavioural consistency (Barden and Petty 2008). The present study examines the effect of product involvement (high/low) in the web environment in terms of thought elicitation and attitude strength (H1 & H2).

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Dual-process models are considered as critical theories on contemporary research on attitude change and persuasion (Briñol, Petty, and Guyer 2019; el Hedhli and Zourrig 2022; Luttrell 2018). Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986) propose the Elaboration Likelihood Model as a general framework for the study of persuasion in the social psychology field (Figure 1). Due to its application to advertising communication, the model has obtained great recognition in the field of consumer behaviour from several researchers (Teeny, Briñol, and Petty 2017; Bitner and Obermiller 1985).

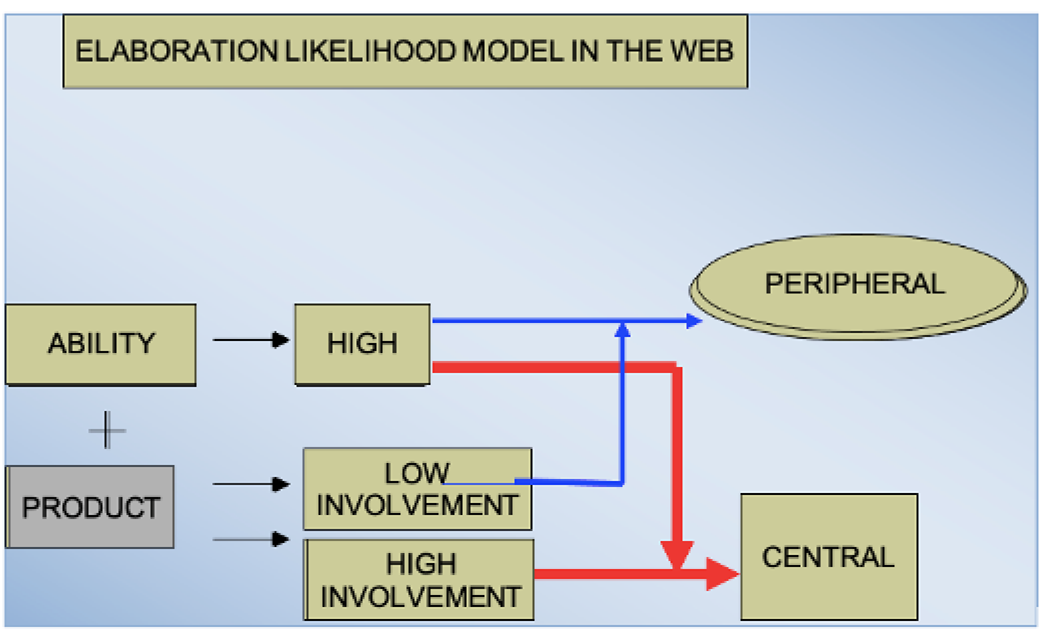
The ELM approach understanding "persuasion" by focusing on two routes to attitude change that serve as endpoints along with extent of thinking continuum: the central and the peripheral route. The central route to persuasion seems to be effective when the elaboration is high, whereas the peripheral route to persuasion seems to be better when the elaboration is low (Teng et al. 2014). The fundamental principle of the ELM is that different techniques of persuasion may be applied best, depending on the elaboration likelihood of the message, which may be high or low. Figure 1 depicts the ELM proposed by Petty and Cacioppo.

Figure 1. The Elaboration Likelihood Model proposed by Petty and Cacioppo



During the last decade investigation in digital technologies has gained significant attention. Key is to understand consumer behaviour in the online environment. Only few consumer theories can be employed in the context of marketing online. Among them is the ELM which is able to predict consumers' information process and attitude change online (Shahab, Ghazali, and Mohtar 2021). The present study seeks to examine the product involvement as a moderator of the number of elicited thoughts and thus as a predictor of the route followed by the message receiver in the online environment. Figure 2 is proposed the research model according to which "consumers; involvement with the product" appears to be a moderator of the route employed.

Figure 2. The Elaboration Likelihood Model in the Web according to which "consumers; involvement with the product" appears to be a moderator of the route employed**.**



3. Literature Review and Hypotheses Formulation

Past studies in offline media suggested that the degree of product involvement is an important determinant that affects whether an individual will follow the central or the peripheral route of information elaboration (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; 1981). Under high involvement condition, the number and not the quality, the source expert and other cues gain consumers' attention and may lead to persuasion (Zotos, Lysonski, and Martin 1992). It appears that high product involvement stimulates an individual to process centrally the provided information to determine the principal qualities of the product under consideration. Central route leads individuals to elicit greater amount of information regarding the product and the ad stimulus (Rucker, Petty, and Priester 2007) as they evaluate each piece of available information stemming from the source (Petty and Cacioppo 1981; 1986; Wright 1973) and the product (Petty and Cacioppo 1979; Petty, Cacioppo, and Heesacker 1981; Laurent and Kapferer 1985). On the contrary, in low involvement products, individuals evaluate the advertised message and product based on peripheral cues, designating peripheral route processing (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983) where individuals may elicit fewer thoughts. Previous studies indicate that product involvement has a moderating effect on consumers' behaviour in the online environment as well (Belanche, Flavián, and Pérez-Rueda 2017; Choi 2020; Ha and Lennon 2010; Eslami and Ghasemaghaei 2018; Peng et al. 2019). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Individuals exposed to a website of a high involvement product will elicit a greater number of thoughts regarding (i) the website and (ii) the product as compared to those exposed to a website of a low involvement product.

The information from the communication outcome is provided under the central or peripheral route of the ELM process. Therefore, we expect that individuals exposed to the website of a high involvement product will follow the central route of information process. Stated differently, individuals exposed to a website that presents a product of high involvement will process the provided information regarding the product and the website more centrally than those exposed to a website that presents a low involvement product. According to the ELM theory, attitudes resulting from the central route, relative to peripheral route, are more inclined to persist more over time, stand resistant in attempts to change them, be included in the consideration choice set, come to mind quickly and are more likely to predict subsequent behaviour (Rucker, Petty, and Priester 2007). Therefore, thoughtful consideration (though the central route of processing) tends to lead to the formulation of stronger attitudes than attitudes resulting from non- thoughtful consideration. The attitudes resulting of the central route tend to be relatively strong; more effortful-based attitudes are more resistant to persuasion (Horcajo and Luttrell 2016), persistent over time (Haugtvedt and Petty 1992), and demonstrated attitude-behavioural consistency (Barden and Petty 2008). Elaboration is proposed as an important attitude attribute that predicts strength (Luttrell and Sawicki 2020). The defining futures of attitude strength are durability and impact (Krosnick and Petty 1995).

Based on the above it is expected that:

H2: Individuals exposed to a website of a high involvement product will formulate stronger attitudes towards (i) the website and (ii) the product as compared to those exposed to a website of a low involvement product.

4. Method

The "experimental design" was employed to examine the effect of product involvement on thought elicitation and attitude strength in the digital environment (Ha and Lennon 2010). The dependent variables are (1) the number of elicited thoughts towards the brand and the website as well as (2) the attitude strength towards the products. The manipulated (independent) variable is the level of involvement with the product (high or low).

4.1 Product Involvement Measurement - Pretests

The individual importance that a person assigns to an object forms the level of involvement regarding the particular object (Antil 1984). It incorporates person-specific characteristics, since it can differ from person to person (Zaichkowsky 1985b; 1986). Consumers may perceive the same product in a different way (Lastovicka and Gardner 1979; Zaichkowsky 1985b; 1985a). Nevertheless, the "group effect" of certain product categories should be underlined, according to which for certain groups of people (target markets) certain products seem to be high involving, whilst others tend to be low involving (Rahtz and Moore 1989). Considering the nature of the "group effect", two pre-tests were employed. Following previous studies (Han and Kim 2017a; Hong 2015) pre-tests were conducted to arrive at two products one of low and one of high involvement based on which the experimental websites would be constructed, and the product involvement variable would be manipulated.

The participants' involvement with high and low involvement products was measured using the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) developed by Zaichkowsky (1985b) indicated the laptop as a high and refreshment drink as a low involvement product. The table below (Table 1) indicates that participants' involvement with the refreshment differs significantly compared to the participant's involvement with the laptop (Sig.: .005).

Table 1. Refreshment vs Laptop

			Mean Square	F	Sig.
CANNED DRINK * LAPTOP	Between Groups	(Combined)	.082	9.342	.005
	Within Groups		.006		
	Total				

Two fictitious product brands and two websites respectively were designed for the needs of the experiment. The main reason was to avoid the confusing effect or the pre-attitudinal.

4.2 Sample - Procedure

The selected sample was a convenient one that consists of students in the 3rd or 4th year recruited from a Greek/European University. 185 students participated in the study. The age mean was 20,9 years old. 48% consisted of women. Their income is between 0-480 euro. They surf in the web almost 3 hours per day. 95 students were exposed to the website that presents the high involvement product and 90 students [87 usable questionnaires] to the website that presents the low one. Participants arrived at a University lab and first fill in the online questionnaire regarding their internet behaviour and demographics. Then, they navigate to the website at their own time and pace. Later, they fill in the questionnaire regarding the thought listing technique.

They also fill in the questionnaire regarding the thought listing technique the attitude regarding exposed brand. The thought listing technique employed to recorder how individuals process the provided information. This technique also termed as thought elicitation, free-call thought and cognitive response was established by Wright (1973) and used by many academics (e.g. Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera 2005; Zotos, Lysonski, and Martin 1992). One week later the participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire regarding the exposed brand in order to measure the attitude strength.

4.3 Measurement Tools

Thought elicitation was measured by employing the thought listing technique proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1981; 1986) (following Liu and Shrum 2009). The methodology tool proposed by DeMarree, Petty and Strunk (2010) was employed to measure the attitude strength for the brand.

5. Data Analysis

Testing the H1, two (2) trained coders analysed the data. When a conflict exists, a third coder is used to resolve it. At this stage of the coding, following Miniard et al. (1991), thoughts not related to the experimental stimuli were discarded. Data were then entered to the SPSS 22 program (Statistical Package for Social Science). One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was selected for the analysis. The dependent variable was the "number of elicited thoughts (0-7)" whereas the independent variable was the "level of product involvement (high vs low)".

Participants' elicited thoughts were discriminated in website-thoughts and product-oriented thoughts. The mean numbers of thoughts are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Number of Thoughts

Thoughts / **Product involvement**	**Low**	**High**
Website oriented	0.64	1.00
Product oriented	1.96	3.98

Table 3 indicates the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances. P value is higher than 0.05 (Sig. = 0.854) and the variances are significantly different for the website related thoughts. P value is higher than 0.05 (Sig. = 0.072) and the variances are significantly different for the product related thoughts.

Table 3. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

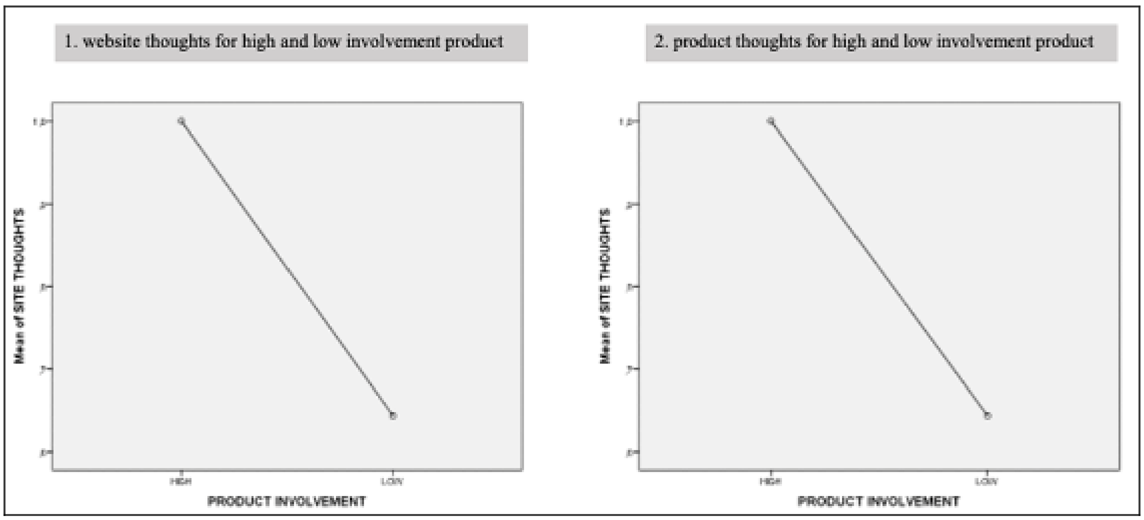
Thoughts	**Levene Statistic**	**df1**	**df2**	**Sig.**
Website oriented	.034	1	180	.854
Product oriented	15.209	1	180	.072

Table 4 displays the ANOVA summary. Site thoughts F (1,180) = 3.629; (Sig. .058), p > 0.05. Product thoughts F (1,180) = 8.630; (Sig. 0.052). These findings are visually depicted as follows. Therefore, H1, 1(i) and 1(ii) is accepted.

Table 4. ANOVA summary

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Website oriented	Between Groups	5.766	1	5.766	3.629	.058
	Within Groups	285.954	180	1.589		
	Total	291.720	181			
Product Oriented	Between Groups	47.165	1	47.165	8.630	**.052**
	Within Groups	983.786	180	5.465		
	Total	1030.951	181			

Figure 3. Website and Product Thoughts for High and Low Involvement Product



A hundred eighty-one (181) students participated in the study to examine the **H2**. Ninety (90) questionnaires were usable for the low involvement condition and ninety-one (91) for the high. We examine the reliability of the questions that measure the attitude strength (AS) using Croabach's Alpha method. Croabach's alpha is .763 > .70 which shows high reliability.

Data analysis indicates that individuals exposed to the website of the low involvement product (mean= 5.636) generated stronger attitude than those exposed to the website of high involvement product (mean= 5.402). This difference is not statistically important (Sig. .325). Levene test is not significant (Sig. = .127 > .005) indicating that the variances are approximately equal. Therefore, H2 is rejected.

6.Conclusions, Future Research & Limitations of the Study

The present study makes several noteworthy contributions to the information process on the online environment. One of the most intriguing findings to emerge is the establishment of the ELM theory in the online environment as well as the establishment of the proposed research model. The main goal was to determine that the variable of "product involvement" moderates the number of the elicited thoughts online. Hypothesis [H1] posed at the beginning of the study it is now possible to state that the "product involvement" is variable that has a direct effect on the number of thought elicitation (website- and product- oriented) online. Individuals exposed to a website of a high involvement product elicited more thoughts as compared to those exposed to a website of a low involvement product. Findings of the study underling the moderating role of product involvement in the online information process, are in accordance with previous studies in digital environment (Shahab, Ghazali, and Mohtar 2021; Ha and Lennon 2010; Han and Kim 2017; Hong 2015). It is indicated that the degree of product involvement seems to affect whether an individual will follow the central or the peripheral route of information elaboration online similar to offline media (Huhmann, Franke, and Mothersbaugh 2012).

The research work argues that under high involvement product conditions individuals elicited greater number of thoughts and thus the central route of persuasion is employed. It could be assumed that a high involvement product leads individuals to follow the central process of information. This finding verifies the major tenet of the ELM theory that high involvement with a product leads people to search for and actively process information regarding the product and the advertising message (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Celsi and Olson 1988; Greenwald and Leavitt 1984). It is obvious that high product involvement stimulates individuals to process centrally the provided information to determine the principal qualities of the product under consideration.

On the contrary, visitors exposed to a website presenting a low involvement product elicited a lower number of thoughts. Thus, individuals employ the peripheral route of persuasion online. This finding is consistent with the notion that low-involvement participants are engaged in very little information process (Zotos, Lysonski, and Martin 1992). This result is verified in the web environment by Liu and Shrum (2009) who supported that under low-involvement conditions individuals produced fewer thoughts than individuals under high-involvement conditions did. The results of the study supported also a basic tenet of ELM regarding peripheral route. It is suggested that, in the digital environment, under low involvement product condition, participants evaluate the advertised message and product based on peripheral cues, designating peripheral route processing where individuals elicited fewer thoughts.

Overall, it appears that similar to the offline advertising media in the digital environment, a product of high involvement leads individuals to process the provided information under the central route of persuasion. Thus, individuals may elicit a greater number of website- and product- oriented thoughts. On the contrary, a low involvement product leads individuals to process the provided information under the peripheral route. Under this route individuals may elicit fewer thoughts.

However, the present study indicates that product involvement does not have a direct effect on the attitude strength formulation. This finding is not a surprising one since it is suggested that advertising messages can create advertising change. Thought, the findings of this study suggest that one single exposure to a new brand either of low or of high involvement is inadequate to set up the prerequisites for the formulation of strong attitudes. It seems that advertising repetition is a factor that may be important to establish attitude strength in the online media similar to the traditional ones (Haugtvedt et al. 1994).

The results of this survey have provided some initial insights into attitude strength towards the brand. More research is needed to identify the “accessibility of the (formulated) attitude” toward the website. The accessibility of the attitude is defined as “*the degree to which an attitude toward an object is active in memory*” (DeMarree, Petty, and Strunk 2010) and it is considered as a well-established and crucial determinant of whether the formulated attitude will remain stable over time, resist change and guide behaviour and thought (Bassili 1996; Fabrigar et al. 1998; Fazio, Williams, and Fazio 1986). The features of the accessible attitudes are the key characteristics of “strong attitudes” which are defined as durable (resistant to change and stable over time) and impactful (predictive of subsequent behaviour and biases in way of thinking) (Krosnick and Petty 1995). Nowadays, consumers are exposed to unlimited advertising messages and therefore the accessibility as an index of attitude strength towards the website appears to represent an important index of an effective online advertising strategy and a crucial metric of online persuasive success.

Though this study underlies interested findings, additional research would provide remarkable findings in the debated literature of online attitude formation in relation to website effectiveness. The use of augmented reality in digital marketing seems to affect consumers’ brand perceptions and pre-purchase intentions. For example, the employment of virtual mirror, which allows consumers to visual themselves with promoted product images, on digital displays increases perceptions of consumer-brand perception and purchase intention (Baek, Yoo, and Yoon 2018). It would be very much of interest to examine whether the product involvement acts as a moderator on the effectiveness of augmented reality applications.

Fiore et al. (2016) suggested that digital technologies, such as social networking sites, blogs, and content sites as YouTube, empower consumers with the ability to improve product quality. Consumers are becoming co-creators of the product value in the digital era. It would be of particular interest to examine whether the level of product involvement may have an effect on consumers’ trend to become co-creators and to improve the quality of a product.

Future research in other forms of advertising messages and other types of products would shed more light in the website design. Additional research that examines individual differences such as brand familiarity would help the consumer online behaviour model to be synthesized. The measurement of the online branding would help academics and practitioners to build effective online advertising strategies.

This study employs a laboratory experiment exploring the product involvement effect in the online environment under the ELM theory. For that reason, replications and extensions of this research are needed to validate and verify the results as well as to fully understand the effectiveness of a brand website. Moreover, it would be of great interest to explore any product involvement as a potential moderator in other digital media such as mobile phones and high-tech outdoor (smartboard) and to further analyse it within the scope of the Integrated Marketing Communications.

Further research regarding the effect of product involvement on utilitarian or emotional products, as well as on well-established products or new product category will enlighten the online advertising arena. Determining whether these results are applicable to other product categories is a possible avenue of additional research.

Because of the fact that theoretical foundations of the pre-purchase behaviour are not thoroughly understood at this time, especially given the emergence of interactive channels such as the

Internet, further research is warranted in this area. This study investigated consumers' process of online attitude formation. Future studies should incorporate the online and interactive decision-making stages and the procedure that underlies any style of information process that leads to actual online purchase in an effort to understand media attributes, consumers' decision styles, product characteristics and search condition contributing to intention-behaviour consistencies and inconsistencies. Any intention-behaviour consistencies as well as the style of the information process by potential Internet purchases would be of both theoretical and practical interest. Studying actual behaviour (with tool such as an eye-tracking) instead of self-reported data would provide a better understanding of online purchase behaviour.

Several limitations of this study, encompassing the nature of the sample, data collection procedures, the product involvement and the identification of the factors loaded to the attitude strength toward the website should be taken into consideration when interpreting the study's results and developing future research to extend and expand its scope.

References

Antil, John H. 1984. "Socially Responsible Consumers: Profile and Implications for Public Policy." *Journal of Macromarketing* 4: 18–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/027614678400500203.

Baek, Tae Hyun, Chan Yun Yoo, and Sukki Yoon. 2018. "Augment Yourself through Virtual Mirror: The Impact of Self-Viewing and Narcissism on Consumer Responses." *International Journal of Advertising* 37 (3): 421–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2016.1244887.

Barden, Jamie, and Richard E. Petty. 2008. "The Mere Perception of Elaboration Creates Attitude Certainty: Exploring the Thoughtfulness Heuristic." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95 (3): 489–509. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012559.

Bassili, John N. 1996. "Attitudes and Social Cognition Meta-Judgmental Versus Operative Indexes of Psychological Attributes: The Case of Measures of Attitude Strength." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1996 (71): 637–53.

Belanche, Daniel, Carlos Flavián, and Alfredo Pérez-Rueda. 2017. "Understanding Interactive Online Advertising: Congruence and Product Involvement in Highly and Lowly Arousing, Skippable Video Ads." *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 37 (February): 75–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2016.06.004.

Bitner, Mary J., and Carl Obermiller. 1985. "The Elaboration Likelihood Model: Limitations and Extensions in Marketing." In *NA-Advances in Consumer Research*, edited by Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Moris B. Holbrook, 12:420–25. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.

Briñol, Pablo, Richard E. Petty, and Joshua J Guyer. 2019. "A Historical View on Attitudes and Persuasion." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.510.

Celsi, Richard L, and Jerry C Olson. 1988. "The Role of Involvement in Attention and Comprehension Processes." *Journal of Consumer Research* 15: 210–24.

Choi, Joungyun. 2020. “How Creative Mindset Is Involved in Positive Emotions and Attitude That Affects Creative Design Process.” In *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*, 968:3–12. Springer Verlag. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20470-9_1.

DeMarree, Kenneth G., Richard E. Petty, and Daniel R. Strunk. 2010. “Self-Esteem Accessibility as Attitude Strength: On the Durability and Impactfulness of Accessible Self-Esteem.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36 (5): 628–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210364851.

Eslami, Seyed Pouyan, and Maryam Ghasemaghaei. 2018. “Effects of Online Review Positiveness and Review Score Inconsistency on Sales: A Comparison by Product Involvement.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 45 (November): 74–80. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.08.003.

Fabrigar, Leandre R., Joseph R. Priester, Richard E. Petty, and Duane T. Wegener. 1998. “The Impact of Attitude Accessibility on Elaboration of Persuasive Messages.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 24 (4): 339–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167298244001.

Fazio, Russell H, Carol J Williams, and H Fazio. 1986. “Attitude Accessibility as a Moderator of the Attitude-Perception and Attitude-Behaviour Relations: An Investigation of the 1984 Presidential Election.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51 (3): 505–14.

Fiore, Mariantonietta, Demetris Vrontis, Raffaele Silvestri, and Francesco Contò. 2016. “Social Media and Societal Marketing: A Path for a Better Wine?” *Journal of Promotion Management* 22 (2): 268–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2016.1121755.

Greenwald, Anthony G, and Clark Leavitt. 1984. “Audience Involvement in Advertising: Four Levels.” *Journal of Consumer Research* 11: 581–92. http://jcr.oxfordjournals.org/.

Ha, Young, and Sharron J. Lennon. 2010. “Effects of Site Design on Consumer Emotions: Role of Product Involvement.” *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* 4 (2): 80–96. https://doi.org/10.1108/17505931011051641.

Han, Min Chung, and Youjeong Kim. 2017a. “Why Consumers Hesitate to Shop Online: Perceived Risk and Product Involvement on Taobao.Com.” *Journal of Promotion Management* 23 (1): 24–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2016.1251530.

———. 2017b. “Why Consumers Hesitate to Shop Online: Perceived Risk and Product Involvement on Taobao.Com.” *Journal of Promotion Management* 23 (1): 24–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2016.1251530.

Haugtvedt, Curtis P, and Richard E Petty. 1992. “Personality and Persuasion: Need for Cognition Moderates the Persistence and Resistance of Attitude Changes.” *Journal Ot i’ersonaliH and Social Psychology*. Vol. 63.

Haugtvedt, Curtis P, David W Schumann, Wendy L Schneier, and Wendy L Warren. 1994. “Advertising Repetition and Variation Strategies: Implications for Understanding Attitude Strength.” *Journal of Consumer Research* 21: 176–89. http://jcr.oxfordjournals.org/.

Havard, Cody T., Patrick Ferrucci, and Timothy D. Ryan. 2021. “Does Messaging Matter? Investigating the Influence of Media Headlines on Perceptions and Attitudes of the in-

Group and out-Group.” *Journal of Marketing Communications* 27 (1): 20–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2019.1620838.

Hedhli, Kamel el, and Haithem Zourrig. 2022. “Dual Routes or a One-Way to Persuasion? The Elaboration Likelihood Model versus the Unimodel.” *Journal of Marketing Communications*, February, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2022.2034033.

Hong, Ilyoo B. 2015. “Understanding the Consumer’s Online Merchant Selection Process: The Roles of Product Involvement, Perceived Risk, and Trust Expectation.” *International Journal of Information Management* 35 (3): 322–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.01.003.

Horcajo, Javier, and Andrew Luttrell. 2016. “The Effects of Elaboration on the Strength of Doping-Related Attitudes: Resistance to Change and Behavioural Intentions.” *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 38 (3): 236–46. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2015-0316.

Huhmann, Bruce A., George R. Franke, and David L. Mothersbaugh. 2012. “Print Advertising: Executional Factors and the RPB Grid.” *Journal of Business Research* 65 (6): 849–54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.01.006.

Ilicic, Jasmina, Alicia Kulczynski, and Stacey M. Baxter. 2018. “How a Smile Can Make a Difference: Enhancing the Persuasive Appeal of Celebrity Endorsers Boosting Consumer Perceptions of Celebrity Genuineness through the Use of a ‘Duchenne Smile’ in Advertising.” *Journal of Advertising Research* 58 (1): 51–64. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2016-003.

Krosnick, Jon A., and Richard E. Petty. 1995. “Attitude Strength: An Overview.” In *Attitude Strength: Antecedents and Consequences*, edited by Richard E. Petty and Jon A. Krosnick. New York and London : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Psychology Press, Taylor and Francis Group.

Lastovicka, John L., and David M. Gardner. 1979. “Components of Involvement.” In *Attitude Research Plays for High Stakes*, edited by J.C. Maloney and B. Silverman, 53–73. Chicago: AMA.

Laurent, Gilles, and Jean-Noel Kapferer. 1985. “Measuring Consumer Involvement Profiles.” *Journal of Marketing Research* 22: 41–53.

Liu, Yuping, and L. J. Shrum. 2009. “A Dual-Process Model of Interactivity Effects.” *Journal of Advertising* 38 (2): 53–68. https://doi.org/10.2753/JOA0091-3367380204.

Luttrell, Andrew. 2018. “Dual Process Models of Persuasion.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.319.

Luttrell, Andrew, and Vanessa Sawicki. 2020. “Attitude Strength: Distinguishing Predictors versus Defining Features.” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 14 (8). https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12555.

Miniard, Paul W, Sunil Bhatla, Kenneth R Lord, Peter R Dickson, and H Rao Unnava. 1991. “Picture-Based Persuasion Processes and the Moderating Role of Involvement.” *Journal of Consumer Research* 18 (June): 92–107. http://jcr.oxfordjournals.org/.

Ngini, Chukwuma U., Steven M. Furnell, and Bogdan v. Ghita. 2002. "Assessing the Global Accessibility of the Internet." *Internet Research* 12 (4): 329–38. https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240210438399.

Petty, Richard E, and John T Cacioppo. 1979. "Issue Involvement Can Increase or Decrease Persuasion by Enhancing Message-Relevant Cognitive Responses." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 37.

———. 1981. "Issue Involvement as a Moderator of the Effects on Attitude of Advertising Content and Context." *Advances in Consumer Research* 8: 20–24. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285511496.

Petty, Richard E, John T Cacioppo, and Martin Heesacker. 1981. "Effects of Rhetorical Questions on Persuasion: A Cognitive Response Analysis." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 40.

Petty, Richard E, John T Cacioppo, and David Schumann. 1983. "Central and Peripheral Routes to Advertising Effectiveness: The Moderating Role of Involvement." *Journal of Consumer Research* 10: 135–46.

Petty, Richard E., and J.T. Cacioppo. 1986. "The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion." In *Communication and Persuasion*, 1–24. New York, NY: Springer. https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-4964-1_1.

R. Taylor, Charles. 2020. "Advertising and COVID-19." *International Journal of Advertising*. Taylor and Francis Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1774131.

Rahtz, Don R, and David L Moore. 1989. "Product Class Involvement and Purchase Intent." *Psychology & Marketing*. Vol. 0. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Rucker, Derek D., Richard E. Petty, and Joseph R. Priester. 2007. "Understanding Advertising Effectiveness from a Psychological Perspective: The Importance of Attitudes and Attitude Strength." In *The Handbook of Advertising*, edited by G.J. Tellis and T. Ambler, 73–88. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Shahab, Muhammad Hamza, Ezlika Ghazali, and Mozard Mohtar. 2021. "The Role of Elaboration Likelihood Model in Consumer Behaviour Research and Its Extension to New Technologies: A Review and Future Research Agenda." *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 45: 664–89. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12658.

Shrivastava, Sunaina, Gaurav Jain, Jae Hwan Kwon, and Dhananjay Nayakankuppam. 2021. "Impact of Embodiment on Attitude Strength." *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 38 (5): 495–513. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-07-2020-3966.

Sicilia, Maria, Salvador Ruiz, and Jose L. Munuera. 2005. "Effects of Interactivity in a Web Site: The Moderating Effect of Need for Cognition." *Journal of Advertising* 34 (3): 31–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2005.10639202.

Teeny, Jacob, Pablo Briñol, and Richard E. Petty. 2017. "The Elaboration Likelihood Model. Understanding Consumer Attitude Change." In *Routledge International Handbook of Consumer Psychology*, edited by C.V. Jansson-Boyd and M.J. Zawisza, 390–410. Abington, UK: Routledge.

Teng, Shasha, Kok Wei Khong, Wei Wei Goh, and Alain Yee Loong Chong. 2014. “Examining the Antecedents of Persuasive EWOM Messages in Social Media.” *Online Information Review* 38 (6): 746–68. https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-04-2014-0089.

Thrassou, Alkis, and Demetris Vrontis. 2009. “A New Consumer Relationship Model: The Marketing Communications Application.” *Journal of Promotion Management* 15 (4): 499–521. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496490903281270.

Wright, Peter L. 1973. “The Cognitive Processes Mediating Acceptance of Advertising.” *Journal of Marketing Research*. Vol. X.

Zaichkowsky, Judith L. 1985a. “Familiarity: Product Use, Involvement, or Expertise?” *Advances in Consumer Research*, 296–99. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283917325.

———. 1985b. “Measuring the Involvement Construct.” *Journal of Consumer Research* 12: 341–52.

———. 1986. “Conceptualizing Involvement.” *Journal of Advertising* 15 (2): 4–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1986.10672999.

Zotos, Yiorgos, Steven Lysonski, and Peter Martin. 1992. “Elaboration Likelihood Model and Locus of Control: Is the a Connection?” *Psychological Reports* 70: 1051–56.

Consumer Attitudes and Behaviour Towards Sustainability and Fashion Products: An Exploratory Study in The Cyprus Market

Anestis Tsamouridis [a] and Ioanna Papasolomou [b]

[a] *Department of Management, School of Business, University of Nicosia, 2417, Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: anestistsam@gmail.com*

[b] *Department of Management, School of Business, University of Nicosia, 2417, Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: papasolomou.i@unic.ac.cy*

Abstract

This study analyses consumers 'attitudes and behaviour towards sustainability in the fast fashion market of Cyprus. The use of secondary data and primary data analysis was used to investigate attitudes based on the Cognitive-Affective-Behavioural Model developed by Albert Ellis in the 1950s justifying attitudes that was later elevated and applied by Zhang, B., Zhang, Y. and Zhou, P and other researchers. Three main directions of Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural are developed to serve the aim of the research and further expand to main objective. The literature review is developed based on a theoretical background, discussing consumer behaviour within fast fashion through emerging the need of sustainability. The research has as its main aim the exploration of attitudes and behaviour of customers towards sustainable fast fashion products and industry practices within the Cypriot market. Subsequently, enhancing to all dimensions that influence "attitude" in the decision-making process, referring to cognitive, affective, and emotional dimensions. It is important to mention that the primary data collection has passed ethical approval and a questionnaire has been used as a data collection tool following a quantitative method. The census of research was collected using non-probability sampling technique and the procedure method was snowball sampling. The questionnaire was contacted based on similar research to serve the research's objective and test all hypotheses that were proposed. The sample is based on 97 valid responses and a descriptive analysis was used for the collection and analysis of information. Through an awareness and cognitive direction, it was discovered that the majority of the consumers claimed to have high knowledge in regards to the concerns of sustainability within the fast fashion industry, however, through further results it is shown that, in fact, there is a concerning lack of actual knowledge on sustainable fabrics. Through a behavioural component, it was found that, on average, consumers are willing to pay only 20% of price premium for sustainable products. Therefore, it is suggested that policymakers and legislation may consider such insight as means to compromise price for more widely affordable fast fashion sustainable products.

1.Introduction

The study investigates the perceptions, attitudes and buying behaviour of consumers towards sustainable fashion in Cyprus. The research investigates the Cypriot fashion industry from an academic perspective and focuses on the marketing, fashion sustainability and consumer behaviour literature. An overview of the fashion industry and the necessity to investigate this specific field both on a local scale (Cyprus market) and a global scale is analysed in the introduction part. In addition, the introduction contains the study's objectives and research questions that are going to guide the literature review through academic sources and data.

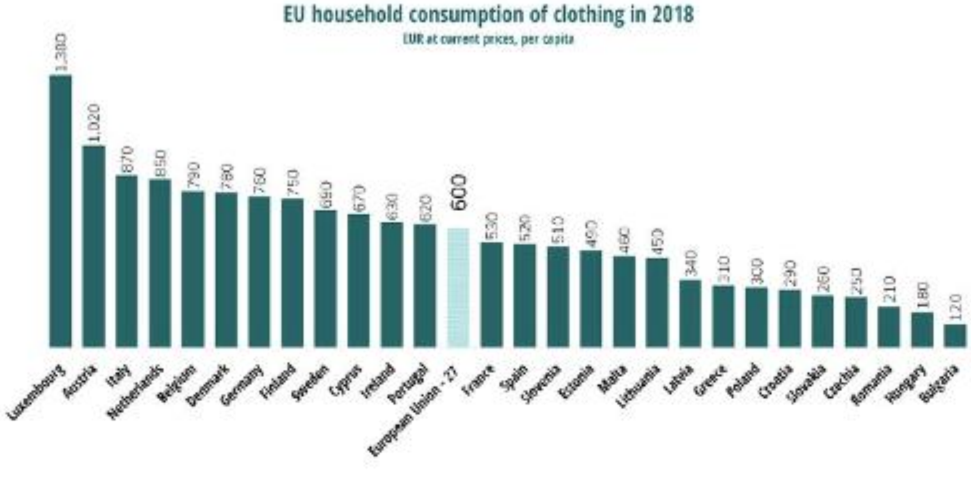
The unsustainable impact of fashion affects current global economies and consequently the European Union as well as Cyprus. The last 10 years, academic literature rapidly grew, emphasising the emerging need of sustainability in fashion. The need for sustainable change is shown through progressive regulations from governments and unions (European Commission and United Nations) that are encouraging, regulating, and investing towards a more ethical and ecological friendly approach. The study aims to investigate the consumer "attitudes" based on the ABC model and explore consumer perception about sustainability in fashion; the objectives and hypothesis of the study are supported through theoretical background and relevant theories investigating aspects affecting their decision making.

1.1.Overview of the Fashion Industry

Within the last decades, the fashion sector has been criticised for unsustainable practices as mass production techniques and fast fashion practices were used to meet high consumer demand and boost profit margins (McNeill and Moore, 2015). According to the European Union, *"In 2018, households in the European Union spent almost € 264 bn on clothing articles, an increase of 10% over the decade"* (Euratex, 2018). The fashion industry has faced a rapid increase and extensive consumer demand; in fact, the fashion industry is considered as the third biggest product manufacturing industry in the world, after automotive and technology industries (Zhang et al., 2021). It is vital to mention that the fashion industry accounts for over 1.3 trillion dollars of global economy and provides 300 million jobs worldwide, therefore we can clearly notice that it contributes significantly to the economic cycles (Business of Fashion, 2019), while also playing a considerable role in the global GDP (Boston Consulting Group, 2019). In addition, it is contended that the fashion industry comes in second place as the most polluting industry after the oil industry at a global scale and negatively affects the planet and its resources (Business of Fashion, 2015).

As figure 1 shows, the average EU household consumption of clothing was 600 euros per capita. This study focuses only on the Cypriot market where the average household consumption was 670 euros per capita in 2018. This indicates that Cypriot households spent more money on clothing than the average consumers in other European countries (10th position across member countries).

Figure 1: Adapted, Europe Statistics (euratex.eu, 2020)



Another major trend that is affecting the industry is the rise of the Fast Fashion business model, as according to the European Parliament, the Fashion industry is dominated by multinational retail chains that trust on mass productions, high volumes of sales and competitive low prices. The Fast Fashion business model aims to offer similar styles such as high-end fashion shows and provide them at low cost, short time and usually using lower quality materials. The Fast fashion model was adopted by consumers and due to increased demand, retailers simultaneously offered more fashion collections. For example, from 2000 to 2011 the number of collections released in the European apparel industry had grown from 2 to 5 collections, while in some cases, well-established retailers such as Zara offered as many as 24 collections each year (Europarl, 2019).

The main challenge for the fashion industry today is the development and adoption of more sustainable and long-term visions towards stakeholders, the community and nature. The emerging need for sustainability in the fashion industry creates market opportunities, since the global agenda is sustainability oriented towards a more circular fashion economy. (European Commission Agenda, 2021)

1.2.The present study

The interrelation between fast fashion and sustainability can be investigated in three dimensions; the consumers demand dimension, supply and manufacturing dimension (represented by fashion brands) and lastly, governmental policies and institutional frameworks. This research study concentrates on the consumer demand dimension, and more specifically on the consumers' perspective towards fast fashion sustainability and how different levels of sustainability awareness can affect their decision-making process (Zhang et al., 2021).

The study proposes a conceptual framework based on empirical evidence and integrates the key concepts in an in-depth investigation, such as fast fashion practices, consumers' attitudes and purchase behaviour towards sustainable brands and sustainability practices. An empirical study will be carried out to investigate the "behaviour" and "attitudes" of Cypriot consumers towards fast fashion. The academic framework is divided in three sections; the first section emphasises on Fast Fashion, while the second dimension discusses sustainability in the industry and finally, whilst the third dimension focuses on consumer behaviour theories to explore attitudes. The study is quantitative in nature and its aim is to investigate consumer attitude towards sustainability of fashion products in the Cypriot market. The key data collection instrument is an online questionnaire. The selection of the specific data collection instrument provides data that can be turned to essential information and insights to understand local consumer perception about fashion sustainability.

The emerging need for sustainability in the fashion sector, combined with the unregulated practices and high demand that were mentioned above, directly affect the final consumers. Academic Literature has rapidly developed in the last years, that emphasises the emerging need of sustainability in the fast fashion sector. Consequently, it is vital to empirically investigate consumers' knowledge and perception in the field, especially in the market of Cyprus, where information related to the fast fashion market is limited. European Union policies and global agendas for sustainability are showing the road for future opportunities, by exploring consumers' attitudes towards sustainable fast fashion products to help identify current market needs, consumers' awareness degree, and insights for future trends.

2.Literature Review

2.1.Overview

The interrelation between fast fashion and sustainability is influenced by multiple directions as there are several factors that affect the two, such as governmental policies (new industrial regulations), Fast Fashion Brands (Supply), Manufacturing (Supply), Retailers (Demand and Supply) and lastly, consumers' needs (demand). The research concentrates on the consumers' dimension; thus, the first parts of the literature review focus on the sustainability within the fast fashion industry and deepens on consumers' awareness around fast fashion products with sustainability features. At this point it is essential to clarify the terminology of "sustainability" that this study is using as a basis and how it serves the scope. Sustainability in fast fashion products refers to products with sustainable characteristics or attributes such as being organic, using biodegradable fabrics, following zero waste methods, plastic-free, circular economy infrastructure etc. These factors showed that sustainable attributes can be measured and applied to consumers' behaviour and buying decision process. In addition to this, the literature review discusses similar studies that follow the same direction and elaborates how consumers' perception on sustainability affects their decision-making process in regards to fast fashion sustainable products.

2.2.Fast fashion Industry: An Overview

Fast fashion refers to specific manufacturing practices and buying processes of the fashion industry. It has been described by researchers based on common marketing characteristics such as short life cycle of products, unstable and volatilised market and low predictability (Fernie and Sparks 1998). Based on that, fashion retailers and manufacturers maximise their profits in a high demanding industry and capitalise on the fast pace of market consumption (Christopher, Lowson, and Peck 2004). Fast fashion consumers seek for the 'insatiable demand for newness' (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006, p. 269). In addition to this, the growth of fashion seasonality from 4 to 24 (as mentioned above), resulted in fast paced designs, sources and production processes that emphasise on profitability rather than sustainability (Bruce and Daly, 2006).

According to Fletcher (2008), the fast fashion model is predominantly a fast response system that, by its very nature, promotes disposability. The fast fashion model in relation to the fast cycles approach, that focuses on standardised prototyping, mass customization and mass production capabilities, created effective shipping procedures and finished products that can be quickly sold in global markets (Aspers and Skov, 2006). Sequentially, retailers, in order to engage with their customers and maintain their interest, feed new fads and motivate weekly purchases with continuously updated stock and a continual new product offering (Tokatli and Kizilgun 2009).

2.3.Consumer Behaviour

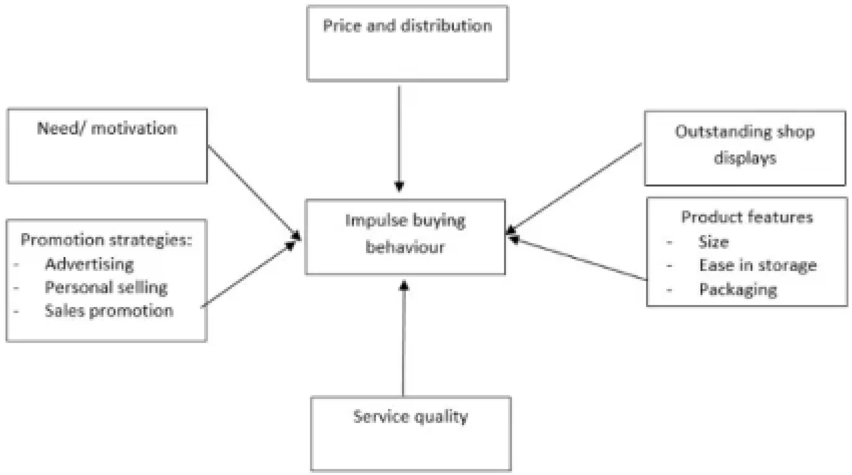
Multiple academic frameworks and theories have been applied as means to offer support on investigating consumer behaviour and attitudes. In an attempt to define consumer behaviour, Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) stated that *"the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs"* page 3. Following the Consumer behaviour theory, suggested by Bray (2008), consumer's behaviour in decision making, can follow different approaches through analysing different models of psychology. Accordingly, Foxall (1990) underlines the necessity to investigate different variables when referring to consumer behaviour, suggesting five major approaches - Economic, Psychodynamic, Behaviourist, Cognitive, Humanistic (terminology might vary based on different literature). Thus, the research focuses on four carefully selected consumer behaviour theories, with the purpose of covering all variables that directly or indirectly affect consumers' decision making in a fast fashion market. As a result, the theoretical background of consumers' behaviour is required to develop and frame the Research Question later on regarding what truly affects the "attitude" and results to decision making of consumers towards sustainability. Thus, consumer behaviour literature is necessary to rationalise valid and applicable measurement variables (awareness & knowledge of consumers) within the fast fashion market of Cyprus.

2.4. Hawkins Stern Impulse Buying Theory (Behavioural Theory)

The Hawkins stern impulse buying theory is considered an appropriate model to investigate behavioural theory within the retail market. As Ozer and Gultekin (2015) found through applying this model in the fashion sector, "fashion focused impulsive buy" refers to an unexpected purchase, made without any prior intention of purchasing fashion products. Therefore, impulsive consumer behaviours need to be addressed and considered before conducting the primary research, in order to incorporate the research appropriately. Impulse buying theory, focuses on various parameters (as shown in figure 2) that may affect the behavioural purchasing decision. In the same context, this research expands and investigates behavioural dimensions as shown in Q1.1. Research objective 2 and four questions are used to investigate this direction.

According to the study conducted by Pradhan (2016), when it comes to purchasing choices, consumer behaviour theory is the study of how individuals make them with the goal of assisting companies and marketers in capitalising on these habits by forecasting how and when they will purchase. It aids in the identification of factors that affect these choices, as well as the development of proactive behaviour modification methods to influence these decisions. In spite of the fact that many consumer behaviour theories place a focus on rational decision-making, Stern was a big believer in impulsive behaviour. According to the viewpoint provided by Naeem (2020), unexpected purchasing impulses should be included alongside logical purchase choices in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the typical consumer's purchasing behaviour. Unlike conventional decision-making, impulse purchases are mostly influenced by external signals and have nothing in common with it.

Figure 2: Adopted by: Hawkins Stern Impulse Buying Theory

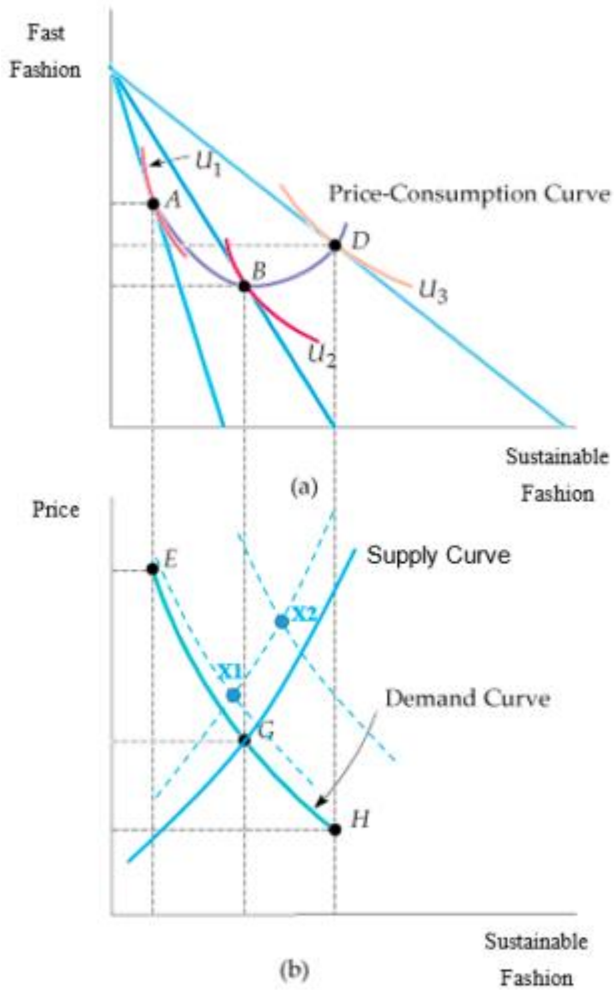


Hawkins Stern was the one who came up with the idea back in 1962. Consumer behaviour theories developed in the twentieth century, such as Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory of Motivation (1943) claimed that customers always made logical and well-planned purchasing choices. Consumers are affected by external conditions to make impulsive purchases, according to Stern's argument in support of this viewpoint. According to this idea, customers may be convinced to purchase more than they had originally intended. Another study of American customers that was conducted recently revealed that 80 percent of individuals who shop online do it on the spur of the moment (Amos, Holmes, and Keneson, 2014).

2.5.Consumer Behaviour Economic Theory about fashion products

According to the study conducted by Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2012) quick fashion goods are still inexpensive. As a result, demand for fast fashion products is driven by fundamental economic principles: higher costs lead to reduced demand and greater income leads to increased demand. Most contemporary economic interpretations make the premise that consumers are rational optimists, which is a prevalent assumption in nearly all economic interpretations. They have a clear understanding of what they desire (utility function) and what they have (budget restriction), which are often represented in a mathematical model such as the one illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 3 Adopted by: Zhang, Bo, Yaozhong Zhang, and Peng



When the price of sustainable fashion items falls, the budget restriction (the consumer's affordability) relaxes and extends outwards, resulting in a greater degree of usefulness. Each optimum demand is represented by a point on the demand curve that includes the total potential price and quantity combinations for that particular product or service. Similarly, on the supply side, producers make an optimization choice, which results in the formation of a supply curve. The interactions between consumers and producers in the marketplace determine the overall equilibrium price and quantity. Hands (2010), with his economic knowledge, stated that price and income are the two most significant variables that affect consumer decision-making.

The perceived and objective pricing of a product are both significantly influenced by sustainability. With growing awareness of environmental problems and the need for sustainability, customers are increasingly choosing natural and long-lasting fabrics in clothing over synthetic and non-biodegradable fabrics (fast fashion). Environmentally friendly clothing has a demand curve that is skewed to the outside. Nevertheless, since most environmentally friendly fabrics are costlier than conventional materials, a greater price may discourage consumers from buying clothing that incorporates sustainability characteristics. This has resulted in an upward shift in the supply curve for environmentally friendly clothing products.

2.6.Psychological Consumer Behaviour about Fashion Products

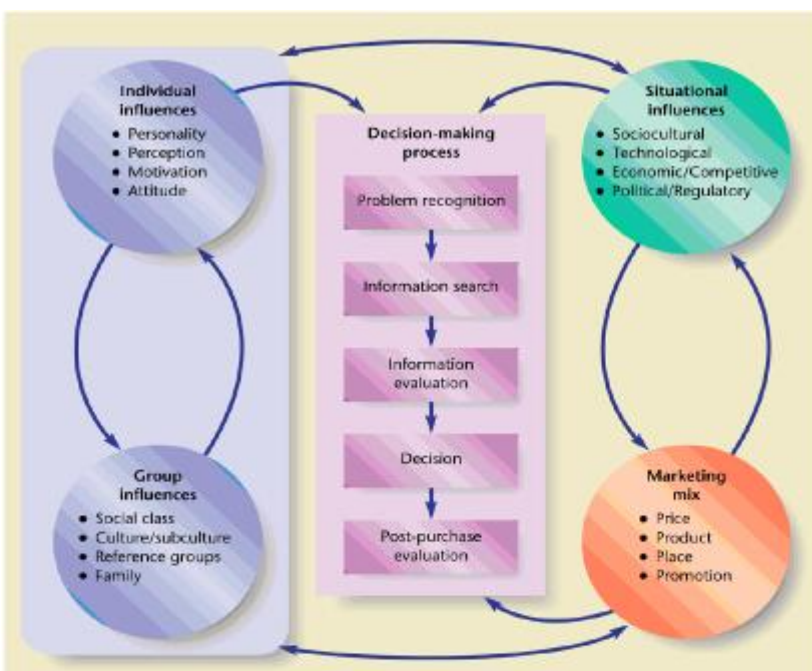
According to Bhamra, Lilley, and Tang (2011), traditional economic theories, on the other hand, do not take into consideration the emotional component of purchasing decisions. In essence, it is a normative judgement rather than a positive evaluation (what individuals should do). It is a fact that humans are not machines, and we do not always make the logical decisions that economic theory says we would. Psychology provides a unique viewpoint on consumer behaviour that encompasses cognitive, emotional, and social requirements, and it fills in the gaps left by economics in understanding consumer behaviour. Because all knowledge is produced and interpreted in social contexts, the sociocultural approach emphasises the importance of social interactions. Additionally, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory emphasises the battle between the id, the ego, and the superego to fulfil one's own needs alongside other people's needs. A study by Bernays, who was inspired by Sigmund Freud, examines the illogical factors that affect consumer behaviour, and he was successful in applying his findings to a campaign to discourage female smokers from smoking. Jung developed the word "neurosis" while studying under Sigmund Freud, and it is defined as a major unresolved conflict between opposing views, according to the dictionary.

2.7.ABC Model

According to the study conducted by Zhang et al. the ABC Model of Attitudes emphasises the link between the knowledge of consumers, their feelings, and their actions. This attitude measurement model was introduced by Smith (1947) in the field of psychology and since then, it has evolved and enhanced through academic literature over the years. Affective, behaviour, and cognition are the three components as figure 4 shows.

Affect is a word that expresses how someone feels about something. In this context, affect refers to a person's feelings or thoughts towards a product or service. For instance, “How do customers feel about fast fashion products with sustainable features?”

Figure 4 Source: Blackwell – Decision making process and consumer’s attitudes.



Customers' responses due to emotion and cognition are referred to as behaviour. Cognition refers to an individual's belief or knowledge about an attitude object. The next component of an attitude is the behavioural component, and it refers to the way one behaves when exposed to an attitude object according to Breckler, Steven (1985).

The ABC model and the additional consumer behaviour literature are introduced as means to justify what we call "attitude" of consumers and in which dimension we need to focus in order to measure sustainability based on affecting, behavioural and cognitive behaviours. The "attitudes" are subjective to every consumer, therefore the model and the consumer behaviour framework developed to support and clear the study purpose based on scientific attitudes measurement model. The fact that attitude is a subjective option based on an individual's background makes the adoption of research methods and objective measurement models vital for valid and adequate results. The study focuses on the individual influences based on consumer attitudes. The attitude measurement is part of the decision-making process created by Blackwell to identify influencing factors.

The three major components of the model Figure 4 (Individual, Group and Situational influences) are used in this research in the form of a question to investigate multiple influences of consumers. For instance, economic aspect questions, are influenced by social groups, family groups, and attitude towards sustainability.

2.8.Insight in Cyprus & Fashion Products Market

According to the research conducted by Thrassou, Kone, and Panayidou (2008) Cyprus is a relatively small Mediterranean island with four main towns along its coastlines, all of which are worth seeing. The overwhelming majority of large apparel retail businesses are concentrated along the main streets of four major cities of Cyprus (Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos, Larnaka). Most of the time, these major thoroughfares have a large volume of traffic with a diverse mix of consumers looking to augment their income via purchases. It has been recognised in the study conducted by Gundala, (2010) that consumer profiles in the Cypriot clothing sector indicate that gender seems to have no major influence on the selection of shop features. This intriguing result may be due to the social and cultural background of the Cypriot consumer market, which is worth noting. According to the results of this study, the only demographic variable that has a statistically significant impact on customers' evaluations of shop image characteristics is their socioeconomic status. This information can be used as insight since fashion products are commonly used as reflection of socioeconomic status.

3.Methodology

The literature review was developed based on retrieving both the conceptual theories and the empirical evidence that focus on exploring the purchase behaviour and attitudes of consumers. A literature review of the key influences such as economic, cultural, and psychological influences on consumer behaviour, and theoretical models such as the Hawkins Stern Impulse Buying Theory and the ABC Model of attitudes, led to a comprehensive review that formed the basis in which the study's overarching aim, research objectives and hypotheses were set.

3.1.The Study's Scope, Aim and Research Hypotheses

The aim of this research is to investigate the attitudes and behaviours of customers towards sustainable fast fashion products and industry practices within the Cypriot market. Subsequently, to investigate all the dimensions that influence "attitude" in the decision-making process this research is focusing on the cognitive, affective, and emotional dimensions.

The first and key direction of the study is based on Question 1, where sub-questions Q1.1 & Q1.2 are developed to investigate multiple directions of Q1 in detail and to provide more accurate and valid results.

Therefore:

*RQ1: **"**To what degree are customers of fast fashion products **aware** of the notion of sustainability in the Cyprus market"? (Cognitive & Awareness Dimension).*

The sub-questions based on the attitude model and extended factors influencing Q1 and the relevant sub-question investigating the "Consumer's behaviour" dimension of attitude is:

*RQ1.1 **"**Which factors are actually affecting/influencing the decision making of customers towards fast fashion products with sustainable features in the Cyprus Market?" (Consumer Behaviour Dimension)*

Q1.2 defines the Affective and Emotional Dimension of consumer attitude towards sustainable fast fashion products. Therefore, the question is as follows:

*RQ 1.2 **"**How do Cypriot customers of fast fashion products feel towards sustainable fashion brands?" (Affective and Emotional Dimension)*

Research Objectives

The research objectives that are associated with relevant research questions are presented in table 1. Table 1 represents the association between research objectives, questions, hypothesis, and associated questionnaire questions with the study. Accordingly, the three-research objectives are:

Research Objective 1: To explore the degree of awareness (cognition) among consumers regarding sustainable fast fashion products and industry practices within the market of Cyprus.

Research Objective 2: To understand which factors affect consumers' purchase behaviour (behavioural) in regards to sustainable fast fashion products in the Market of Cyprus.

Research Objective 3: To examine how consumers of fast fashion products feel (affection) about products with sustainable features in the market of Cyprus.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Cypriot Consumers 1) are aware of fast fashion industry sustainability issues yet, however, they may lack actual knowledge and 2) they spend more than 20% of their budget on fast fashion.

Hypothesis 2: Fast fashion consumers in Cyprus prioritise price over sustainability in the decision-making stage, and they are highly influenced by social media and/or family relatives.

Hypothesis 3: Consumers feel angry when they learn about unethical fast fashion industry practice and is highly affecting their purchasing decision making.

3.2.Research Design

The methodological approach encompasses the research type, design and methods adopted in the present study, followed by the ethical considerations and procedures that were implemented to ensure validity in the research results. This chapter provides clarity on the population of the research as well as the sample frame of the research study. The data collected will also be reviewed and analysed in this section. Therefore, it is important to clarify that this research aims to investigate attitudes of consumers that live in Cyprus and create an in-depth understanding of the subjectiveness of each individual's attitude.

Table 1: Source: Authors own

Research Aim

The aim of the research is to investigate the attitudes and purchase behaviour of customers towards sustainable products and industry practices in the Cyprus market, and subsequently, to explore the impact of by focusing on the cognitive, affective, and emotional dimensions.

Research Questions	**Research Objectives**	**Research Hypothesis**	**Relevant Questionnaire Questions**
Q1 "To what degree are customers of fast fashion products aware of sustainability in the Cyprus market"? (Cognitive & Awareness Dimension).	**Q1Research Objective I:** To explore how aware **(cognitive & awareness)** consumers are regarding sustainable fast fashion products and industry in Cyprus.	**Hypothesis 1:** Cypriot Consumers 1) are aware of fast fashion industry sustainability issues yet, however they might lack of actual knowledge, 2) they spend more than 20% of their budget on fast fashion.	7,8,9,10,11
Q1.1 "Which factors are actually affecting/influencing the decision making of customers towards fast fashion products with sustainable features in the Cyprus Market?" (Consumer Behaviour Dimension)	**Research Objective II:** To understand which factors **affect** consumers' purchase behavior **(behavioral)** regarding sustainable fast fashion products in Cyprus.	**Hypothesis 2:** Fast fashion consumers in Cyprus priorities price over sustainability in the decision-making stage, and they are highly influenced by social media and family relatives.	12,13,14,15
Q1.2 How do customers of the fast fashion industry in Cyprus **feel** towards fast fashion products that have sustainable characteristics?	**Research Objective III.:** To examine how consumers of the fast fashion industry **feel** (**affective & emotional**) about products with sustainable characteristics in the Cyprus market.	**Hypothesis 3**: Consumers feel angry when they learn about unethical fast fashion industry practice and is highly affecting their purchasing decision making.	16,17,18,19

3.3.Sampling Method

The initial step of the sampling process is to identify the target population. According to Taherdoost (2016), population is defined as the "number of people living in a particular country", therefore the target population of this research will be any individuals that consumed fast fashion products, at least once, in the Cypriot market and are at the age of, or older than, 18 years old. According to Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT), the latest recorded population of Cyprus at the end of 2019 was 888.000, including any individuals that were under 18. However, the research investigates only adults (18 years old and above). Eurostat statistics (Eurostat, 2020) showed that approximately 200.000 of the population is underaged. Following this information, the target population that can be considered as a consumer in Cyprus will be around 700.000 and that will be the target population that will be used for this research.

According to Taherdoost (2016), a sampling frame is a list of all the actual cases from which a sample will be drawn that is a representative of the population. Accordingly, the sample frame is set to narrow down the target sample frame. For this particular paper the sample frame will be any individuals that have purchased any fashion product in Cyprus at least once. Therefore, sample frame will narrow the results from general consumers (target population) to only fashion consumers in Cyprus In order, to minimise any sample frame errors, the first question that was used in the questionnaire (Appendix 1) aims to determine whether or not the participant has ever consumed fashion products in Cyprus to ensure validity of results.

As the sample frame has now been defined, it is now important to focus in the sampling method that will be implemented. To begin with, sampling techniques can be allocated into two types: random sampling and non- random sampling. To determine which method must be applied to this particular research it is vital to, firstly, understand the capabilities of the research, the available resources and time that were required. According to Brown (1947), the random sampling technique was found to decrease the risk of errors and biassed results that may affect the outcome in a negative way. However, this technique may require more time and energy than the non-sampling technique, due to a particular level of sampling error. This study will use the non-probability sampling method as the chances to select each member of the population are not equal (Yin, 2003). The probability sampling on the other hand assumes that all members of the population have a fair and equal chance of being selected. (Taherdoost, 2016). Non-probability sampling can be more efficient in a smaller sample or in cases where the deadlines are tight and there are budget restrictions to execute random probability sampling.

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method and according to Brewetin and Millward (2001) it is considered to be useful to mainly access small populations, small groups and closed nature societies. A research that uses snowball sampling, identifies valid units of sample and then motivates other units (engagement in sharing) to participate in the research study. Consequently, if snowball sampling is used effectively it can lead to a higher sample size, enhancing the potential to increase the accuracy and validity. For this study, the questionnaire was sent to different Cypriot communities such as University of Nicosia student group chats, individuals of all ages, employed adults etc. It is vital to mention that selection bias is inevitable to occur since the scale of the research is limited around the researcher and his subjective point of view.

The questionnaire was developed to serve the research objectives of this study and was inspired from various academic papers that investigate the same field. More specifically, Bo Zhang et al., published a study of a similar nature, focusing on the Market of the United Kingdom in 2021 and their questionnaire was used as reference. As already mentioned, attitudes are subjective to each individual, therefore, the measurement scale of attitudes and the questionnaire measuring system must take this into consideration when building the questionnaire as it can become problematic if this is missed. Following Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) suggestions, this research adopted a five-scale measuring system: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree. The reason why this method was selected, is because it allows us to convert the attitude into quantitative data (10 out 19 total questions are using agree-disagree five scale measurement). The questionnaire was created with the support of a platform called 'Survey Monkey' (https://www.surveymonkey.com/). The questionnaire was distributed through online social media platforms such as Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram, Email, Instagram. The snowball method was used to collect data as it motivates other participants to share the questionnaire to further groups.

4.Data Analysis & Findings

The chapter will provide a detailed analysis of the data collected. The first section of this chapter will give an overview of new data, with the use of Descriptive analysis, by converting them into general information in an attempt to create new insights about the Cypriot market and the attitudes of consumers towards the sustainability of fast fashion. Further findings will be discussed and will be allocated in three major categories: Affective, Behavioural, Cognitive. The reason for this allocation is to provide an alignment between objectives and hypothesis and therefore link literature with findings as well as new information. To achieve that, a simple relationship analysis was used between different consumer attributes as suggested by the ABC attitudes model. The data collection started in early September 2021 and the duration was 10 days of data collection.

4.1.Descriptive Data Analysis

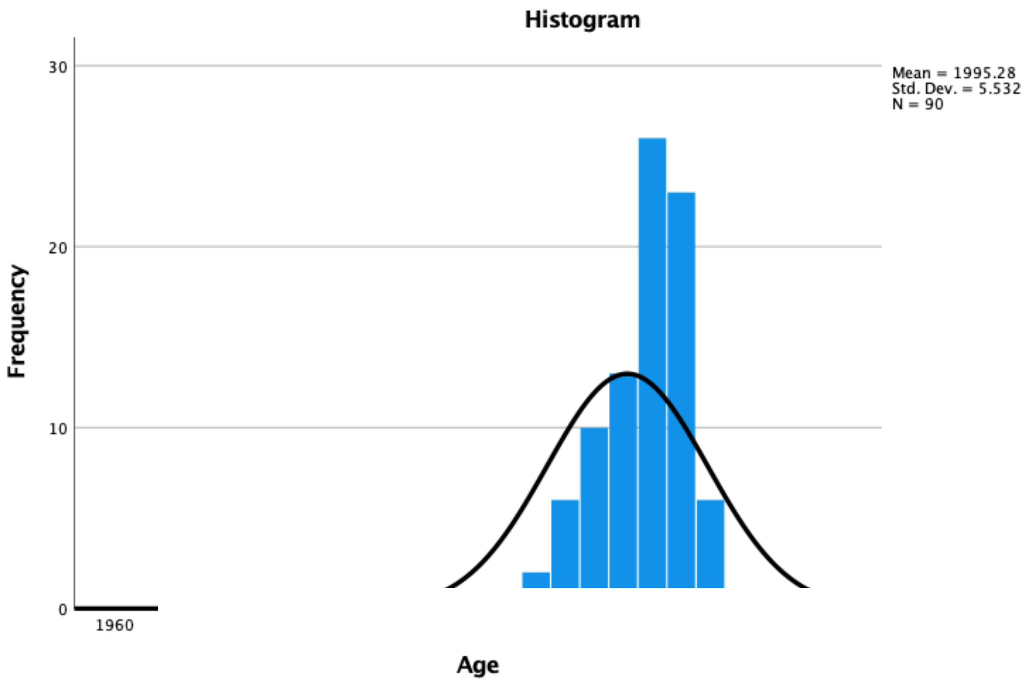
As it was mentioned above, question 1 was used to minimise sample frame error by asking participants if they purchased fashion/clothing products in Cyprus at least once. The nature of the question, sharply separates sample frame units from in-frame to out of frame, by simply answering with a yes or no. Taking this into consideration, 93 out of 103 participants answered yes and only 8 no. This shows that an 8.82% sample frame error occurred as the 8 units will be excluded from the analysis due to the fact that they are not consumers of the Cypriot market. Therefore, the 91.18% positive responses will be our final sample unit.

4.1.1.Population Analysis

Question 2 showed that 34.4% of the sample units were males and 65.6% females. This shows that the snowball technique worked in the direction of females' sample units. The gender differences that occurred can be explained through literature according to Hwang and Choi, (2017) & Obermiller and Issac, (2018) & Brough et al., (2016), various research proved that women, especially within the age of 18-34 years, are shown to be more aware, knowledgeable and interested in matters related to sustainability compared to men. In addition, Brough et al., (2016) study showed that there's a psychological relation between sustainability and femininity and that may be the main reason why men tend to avoid adopting eco-friendly behaviours as they may seem "un-feminine" to others. Based on Q1 and Q2, the sample frame was found to be representative and relative to the research direction.

Participants were also asked in question 3 to provide their age and it was found that the average age is 25 as most participants were born in 1996, showing that 85% of the sample belongs in the category of Generation Z (18-25). 12% is also considered Generation X and 3% Baby Boomers. As the majority falls into this category, it can become the main representative sample of this research. Figure 5 shows a histogram to help the reader visualise the focus on the Generation Z as the peak frequency is between 1995-2003 with mean age of questionnaire 25 years old.

Figure 5 Question 3 What year were you born in Histogram



4.1.2.Awareness/ Cognitive Component

The awareness and cognitive component, aims to serve research objective 1 through investigating the level of awareness as well as general knowledge of Cypriot consumers in terms of sustainability. There were a total of 5 questions within the questionnaire with the main aim to direct the research towards consumers' attitude.

Table 2 shows the results of threw questions (Q7, Q8, Q9) that were used to directly explore consumers' knowledge and awareness about the unsustainable practices within the fast fashion industry.

Table 2 Cross Tabulation of Q7,Q8,Q9 based on gender variables

Scale	Q7			Q8			Q9		
	Gender			Gender			Gender		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Strongly agree	14.9%	21.8%	36.8%	18.4%	25.3%	43.7%	19.5%	32.2%	51.7%
Agree	11.5%	27.6%	39.1%	10.3%	24.1%	34.5%	10.3%	21.8%	32.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	5.7%	13.8%	19.5%	3.4%	11.5%	14.9%	2.3%	6.9%	9.2%
Disagree	1.1%	2.3%	3.4%	1.1%	2.3%	3.4%	1.1%	3.4%	4.6%
Strongly disagree	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%	2.3%	3.4%	1.1%	1.1%	2.3%
Mean	1.90	1.95	1.93	1.73	1.96	1.89	1.67	1.77	1.74

Furthermore, question 10 and 11 were used to compare the level of knowledge that consumers assume to have versus what the actual knowledge of sustainability within the industry is. Q10 was used to measure the knowledge that the consumers presumed to have regarding sustainability.

Q10: I know about apparel brands that sell eco-friendly fashion products.

Anyone who answered with "Agree or Strongly Agree" and claimed knowledge in apparel brands that sell eco-friendly products is expected to know the correct answer in Q11.

Q11 therefore measures the "actual knowledge" of consumers.

Q11: To your knowledge, which of the following fabrics is the most eco-friendly?

			q10					
			Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total Row
q11	Synthetics	Table N %	2.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%	
	Wool	Table N %	4.6%	11.5%	5.7%	1.1%	0.0%	
	Modal	Table N %	2.3%	3.4%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	6.9%
	Cotton	Table N %	19.5%	27.6%	11.5%	5.7%	0.0%	
		Total	28.7%	43.7%	19.5%	8.0%	0.0%	

Given the options of Synthetics, Wool, Modal and Cotton with the correct answer being the Modal, Q11 will, therefore, measure the “actual knowledge” of consumers. In this question, any participants who agree that they know eco-friendly brands in Q10 were expected to know the correct answer in Q11. Please refer to table 3 to visualise the results.

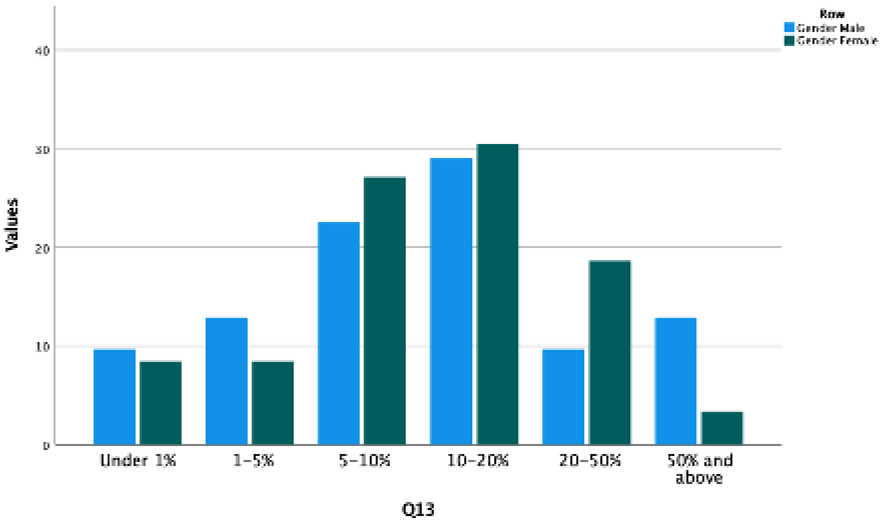
72% of the population agreed that they know eco-friendly brands, 20% were neutral and the rest disagreed. The researcher noticed that there was no response as Strongly Disagree. Based on that it is assumed that the consumers are confident about their knowledge as the majority “claimed " knowledge on apparel brands that sell eco-friendly fashion products. However, it was interestingly found that when participants were asked a challenging question about actual knowledge only 6% were correct. Following the results in the cross tabulation table 3 with a better visibility of the data in the bar chart in figure 6, the results show high contrast between actual and claimed knowledge across consumers in Cyprus.

4.1.3.Behavioural Component

As stated in the literature review, even though price and income are the two most significant variables that affect economic decisions it was found that consumers also respond to emotion, cognition and beliefs influenced by social environment. In this section, the researcher will aim to find how an economic decision affects a sustainable consumer behaviour. The analysis is also expanded on how their social environment can or may affect their attitude and perspective towards sustainable decision making. Four questions (Q12,13,14,15) were used to serve research objective 1.2 in order to help create a better understanding of the different factors that affect consumers’ purchase behaviour regarding sustainable fast fashion products in the Cypriot Market and how. The data gathered in Questions 12 and 13 were used to investigate economic behaviour of consumers in the Cypriot market. In order to gather more insightful information, the investigation will be achieved through the use of cross tabulation graphs and descriptive analysis of gender differences to explore possible variances.

The researcher observes that the results of Q12 have a normal distribution which is aligned with the normality of the economic theory. However, there's a discrepancy on the groups of 50% and above that prevents the pattern to be categorised as a perfect normal distribution. The phenomenon is analysed in the following figure 7 that allocates the responses in genders.

Figure 7 Q13 Histogram Crosstabs



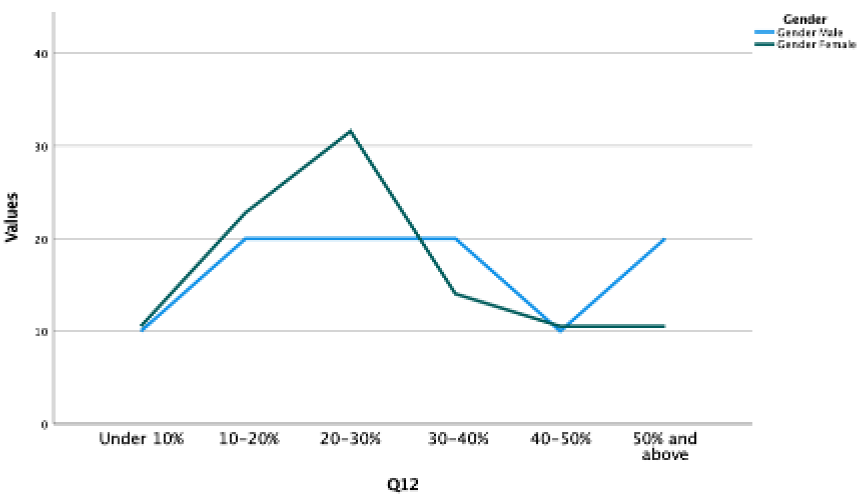


Figure 6 Q12 Histogram Crosstabs

20-30% of the sample's purchases are sustainable fast-fashion products. A 10% difference is identified between men and women as the sustainable products of Men's total purchases fall into the option of 50% and above. (Mean: 3.6). Through normal distribution that was applied on results, it was found that consumers are willing to pay up to a 20% increased price for sustainable product. 58% of the sample stated that the social environment is not particularly a factor of influence in their decision making of buying sustainable product.

5.Conclusions

The research investigated consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards sustainability by focusing on the fast fashion sector in Cyprus following a literature review and similar academic research. The aim was to explore consumers' attitude using the ABC attitude model and by investigating other related theoretical backgrounds from various perspectives and point of views, as means to create a comprehensive and objective image of the market in Cyprus. To achieve the research objectives and aim, the literature expands further on consumer behaviour and analyzes multiple and essential theories stating the emerging need of sustainability within the fast fashion industry.

In conclusion, it was found that the level of awareness in sustainability of Cypriot consumers is high and, in many cases, the consumers are highly aware of its negative impact. The consumer's decision making is somehow affected due to sustainability matters. Results found that the attitude of consumers and especially the affective and emotional direction is influencing the decision making regarding fast fashion products. It is vital to mention that the descriptive method of analysis provides a brief overview of the market and is not used as the entire image market. The first insight shows essential data and the descriptive analysis was found useful for this research stage and expectations.

5.1.Limitations

This research was conducted by one person which can be presumed as subjective as it was analysed from only one perspective. However, as a vast source of literature was used and analysed, it can be assumed that the analysis was made by a number of different individuals that used their own sources of literature to create an idea. In addition to this, to support the findings of the literature review, further data was collected revolving around the perception as well as feelings of 97 other individuals.

As it was stated above, an online survey was used to gather this information. Even though the survey can provide positive results, there can be some limitations that must be taken into consideration. According to Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece (2003), there is not enough information and knowledge about the characteristics of the participants and therefore the data collected can be considered ambitious. In the sample unit of this research there was a small percentage of individuals that were unemployed (6.6%) and therefore there is a small risk that some answers received were based on assumptions and not reality i.e. a person that is unemployed, with no income, might have hesitated to pay a premium price for a product. In addition to this, there is a tendency for people to prefer to present themselves in a favourable way instead of providing accurate responses. For example, some of the respondents of this research might have felt uncomfortable answering with honesty on whether or not they are buying sustainable fast fashion products even though they have high levels of awareness of the importance of sustainability. This process is known as Social Desirability Bias which occurs regularly in surveys. (Zikmund & Babin, 2009)

Another challenge that was also faced was the non-response rate as there is not any recompense provided. The questionnaire was viewed by 130 individuals but only 97 completed it. Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece (2003), advised that financial incentives could have been used to motivate individuals and increase response rates. However, as this research was conducted by a student, the collection of primary data was aiming to stay costless. 9% of sample frame error occurred, however, it was isolated and excluded from research. Lastly, it is important to mention that the sample units may not be a representative amount for a total market analysis.

5.2.Managerial Implications

Based on the findings, some theoretical implications can be suggested towards manufactures, retailers and governmental agencies that operate in the Cypriot Fast Fashion market. It was also found that consumers feel overconfident about their knowledge towards sustainability resulting in a high difference between claim and actual knowledge. This can be used as a basis to push authorities to provide awareness in regards to sustainability in fast fashion products. In addition to this, it is also recommended that consumers should frequently expand their knowledge to prevent unintentional and unsustainable purchases.

A suggestion can also be made to retailers and manufactures. Even though the majority of the consumers was found to be highly interested in sustainable products they are only willing to pay a 20% of price premium for sustainable products which can be an essential insight for a price mix analysis. However, even if consumers cannot afford high price premium they are critically concerned about sustainability and the negative impact of industry.

References:

Unilever global company website. 2021. *Report shows a third of consumers prefer sustainable brands*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unilever.com/news/press-releases/2017/report-shows-a-third-of-consumers-prefer-sustainable-brands.html> [Accessed 11 June 2021].

Aspers, P. and Skov, L., 2006. Encounters in the Global Fashion Business. Current Sociology, 54(5), pp.802-813.

Barnes, L. and Lea-Greenwood, G., 2006. Fast fashioning the supply chain: shaping the research agenda. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 10(3), pp.259-271.

Bruce, M. and Daly, L., 2006. Buyer behaviour for fast fashion. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 10(3), pp.329-344.

Christopher, M., Lowson, R. and Peck, H., 2004. Creating agile supply chains in the fashion industry. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 32(8), pp.367-376.

Euratex.eu. 2021. FACTS & KEY FIGURES OF THE EUROPEAN TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY. [online] Available at: <https://euratex.eu/wp-content/uploads/EURATEX-Facts-Key-Figures-2020-LQ.pdf> [Accessed 4 June 2021].

Europarl.europa.eu. 2021. Environmental impact of the textile and clothing industry. [online] Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/633143/EPRS_BRI(2019)633143_EN.pdf> [Accessed 5 June 2021].

European Parliament. 2021. Legislative train schedule | European Parliament. [online] Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-new-boost-for-jobs-growth-and-investment/package-circular-economy-package> [Accessed 10 June 2021].

Fernie, J. and Sparks, L., 2014. Logistics and retail management. London: Kogan Page.

Koperniak, S., 2021. MIT Climate CoLab, in collaboration with Nike, launches new materials competition. [online] MIT News | Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Available at: <https://news.mit.edu/2015/nike-mit-climate-colab-apparel-materials-sustainability-contest-1029> [Accessed 3 June 2021].

McNeill, L. and Moore, R., 2015. Sustainable fashion consumption and the fast fashion conundrum: fashionable consumers and attitudes to sustainability in clothing choice. International Journal of Consumer Studies, 39(3), pp.212-222.

Media-publications.bcg.com. 2021. Luxury Market Trends—Digital & Experiential Luxury 2019. [online] Available at: <http://media-publications.bcg.com/france/True-Luxury%20Global%20Consumer%20Insight%202019%20-%20Plenary%20-%20vMedia.pdf> [Accessed 4 June 2021].

Refashion.fr. 2017. A CALL TO ACTION FOR A CIRCULAR FASHION SYSTEM. [online] Available at: <https://refashion.fr/eco-design/sites/default/files/fichiers/A%20call%20to%20action%20for%20a%20circular%20fashion%20system.pdf> [Accessed 10 June 2021].

The Business of Fashion. 2019. The State of Fashion 2019: An 'Urgent Awakening' for the Industry. [online] Available at: <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/luxury/the-state-of-fashion-2019> [Accessed 4 June 2021].

The Business of Fashion. 2021. How can the fashion industry become more sustainable?. [online] Available at: <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/can-fashion-industry-become-sustainable> [Accessed 4 June 2021].

Tokatli, N. and Kızılgün, Ö., 2009. From Manufacturing Garments for Ready-to-Wear to Designing Collections for Fast Fashion: Evidence from Turkey. Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space, 41(1), pp.146-162.

Zhang, B., Zhang, Y. and Zhou, P., 2021. Consumer Attitude towards Sustainability of Fast Fashion Products in the UK. Sustainability, 13(4), p.1646.

The Impact of Sequential Media Exposure on Advertising Effectiveness and the Role of Cognitive Load

Fotini Theodorakioglou [a], Leonidas Hatzithomas [b] and Christina Boutsouki [c]

[a] *Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Greece, Egnatia 156, Thessaloniki 54636 Greece; Email: fonitheod@uom.edu.gr*

[b] *Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Greece, Egnatia 156, Thessaloniki 54636 Greece; Email: hatzithomas@uom.edu.gr*

[c] *Department of Economics, School of Economics & Political Science, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, University Campus, Thessaloniki 54124 Greece; Email: chbouts@econ.auth.gr*

Abstract

In recent years, a growing number of people are consuming multiple forms of media simultaneously rather than sequentially. The present study examines the effects of sequential/simultaneous media exposures on consumers' attention, comprehension, and attitudes toward the ad. Cognitive load is also analysed as a mediator in the above relationships. An experiment with 291 participants showed that sequential rather than simultaneous media viewing leads to more favourable ad attitudes via lower cognitive load, higher attention, and higher subjective comprehension. Practical implications for marketers aiming to improve the effectiveness of their multimedia advertising campaigns are discussed.

Keywords: *sequential media exposure, simultaneous media exposure, cognitive load, attention, subjective comprehension*

1.Introduction

New digital media options allow the communication of information through diverse channels and media forms. In addition to traditional media, a brand can nowadays reach consumers through banners on websites, social media targeting ads or paid search ads. The increased availability and technological sophistication of new media devices (e.g. handled Internet devises) have increased the time people spend on media (Wiradhany and Koerts 2021). Advertisers attempt to capitalize on the increasing use of the Internet by integrating online advertising into their promotional campaigns (Ma and Du 2018; Voolvert 2011). As media patterns change dramatically, consumers find new ways to process communications. A reflection of this new media environment is people's tendency to consume more than one medium at the same time (Segijn and Eisend 2019). People can attend to social media advertising while watching television, or they can listen to the radio while using their computers to shop online, indicating a media multitasking or otherwise, simultaneous media exposure (Kazakova et al. 2015). Several papers discuss the prevalence of media multitasking. Pilotta et al. (2004) claim that single media exposures, which have been the situation for some time, are not the case anymore. Media multitasking is a global trend, and the simultaneous media usage has become a part of people's daily routines (Duff and Segijn 2019). The recent proliferation of personalized electronic devices and home-accessible Internet has rendered obsolete the sequential, single-screen engagement (Hassoun 2014). According to Schaap, Kleemans and Van Cauwenberge (2018), the number of people who use a second device (e.g. tablet, smartphone, computer, or laptop) while they watch television is rapidly increasing; thus, watching TV as a single screen activity is no longer the normal. Segijn et al. (2017c) found that over half of the Dutch population media multitasked on average three days a week. Roberts and Foehr (2008) suggested that when people consume two media concurrently, an hour of media use equals to two hours' exposure to media content. Media exposure has dramatically increased as more and more people use several media simultaneously, even if the time they spend on media remains the same. A new form of advertising strategy is synced advertising, according to which advertisements on mobile devices are synchronized with ads on other media in real time (Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel 2021). Advertisers attempt to capitalize on the prevalence of media multitasking by using combinations of different media in their advertising campaigns instead of using only one medium (Voorveld 2011).

As media multitasking prevails, the impact of sequential/simultaneous media exposures on advertising effectiveness becomes an interesting topic for media researchers and advertisers. With an increasing number of consumers exposed to multiple media, either sequentially or at the same time, effective multimedia synergies need to be created. Further research on the differential effects of simultaneous compared to sequential media exposures and the conditions under which they occur becomes topical (Assael 2011; Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel 2021).

The present study provides insights into the effects of different forms of media exposures (sequential/simultaneous) on advertising campaigns. It attempts to determine the underlying roles of attention, cognitive load, and subjective comprehension on these effects. Therefore, the following research question is formulated: What are the effects of sequential/simultaneous media exposures on advertising outcomes, and which are the underlying mechanisms?

2.Literature review

The way people use the media presents challenges and opportunities for advertisers. In this context, it is important for advertisers to better understand how media exposure (i.e. sequentially or simultaneously) influences advertising effectiveness.

2.1.The influence of sequential media exposures on advertising effects

The sequence of multimedia exposures can be vital on consumers' evaluations of ads and brands. Factors such as product type, brand familiarity, novelty, and positivity could have complex interactions with media exposures. Voorveld, Neijens and Smit (2012) found a consistent interaction effect between TV commercial-website sequence and product involvement regarding attitudes toward the ads and message evaluation. Interestingly, the sequence publicity-then-advertising can be more effective at persuading potential customers to visit a tourist destination than advertising followed by publicity (Loda and Coleman 2005). Exploring the sequence of exposure of TV and tablet synced ads for the same brand, Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel (2021) found that participants who viewed the TV commercial before or concurrently with the tablet ad, paid more attention to the tablet ad. Another research (Edell and Keller 1989) showed that in the TV-radio sequence condition, people allocate less processing capacity to encode the radio stimulus and more to retrieve and reprocess the ad trace stored from prior exposure to the TV ad. Therefore, people retrieve the TV ad during the radio replay exposure. In the radio-TV sequence condition, better recall of the brand claims and video elements occur when the audio is generally, rather than specifically, related to the video. Interestingly, during sequential media exposures, the ad in the first medium primes interest in the ad in the second medium (Voorverd, Neijens and Smit 2011). Interactions between online media sequences and product types and how these influence consumers' message persuasion were also discussed (Dong and Li 2018). However, investigation on the effects of different media sequences within cross-media campaigns remains limited (Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel 2021; Voorveld, Neijens and Smit 2012).

Prior studies (Chatterjee 2012; Edell and Keller 1989) have also examined whether the order in which consumers are exposed to information influences their evaluations of cross-media campaigns. When different media are used, consumers are exposed to the campaign ads in various orders, with brand information progressively added or subtracted. Research findings revealed that sequential multimedia exposures lead to higher synergistic effects when the information for the brand increases rather than decreases (Chatterjee 2012; Edell and Keller 1989). People tend to process and evaluate the ads less at the later exposures as they retrieve ad memory traces formed at prior exposures (Edell and Keller 1989). In this way, memory traces activated and established by the first exposures to an ad (i.e. the primed stimulus) facilitate processing during later ad exposures if additional information is available. When incremental information is added at each exposure, higher levels of brand recall and brand attitude are achieved (Chatterjee 2012).

2.2.The influence of simultaneous media exposures on advertising effects

Multitasking may inhibit information processing and reduce comprehension and counterarguing. Less attention and comprehension can either enhance persuasion by suppressing counterarguments or reduce persuasion by decreasing comprehension (McGuire 1972 as quoted in Jeong and Hwang 2016 p.601). Consistent with prior findings, Jeong and Hwang (2012) suggest that multitasking reduces comprehension and counterarguing. Prior research suggests that multitasking tends to reduce cognitive outcomes (such as attention, comprehension, and recall), and positively affects persuasion and attitudes by suppressing counterarguing. Media multitasking has more negative effects on cognitive outcomes when people have less control over the media because they cannot switch back and forth between them and suffer from cognitive overload (Jeong and Hwang 2016).

Past literature focused on how simultaneous media exposures affect attention to media content. The findings of Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel (2021) revealed that people who watch synced ads on TV and tablet, pay more attention to them when they are displayed simultaneously than sequentially as there is more chance for people to watch one ad when they switch their attention between media. In the simultaneous condition, this correlation is influenced by privacy concerns; people with higher privacy concerns view less time the tablet ad compared to consumers with lower privacy concerns. According to Collins (2008), the use of the Internet while watching television tends to decrease the attention to the medium content. The lack of focused attention reduces the comprehension of television messages by the viewers, suppressing, in this way, the counterarguing of the media content, and increasing the media effects. The simultaneous media use leads to fragmented exposures to media content due to cognitive processing constrains. Consequently, viewers pay only a portion of their attention to each media content, hampering the quality of exposure to it (Brasel and Gips 2011; Segijn et al. 2017b). Kazakova et al. (2016) revealed that viewers who shift their attention to a second screen (e.g. a computer) pay less attention to the television commercials displayed on the primary screen (e.g. television), making them less intrusive compared to viewers exposed to a single medium. In this way, the simultaneous exposure to two media affects attitudinal responses to television commercials positively. On the other hand, media multitasking behaviour results in lower memory of the brands advertised in television commercials. Single screeners have better brand memory and more positive brand attitudes due to more attention and subsequent program involvement compared to multiscreeners, in either related or unrelated dual-task conditions (Segijn, Voorveld and Smit 2017a). In the same field of study, Voorveld (2011) proved that campaign ads are more positively evaluated when people are exposed to them simultaneously in different media rather than when using only one medium, because people pay less attention to them and evaluate them superficially. How simultaneous use of a TV and a tablet affects brand attitude has been a topic of interest for Segijn, Voorveld and Smit (2016). According to the authors, multi-screeners have more difficulty in recognizing the advertised brand compared to single-screeners, and due to this difficulty, brand attitude decreases. When multiscreening, attention is hindered, and structural interference occurs because of the concurrent visual modalities of both screens. The same time, multiscreening reduces counterarguments and this decrease results in more positive brand attitude. Therefore, recognition and counterarguments are mediating the relationship between multiscreening and brand attitude with reverse effects on brand attitude. Interestingly, a recent meta-analysis into multiscreening effects suggests that there is a detrimental impact of multiscreening on cognitive advertising outcomes (attention, brand recognition, brand recall) and there is no direct significant impact of multiscreening on affective advertising outcomes (brand attitude, purchase intention) compared to single screening (Segijn and Eisend 2019). However, people control their attention levels through the choice of multitasking environments that correspond to their motivation (Duff and Segijn, 2019).

Cognitive load is an important factor in understanding how media multitasking affects memory of the media content. According to past research, participants who watch television news and simultaneously answer questions have higher cognitive load compared to participants who watch television news without pursuing the second task. Higher cognitive load, in turn, hampers recall and comprehension of the news content (Van Cauwenberge, Schaap and Van Roy 2014). A subsequent study (Schaap, Kleemans and Van Cauwenberge, 2018) suggests that second screening while watching a news program increases cognitive load in viewers and leads to lower news recognition and cued recall. Oviedo et al. (2015) examined the effects of multitasking with the social media for the enjoyment and encoding of TV episodes. Participants enjoyed the TV episodes more and remembered them better when they were watching only TV, compared to the condition of watching TV and interacting with Facebook simultaneously. The high demand of attentional resources which occur during multiscreening tend to increase stress and frustration so that viewers cannot enjoy the TV content. People avoid combining higher time pressure tasks with other tasks (Wang et al. 2015). In a media multitasking situation, when concurrent tasks share different sensory modalities (i.e. visual, auditory, motor), resources are better allocated across modalities and improve multitasking performance, compared to when concurrent tasks share the same modality. In general, people tend to avoid media multitasking situations that involve high demands, so they can conserve mental resources. Therefore, media multitaskers prefer to perform simultaneous tasks with lower levels of shared modalities, lower response requirements and higher relevance, as well as tasks they can better control (Wang et al. 2015).

2.3.Theoretical explanations

According to Kahneman's Dual Process theory (2011), task difficulty determines the amount of cognitive resources necessary to perform a task; the higher the task difficulty, the more the need for cognitive resources to accomplish the relevant task. Easy tasks can be performed simultaneously with little interference as opposed to difficult and complex tasks where more effort is needed.

Multitasking is a complex and difficult cognitive situation that creates high demand on attentional capacity (Chinchanachokchai, Duff and Sar 2015). However, people have limited amount of attentional capacity (Lang 2000, Kahneman 2011) that is insufficient to fully compensate for the effects of increased task complexity. When people are exposed to different media content simultaneously, task difficulty increases because cognitive load is higher compared to a situation in which people are exposed only to one medium content (Chinchanachokchai, Duff and Sar 2015; Kazakova et al. 2015; Van Cauwenberge, Schaap and Van Roy 2014). Therefore, media multitasking environment prompts audiences to divide their attention between tasks. Indeed, past research has found that media multitasking is mainly characterized by fragmented exposures to media content due to attentional capacity constraints (Kazakova et al. 2016). Likewise, Brasel and Gips (2011) and Segijn et al. (2017b) proved that when people view two media screens simultaneously, they switch their attention between them at a high rate while their gazes are short. In this way, the simultaneous exposure to different media decreases attention of the media content compared to a situation in which people are exposed sequentially to different media content. However, when audiences pay only a portion of their attention to each task, the quality of exposure to the media content can be lower (Kahneman 1973).

Cognitive load effects are explained by the dual-process theory (Kahneman, 2011) in psychology and other fields, which attempts to link a range of attributes to different ways of thinking (Evans and Stanovich 2013). Kahneman (2011) has distinguished two ways of thinking: System 1 thinking that operates with little effort, quickly and inhibits the detailed, systematic information processing. System 2 thinking that requires attention and allocates it to complex situations and effortful mental activities; System 2 thinking is disrupted when there is high cognitive load. When demands for difficult cognitive tasks exceed people's capacities, information processing occurs automatically (System 1) without the full benefit of conscious monitoring (System 2) (Feldon 2007).

As media multitasking is a complex cognitive situation that occurs under limited time constraints and requires cognitive effort, since people divide their attention between two difficult tasks performed simultaneously, and given that people tend to avoid mental overload (i.e. the law of least effort), it is assumed that media multitasking enhances the automatic process of information (System 1). People process media content fast and intuitively instead of slowly, systematically, and deliberately. Hence, the simultaneous exposure to media can negatively impact the attention and comprehension of media content since it increases cognitive processing demands for media viewers and activates the automatic way of thinking. As people do not observe nor carefully process the content of the ads and the true merits of the advertised brand, negative thoughts about the ad can emerge. Instead, when people are successively exposed to media content, they can observe and better comprehend the ad and the benefits of the advertised brand, by involving both System 1 and 2 thinking. This may significantly improve ad attitudes.

2.4.Research Hypotheses

Prior studies have examined significant aspects of media multitasking including people's viewing behaviour and its effects on visual attention (e.g. Duff and Segijn 2019; Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel 2021), as well as the effects of media multitasking on advertising outcomes and underlying mechanisms (e.g. Jeong and Hwang 2015; Van Cauwenberge, Schaap and Van Roy 2014). Most studies underlined the declining amount of visual attention towards media content when the use of different media increases and the negative effects of media multitasking on memory and comprehension (e.g. Segijn and Eisend 2019; Van Cauwenberge, Schaap and Van Roy 2014). Yet, despite the negative effect on information processing, people continue to simultaneously consume different media, and, nowadays, media multitasking activities are a daily routine. Given people's limited cognitive capacity to allocate among different tasks (Lang 2000), it is assumed that complex and demanding tasks (i.e. simultaneous media viewing), cannot be processed thoroughly. Sequential media viewing on the other hand, can improve ability to attend and carefully process the media content, as these operations are less demanding and effortful compared to simultaneous media viewing. People are thus more likely to slowly process the advertisements with reduced effort and better understand the benefits of the advertised brands resulting in positive feelings about the ads. Based on the above, and keeping in mind the limited understanding of sequential vs simultaneous media exposure effects (Assael 2011, Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel 2021), the present study advances the following research hypotheses:

H1: Sequential media exposure leads to less cognitive load compared to simultaneous media exposure.

H2: Cognitive load has a negative effect on attention.

H3: Cognitive load has a negative effect on subjective comprehension.

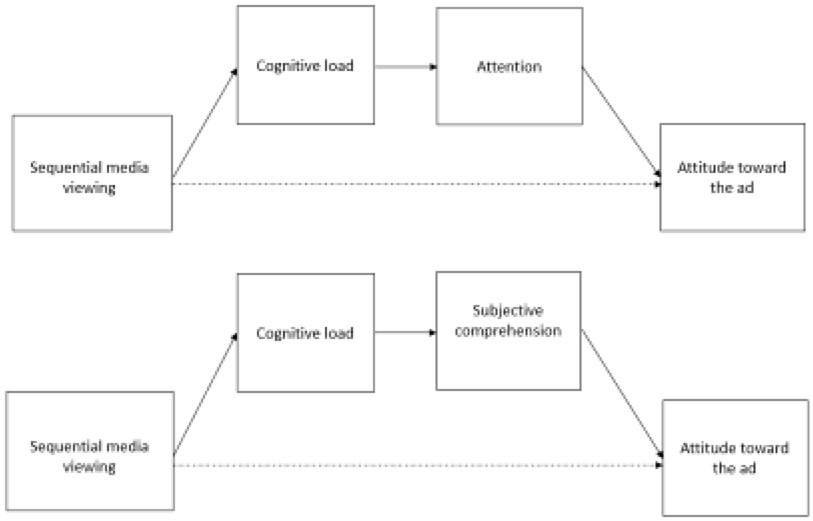
H4: Attention has a positive effect on attitude toward the ad.

H5: Subjective comprehension has a positive effect on attitude toward the ad.

H6: Cognitive load followed by attention mediate the relationship between sequential media exposure and attitude toward the ad.

H7: Cognitive load followed by subjective comprehension mediate the relationship between sequential media exposure and attitude toward the ad.

Figure1. Conceptual models.



3.Methodology

3.1.Research procedure

To test the proposed hypotheses, a between-subjects experiment was carried out in Greece. Media exposure was simulated by asking respondents to watch a video (i.e. television content) and browse a website either sequentially or simultaneously on a computer screen. In the sequential condition participants watched the video and then browsed the website, whereas in the simultaneous condition participants executed both tasks concurrently using a split screen. Combining two tasks at a split screen is a media multitasking type often met in real life (Jeong and Hwang 2016; Segijn, Voorveld and Smit 2017a).

The specific combination of media (video and website) was selected for this experiment as people often consume television and online content simultaneously. Moreover, watching television while performing online computer tasks may be a complex scenario that requires higher cognitive demands. Both television and computer media require the processing of stimuli in two different perceptual modalities (visual and auditory) (Kazakova et al. 2015) yielding to cognitive load.

3.2.Stimulus material

To address the experimental needs a stimulus material and an online questionnaire were developed. The stimulus material consisted of a video (TV content) that contained the target TV commercial and a website that presented the target banner ad. The selection of the target brand was based on the following criteria: (1) unfamiliar in Greece, (2) a relevant product for university students, (3) gender neutral, (4) presentable both visually and verbally in advertisements. A thorough review of various product categories resulted in the selection of an energy drink product. An unfamiliar in the Greek market energy drink was selected as the target brand.

The video contained a travel documentary film and a commercial break. The commercial break contained the target TV ad and four filler advertisements. The specific travel documentary film was deliberately selected among others to prevent bias resulting from pre-existing attitudes and knowledge, as it hasn't been shown on Greek television. To prevent primacy and recency effects (Segijn, Voorveld and Smit 2016), the target TV ad was placed in the third position. To prevent bias resulting from familiarity (Segijn, Voorveld and Smit 2016), all TV advertisements were unknown commercials broadcasted in Cyprus. Filler TV ads were in English and promoted low-involvement products. The seven-minutes video consisted of the first half of the travel film, then the commercial break, and finally the rest of the travel film.

The website contained images and text about physical activities and wellness and presented the target banner ad and a distractor banner ad. The target banner ad combined text with image, mentioned the brand in words and visually presented it. The distractor banner ad promoted casual clothing, i.e. a product that interests' young males and females, combined text with image and had the same size with the target banner ad.

3.3.Sample

Two hundred ninety-one university students in Greece participated in the experimental research (167 females (57%) and 124 males (43%)). The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 54 years (95% aged 18-24, 3% aged 25-34 and 2% aged above 35 years). All students attended a business administration program at the University of Macedonia or the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Participants were randomly assigned to the two treatment groups. One hundred thirty-seven students firstly watched the video and then browsed the website on their computer screens (sequential media exposure condition); one hundred fifty-four students watched the video and browsed the website at the same time on a split screen (simultaneous media exposure condition). After media exposure, students filled out an online self-reported questionnaire about the targeted TV commercial and web banner they had just seen on their computer screens. The questionnaire examined the underlying mechanisms of attention, subjective comprehension, cognitive load, and the evaluative outcomes (i.e. attitude towards the ad). All participants were awarded an extra credit point in their marketing class.

3.4.Measures

At the beginning of the online questionnaire, participants read a human subject's consent statement for identity confidentiality and anonymity. By completing the questionnaire participants were consenting in the study and declared they had understood the purpose of the research. Then, participants were asked to respond to two items measuring *attention* (adapted from Chang and Thorson 2004). 'The ads for the energy drink 28 Black caught my interest' and 'I paid close attention to the ads for the energy drink 28 Black' on a 7-point Likert Scale (1-strongly disagree, 7-strongly agree). The more attention was paid to the ads, the greater the score number. *Subjective ad comprehension* was measured by two items adapted from Mohanty and Ratneshwar (2015) on a 7-point Likert Scale, ranging from (1=) not at all to (7=) very much. 'To what extent did you understand the ads for the energy drink 28 Black?' and 'How certain are you that you understood the ads for the energy drink 28 Black?'. Mental effort and perceived difficulty are cognitive load measures. *Cognitive load* was assessed by four items slightly modified from Eveland and Dunwoody (2001). 'I had difficulty understanding how the information was structured into the ads for the drink 28 Back', 'I felt lost when watching the ads for the drink 28 Black', 'The main points of the ads for the drink 28 Black were clear and coherent (reversed item)', 'It was clear how all information fit into the ads for the drink '28 Black' as a whole (reversed item)'. Items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale (1-strongly disagree, 7-strongly agree). *Attitude towards the ads* was adapted from Chang and Thorson (2004) and was measured by three items (on a seven-point semantic differential scale): interesting/not interesting, good/bad, appealing/not appealing as a response to the question 'How would you rate the ad for the energy drink 28 Black?'.

4.Results

To test the research hypotheses of the study, two mediation analyses (model 6 with 5000 Bootstrap samples, Hayes 2013) were conducted with media exposure as the independent variable, cognitive load, attention, and subjective comprehension as the mediators, and attitude toward the ad as the dependent variable. Media exposure was dummy coded in two levels (sequential media exposure versus simultaneous media exposure).

The results indicate that sequential media exposure leads to less cognitive load compared to simultaneous media exposure (β=-.63, SE=.14, t=-4.55, $p<.001$). Thus, H1 is supported. Cognitive load has a significant negative effect on attention (β=-.64, SE=.08, t=-7.87, $p<.001$) (Table 1) and on subjective comprehension (β=-.86, SE=.07, t=-12.15, $p<.001$) (Table 2). Therefore, H2 and H3 are supported. The analysis also demonstrated that attention has a significant positive effect on attitudes towards the ad (β=.49, SE=.03, t=16.36, $p<.001$) (Table 1, H4 is supported). Moreover, as it has been hypothesized (H5), subjective comprehension positively and significantly affects the attitudes towards the ad (β=.26, SE=.05, t=5.7, $p<.001$) (Table 2).

Table 1. Mediation model (PROCESS, Model 6, bootstrap 95% confidence intervals): Indirect effects of sequential (vs. simultaneous) media exposure on Attitude toward the ad with cognitive load, and attention as mediating factors

	Cognitive Load		**Attention**		**Attitude toward the Ad**	
	β	*t(289)*	β	*t(288)*	β	*t(287)*
Sequential	-.63***	-4.55	.30	1.52	-.42***	-4.17
Cognitive Load			.64***	-7.87	.14*	-3.00
Attention					.49***	16.36
Mediation					***Index***	***LLCI ULCI***
Sequential->Cognitive Load->Attitude toward the ad					.09	(+.02, +.17)
Sequential->Attention->Attitude toward the ad					.15	(-.04, +.35)
Sequential->Cognitive Load->Attention->Attitude toward the ad					.20	(+.11, +.30)

The analysis also indicated a significant serial mediation effect of sequential media exposure on attitudes toward the ad via cognitive load and attention (β=.2, SE=.05, BC 95%, CI [.108, .299]) (Table 1). A significant serial mediation effect of sequential media exposure on attitudes toward the ad via cognitive load and subjective comprehension (β=.14, SE=.04, BC 95%, CI [.063, .237]) is also recorded (Table 2). Hence, H6 and H7 are supported.

Table 2. Mediation model (PROCESS, Model 6, bootstrap 95% confidence intervals): Indirect effects of sequential (vs. simultaneous) media exposure on Attitude toward the ad with cognitive load, and subjective comprehension as mediating factors

	Cognitive Load		**Subjective Comprehension**		**Attitude toward the Ad**	
	β	*t(289)*	*β*	*t(288)*	*β*	*t(287)*
Sequential	-.63***	-4.55	-.01	-.05	-.27*	-2.05
Cognitive Load			.86***	-12.15	-.23***	-3.40
Subjective Comprehension					.26***	5.70
Mediation					***Index***	***LLCI ULCI***
Sequential->Cognitive Load->Attitude toward the ad					.14	(+.04, +.28)
Sequential->Subjective Comprehension->Attitude toward the ad					-.01	(-.09, +.09)
Sequential->Cognitive Load->Subjective Comprehension->Attitude toward the ad					.14	(+.06, +.24)

5.Discussion and Conclusions

The present study examines the differential effects of sequential as opposed to simultaneous media viewing on advertising attitudinal outcomes. Previous research into the association between media viewing and attention has shown that the simultaneous exposure to different media is negatively associated with self-reports of attention as people have limited attentional capacities and are not able to handle a large amount of information (e.g. Kazakova et al. 2016, Segijn and Eisend 2019). On the other hand, Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel (2021) suggested that synced advertising increases the chance for individuals to be exposed to the ads when they are displayed simultaneously on two media, whilst at the same time it increases attention to them. In this experiment, university students viewed on their computer screens television and Internet content either sequentially or simultaneously. Our findings suggest that participants who viewed the media content sequentially paid more attention on the campaign ads they encountered. Therefore, a significant positive correlation between sequential media viewing and attention to the ads was evident. Moreover, participants were able to thoroughly elaborate on the campaign ads and better observe the benefits of the advertised brand, yielding to the conclusion that sequential media viewing enhances the subjective comprehension of the campaign ads. Our research showed that viewing media sequentially is easier in cognitive terms than viewing them simultaneously, thus supporting Kahneman's (2011) Dual Process theory as well as past research findings (e.g. Van Cauwenberge, Schaap and Van Roy 2014). Cognitive load, as a measure of mental effort, mediates the relationships between media exposure and cognitive processing (attention, subjective comprehension); viewing media sequentially leads to less cognitive load, which in turn, results in increased attention and subjective comprehension.

Although past research into the association between media multitasking and attitudes toward advertisements has yielded mixed findings (e.g. Kazakova et al. 2016, Wang et al. 2015), the present study provides evidence that sequential exposure to different media positively affects attitudinal responses to the campaign's ads. It seems that people are able to process the content of campaign ads more systematically, analytically and carefully (i.e. System 2 way of thinking of Kahneman's dual-systems theory) when they attend them sequentially, and this yields to positive thoughts for the benefits of the brand and the ad. Based on the results of the current study, we can conclude that the processing of television commercials and digital advertising can have positive implications on attitudes towards the campaign ads when people are exposed to the media sequentially rather than simultaneously. On the other hand, media multitasking is a complex and demanding effort that hampers advertising performance through decreased attention and subjective comprehension for the ads.

This study extends research on the differential effects of sequential compared to simultaneous media exposure, filling the gap noted by Assael (2011) and Segijn, Voorveld and Vakeel (2021). It extends the research of Van Cauwenberge, Schaap and Van Roy (2014) and Jeong and Hwang (2012) on how the underlying cognitive processes of attention and comprehension impact advertising performance when people are exposed to different media exposure patterns and increases knowledge on the mediating role of cognitive load. This study proves that when the demands of media multitasking exceed humans' available resources, a loss in advertising performance is expected, in support of the limited resources theory (Kahneman, 2011; Lang, 2000).

6.Implications and future research directions

6.1.Managerial implications

This study provides managerial implications on the synergistic effects of media. Understanding the processing mechanism and the effects of different forms of media exposure is of major importance for marketing managers to set their multimedia communication strategies. The results showed that media advertising can lead to different outcomes, depending on the way people consume the media. In this context, the sequential presentation of multimedia ads might be the best option to form positive evaluations. Results showed that media multitasking reduces the amount of attention people spend on them. It is expected that attention to advertisements becomes scarcer in our days as more and more people consume multiple media concurrently compared to the past (Segijn and Eisend 2019). It is also worthwhile mentioning that normally advertisements are not beneficial of full attention and act as distractors when attending the media (Duff and Segijn 2019). Therefore, the challenge and opportunity for advertisers would be to find creative ways to gain the audience's attention when they design and develop their advertising campaigns. For example, according to Kazakova et al. (2016) consumers prefer watching TV ads that focus on the desirability rather than the feasibility of a product while multitasking. This study shows that processing two media simultaneously contributes to the cognitive load and yields less favourable advertising evaluations. It might benefit advertisers to simplify communication messages or integrate information among multimedia advertisements to reduce information overload (Kahneman 2011; Schaap, Kleemans and Van Cauwenberge 2018) and facilitate ad comprehension. Finally, information on how viewers process advertisements presented on their computer screen, could be beneficial for advertisers to capitalize on the increased use of the Internet and create successful digital campaigns.

6.2.Limitations and directions for future research

As every study, this study has some limitations. First, it used only a university students' sample, and this may yield homogenous results. It would be interesting to extent research into more diverse and ideally representative samples to cross-validate findings. Also, the study used only self-report measures to test the hypotheses. It would be interesting to examine participants' attentional and task difficulty differences with eye-tracking and compare eye-tracker with self-reported findings.

Consumers' needs and personality characteristics can either encourage or inhibit media multitasking behaviour. In this context, it would be interesting to assess self-motivation, habitual media multitasking behaviour and the ability for attention regulation (Wiradhany and Koerts 2021) as variables that may influence the correlation between cognitive load with attention and subjective comprehension during media multitasking. This investigation could help us achieve a better understanding of user differences in relation to different forms of media exposure and advertising performance. Moreover, researchers and practitioners could benefit from future studies that take into consideration the sequence of exposure to ads in a communication strategy; in our experiment, participants viewed the video (i.e. television content) and then the website during the sequential exposure. A direction for future studies is to ask participants to browse the website first, then watch the video and compare findings with the simultaneous and the video-website sequence conditions. Additionally, future research could test a different combination of media to validate results. For example, it would be interesting to see how the combination of social media (i.e. another form of digital advertising) with television shapes consumer responses during sequential/simultaneous media viewing, as social media are often consumed simultaneously with other media; Besides the way consumers are engaged with the media, advertisers also need to focus on the role of campaign ads when they plan and execute promotional campaigns (Voorveld and Valkenburg 2015). Thus, future research could investigate various features of multimedia campaign ads and assess their impact on the way consumers process them during sequential and simultaneous consumption and evoke favorable advertising evaluations.

References

Assael, H., 2011. "From silos to synergy: a fifty-year review of cross-media research shows synergy has yet to achieve its full potential." *Journal of Advertising Research* 51(1 50th Anniversary Supplement): 42-58.

Brasel, S.A., and J. Gips. 2011. "Media multitasking behaviour: Concurrent television and computer usage." *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking* 14(9): 527-534.

Chang, Y., and E. Thorson. 2004. "Television and web advertising synergies." *Journal of advertising* 33(2): 75-84.

Chatterjee, P. 2012. "The role of varying information quantity in ads on immediate and enduring cross-media synergies." *Journal of Marketing Communications* 18(30): 217–240.

Chinchanachokchai, S., Duff, B.R., and S. Sar. 2015. "The effect of multitasking on time perception, enjoyment, and ad evaluation." *Computers in Human Behaviour* 45: 185-191.

Collins, R.L. 2008. "Media multitasking: Issues posed in measuring the effects of television sexual content exposure." *Communication Methods and Measures* 2(1-2): 65-79.

Dong X., and H. Li. 2018. "Does online media sequence matter in product marketing?" *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications* 28*:* 44-53.

Duff, B. R., and C.M. Segijn. 2019. "Advertising in a media multitasking era: Considerations and future directions." *Journal of Advertising* 48(1): 27-37.

Edell, J.A., and K.L. Keller. 1989. "The information processing of coordinated media campaigns." *Journal of Marketing Research* Vol. XXVI: 149–163.

Evans, J.S.B., and K.E. Stanovich. "Dual-process theories of higher cognition: Advancing the debate." *Perspectives on psychological science* 8(3): 223-241.

Eveland Jr, W.P., and S. Dunwoody. 2001. "User control and structural isomorphism or disorientation and cognitive load? Learning from the Web versus print." *Communication research* 28(1): 48-78.

Feldon, D.F. 2007. "Cognitive load and classroom teaching: The double-edged sword of automaticity." *Educational psychologist,* 42(3), pp.123-137.

Hassoun, D. 2014. "Tracing attentions: Toward an analysis of simultaneous media use." *Television & New Media* 15(4): 271-288.

Hayes, A. F. 2013. "Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: a regression-based approach." *New York: Guilford Press.*

Jeong, S.H. and Y. Hwang. 2012. "Does multitasking increase or decrease persuasion? Effects of multitasking on comprehension and counterarguing." *Journal of Communication* 62(4): 571-587.

Jeong, S.H., and Y. Hwang. 2016. "Media multitasking effects on cognitive vs. attitudinal outcomes: A meta-analysis." *Human Communication Research* 42(4): 599-618.

Kahneman, D. 1973. "Attention and effort." (Vol. 1063, pp. 218-226). *Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.*

Kahneman, D. 2011. "Thinking, fast and slow." *Macmillan.*

Kazakova, S., Cauberghe, V., Hudders, L. and C. Labyt. 2016. "The impact of media multitasking on the cognitive and attitudinal responses to television commercials: The moderating role of type of advertising appeal." *Journal of Advertising* 45(4): 403-416.

Kazakova, S., Cauberghe, V., Pandelaere, M. and P. De Pelsmacker. 2015. "Can't see the forest for the trees? The effect of media multitasking on cognitive processing style." *Media psychology* 18(4): 425-450.

Lang, A. 2000. "The limited capacity model of mediated message processing." *Journal of communication* 50(1): 46-70.

Loda M.D. and B.C. Coleman. 2005. "Sequence Matters: A More Effective Way to Use Advertising and Publicity." *Journal of Advertising Research* 45(1): 362-372.

Ma, J. and B. Du. 2018. "Digital advertising and company value: Implications of reallocating advertising expenditures." *Journal of Advertising Research* 58(3): 326-337.

Marcus, N., Cooper, M. and J. Sweller. 1996. "Understanding instructions." *Journal of educational psychology* 88(1): 49 in Schmeck, A., Opfermann, M., Van Gog, T., Paas, F. and D. Leutner. 2015. "Measuring cognitive load with subjective rating scales during problem solving: differences between immediate and delayed ratings." *Instructional Science* 43(1): 93-114.

McGuire, W.J. 1972. “Attitude change: The information processing paradigm.” *Experimental social psychology*, pp.108-141, New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston in Jeong, S.H. and Y. Hwang. 2016. “Media multitasking effects on cognitive vs. attitudinal outcomes: A meta-analysis.” *Human Communication Research* 42(4): 599-618.

Mohanty, P. and S. Ratneshwar. 2015. “Did you get it? Factors influencing subjective comprehension of visual metaphors in advertising.” *Journal of Advertising* 44(3): 232-242.

Oviedo, V., Tornquist, M., Cameron, T. and D. Chiappe. 2015. “Effects of media multi-tasking with Facebook on the enjoyment and encoding of TV episodes.” *Computers in Human Behaviour* 51: 407-417.

Petty, R.E. and J.T. Cacioppo. 1986. “The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion.” *Communication and persuasion:* 1-24. *New York: Springer.*

Pilotta, J.J., Schultz, D.E., Drenik, G. and Rist, P., 2004. “Simultaneous media usage: A critical consumer orientation to media planning.” *Journal of Consumer Behaviour: An International Research Review* 3(3): 285-292.

Roberts, D.F. and U.G.Foehr. 2008. “Trends in media use.” *The future of children:* 11-37.

Schaap, G., Kleemans, M. and A. Van Cauwenberge. 2018. “Second screening for news: Effects of presentation on information processing and program liking.” *Computers in Human Behaviour* 84: 76-85.

Segijn, C.M. and M. Eisend. 2019. “A meta-analysis into multiscreening and advertising effectiveness: Direct effects, moderators, and underlying mechanisms.” *Journal of Advertising* 48(3): 313-332.

Segijn, C.M., Voorveld, H.A. and E.G. Smit. 2016. “The underlying mechanisms of multiscreening effects.” *Journal of Advertising* 45(4): 391-402.

Segijn, C.M., Voorveld, H.A. and E.G. Smit. 2017a. “How related multiscreening could positively affect advertising outcomes.” *Journal of Advertising* 46(4): 455-472.

Segijn, C.M., Voorveld, H.A. and K.A. Vakeel. 2021. “The Role of Ad Sequence and Privacy Concerns in Personalized Advertising: An Eye-Tracking Study into Synced Advertising Effects.” *Journal of Advertising* 50(3): 320-329.

Segijn, C.M., Voorveld, H.A., Vandeberg, L. and E.G. Smit. 2017b. “The battle of the screens: Unraveling attention allocation and memory effects when multiscreening.” *Human Communication Research* 43(2): 295-314.

Segijn, C.M., Voorveld, H.A., Vandeberg, L., Pennekamp, S.F. and E.G. Smit. 2017c. “Insight into everyday media use with multiple screens.” *International Journal of Advertising* 36(5): 779-797.

Van Cauwenberge, A., Schaap, G. and R. Van Roy. 2014. “TV no longer commands our full attention: Effects of second-screen viewing and task relevance on cognitive load and learning from news.” *Computers in Human Behaviour* 38: 100-109.

Voorveld H.A.M., Neijens P.C. and E.G. Smit. 2011. “Opening the black box: Understanding cross-media effects.” *Journal of Marketing Communications* 17(2): 69–85.

Voorveld H.A.M., Neijens P.C. and E.G. Smit. 2012. “The interacting role of media sequence and product involvement in cross-media campaigns.” *Journal of Marketing Communications* 18(3): 203-216.

Voorveld, H.A.M and S.M. Valkenburg. 2015. “The fit factor: The role of fit between ads in understanding cross-media synergy.” *Journal of Advertising* 44(3): 185-195.

Voorveld, H.A.M. 2011. “Media multitasking and the effectiveness of combining online and radio advertising.” *Computers in Human Behaviour* 27(6): 2200-2206.

Wang, Z., Irwin, M., Cooper, C. and J. Srivastava. 2015. “Multidimensions of media multitasking and adaptive media selection.” *Human Communication Research* 41(1): 102-127.

Wiradhany, W. and J. Koerts. 2021. “Everyday functioning-related cognitive correlates of media multitasking: A mini meta-analysis.” *Media Psychology* 24(2): 276-303.

Langkasuka Food Tourism: A Systematic Review for Food and Cultural Identity Framework Reconstruction[6]

Ronnaphop Nopsuwan [a], Jantima Kheokao [b], Piriya Phovijit [c], Supitcha Pornsuksawat [d]

[a] *Communication Arts in Marketing Communication, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. 126/1 Vibhavadi Rangsit Rd, Ratchadaphisek Sub-District, Din Daeng, Bangkok 10400, Thailand; Email: choke.imc@gmail.com*

[b] *Communication Arts in Marketing Communication, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. 126/1 Vibhavadi Rangsit Rd, Ratchadaphisek Sub-District, Din Daeng, Bangkok 10400, Thailand; Email:jantima@kheokao.com*

[c] *Communication Arts in Marketing Communication, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. 126/1 Vibhavadi Rangsit Rd, Ratchadaphisek Sub-District, Din Daeng, Bangkok 10400, Thailand; Email: sphovijit@gmail.com*

[d] *Communication Arts in Marketing Communication, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. 126/1 Vibhavadi Rangsit Rd, Ratchadaphisek Sub-District, Din Daeng, Bangkok 10400, Thailand; Email:supitchap1@yahoo.com*

Abstract

This research reports a preliminary and ongoing work in the quest for a food and cultural identity framework in the project on the communication of the Langkasuka food identity to promote cultural tourism in three provinces of southern Thailand. Thirty-five research reports were analyzed using thematic analysis and the machine computation program "DiVoMiner. The data analysis yielded the proposed theoretical model to identify food and cultural identity. This model is comprised of two dimensions: the formation/source and the characteristics of cultural food identity. The first dimension, the formation/source or origin of cultural food identity, included three sub-components: social norms, social bonding, and social representation. The second component, the characteristics of the cultural food identity, included 1) form of characteristics (tangible and intangible), 2) change format [a) a new style but the cultural root is detectable, b) authenticity with new presentation style, and c) reasons for changes such as change acceptance, migrations, member of community influence, and assimilation/integration].

Keywords: *food identity, cultural identity, food wisdom heritage, food tourism*

---

[6] This research article is the first phase of the dissertation entitled "Langkasuka food identity communication strategy to promote cultural tourism in three provinces of the southern border of Thailand" conducted in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Communication Arts in Marketing Communication degree at the School of Communication Arts, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand.

1.Introduction

Food has been the main factor in human life since ancient times. Food is something that can alleviate hunger caused by the needs of the body. Food is the medicine to cure disease and injury, and food can strengthen the body. Food is also considered representative of a culture. The origins of all races are different according to the habitat, region, climate, and history of each race. Food is symbolized to reflect the local culture, characteristics of race, religion, geography, habitat, or endemic agricultural crops. (Hall, 1990). All directly affect the identity of food with a unique taste and smell until it is part of the local food identity that cannot be separated, including meticulous improvement, selection of ingredients for each nation's cooking, methods of preparing the seasoning, or how to eat. It can also indicate traditions, beliefs, and cultural ideas passed down from generation to generation. Food can generate income for tourism, generate income for the community, generate revenue for the country, and communicate food identity to create a selling point to promote tourism.

The World Food Travel Association (WFTA) forecasts that by 2027, gastronomic or food tourism is expected to increase to US$1,796.5 billion compared to 2019, when the world's food tourism was US$1,116.7 billion (Jersey Island Holidays, 2021). The value of gastronomic tourism also includes agriculture tourism, eco-tourism, sustainable tourism, and wellness tourism (International Culinary Tourism Association, 2006) as these alternative travels have become another tourism product. Tourists understand the beauty of food from local wisdom cultural heritage passed on from generation to generation (Hall, Shaples, Mitchell, Macionis & Cambourne, 2003). Food tourism has become an increasingly popular alternative tourism. It is one of the choices for tourists seeking local food. Especially in tourism groups, tourists look for aesthetics and authenticity from the secret of cooking to the intention of the family to cook for family members in everyday life to become food on the travel route with nostalgia and well-being as in the past (Hall et al., 2003).

Due to the epidemic of COVID-19 that spread worldwide in December 2019, tourism in all countries, including Thailand, stopped for almost two years. The number of tourists visiting Thailand in 2020 decreased 22.7% compared to the same period of 2019, the highest negative 97% in the past ten years (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020). However, food tourism figures until the end of 2019 reported by the World Food Tourism Organization noted that more than 95% of tourists were gastronomic travellers, with 80% searching for gastronomic tourism prior to departure, and 70% choosing a food-based journey as a critical factor in touring. Food tourism with a sense of social responsibility has become a priority for 63% of millennials, and 77% of millennials are in search of food to enhance their gastronomic experience (Jersey Island Holidays, 2021).

Thailand's tourism has consistently generated high incomes throughout the past. It led to the formulation of a national strategy to develop the 20-year national plan between 2018 and 2015. Set in strategy 2 to be a strategy for building competitiveness to increase competitive skills, the plan is based on the basic concept "Continuing from the past," which looks back at the root history of culture, traditions, and way of life from existing local natural resources. It can be regarded as a focus on the tourism industry to create a competitive advantage and applied to the innovation and modern technology of the world today in accordance with the tourism situation (Office of the Secretariat of the National Strategy Board, 2018). Thailand relies on tourism revenues that have continuously generated value over the past ten years and increased steadily.

Thailand's tourism development and public relations plan under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports supports food tourism and cultural tourism through traditional media, social media channels, influencer referrals, or even story writers or travel reviewers, famous YouTubers from both domestic and international or organizing seasonal food and fruit festivals. All add value to the quality of food and the ability to use creative tourism (Creative Tourism) such as the year 2020 under the campaign "Discover Amazing Stories: PADTHAI," which is part of "Amazing Thailand Discover Amazing Stories" to bring food to foreign tourists. Well-known and popular with tourists are food such as pad thai, tom yum goong, green curry, papaya salad, massaman, and tom kha gai. These Thai dishes have been voted annually by agencies or institutions worldwide to become a sought-after menu and entice tourists to learn to cook when traveling to Thailand. The cooking experience allows tourists to enjoy and truly understand the identity of Thailand (Department of Tourism, 2020).

In the southernmost part of Thailand is situated an ancient kingdom called Langkasuka. This kingdom dates back more than 1,500 years. It has flourished in religion, culture, and trade. This ancient kingdom spans around Pattani Province, Yala Province, and Narathiwat Province, which are a group of southern border provinces in Thailand. The province of Narathiwat as a border economic development area has been upgraded with various leadership roles in the south border economy. Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces also have advantages in tourism diversity, such as natural attractions, arts, and multicultural society lifestyles. Local wisdom that blends from various nationalities fused into local identity has become dominant in the three southern border provinces that are the foundation of culture and local wisdom. It makes Thai and foreign tourists, especially Malaysian, Singaporean, and Indonesian tourists come to travel a lot. Tourism in the three southernmost provinces has steadily increased in the number of visitors every year from 2010 until 2016 (Office of the Permanent Secretary. Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018). However, since the COVID-19 pandemic in December 2019, international tourism has stopped due to national and world travel bans. From September 2021, when the travel ban was relaxed to allow foreign tourists to come to Thailand, the tourism industry gradually regained its momentum.

A search for tourism-related literature using the keywords "ลังกาสุกะ (in Thai)" and "LANGKASUKA" from the Google Scholar database on May 12, 2021 found 98 topics in research articles, books, and textbooks about the history of Langkasuka. These topics were divided into five groups: Group 1) three research studies related to tourism; Group 2) 46 research reports on the history and background of Langkasuka, but the scope of the study was beyond the area of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces; Group 3) 18 research reports focusing on 18 subjects of art and culture, ancient sites, and local traditions; Group 4) 16 research studies on politics and government of Pattani province; and Group 5) 15 research reports on social sciences, life.

Information on the current global food tourism situation and communication and tourism promotion in the three southern border provinces was scarce. Literature review on food tourism in Langkasuka indicated a knowledge gap on Langkasuka food identity, including food tourism research studies on Pattani Province, Yala Province, and Narathiwat Province. The small number of the research studies cause a theoretical gap in the communication concept of Langkasuka food identity to promote tourism in the three southern border provinces. As a result, there is a lack of knowledge of methodology (methodology gap) to study the guidelines and plan to bring the identity of Langkasuka food to promote tourism and food tourism in the three southern border provinces. A study approach is seeking answers to the local food identity of Langkasuka to encourage food and cultural tourism from the diversity of races, religions, and cultural heritage of people who have lived together for hundreds of years in a multicultural society in the three southern border provinces. It is beneficial to Thailand's tourism industry to point out opportunities for research studies to support marketing communication in food tourism in the three southern border provinces and local Langkasuka food to be known to tourists and the general public even more. This leads to communication to build awareness about the identity of Langkasuka food and promotes sustainable income from tourism for local people. Communication of tourism products and services should be developed. Food tourism activities, including related businesses, make tourists satisfied, impressed, able to compete at regional and international levels leading to a better image for Thailand according to the strategic vision of the southern border provinces development 2020-2022. The National Strategy Committee (2017) believes in a strong multicultural society and economic growth that improves people's quality of life, green development, world tourist destinations, leading to sustainable peace to the Southern Frontier based on the 20-year national strategy for development according to its philosophy of "stability, prosperity, and sustainability."

For the communication strategy, a food and cultural identity framework to guide the data collection must be conceptualized; therefore, a systematic review is crucial. This study aimed to determine the theoretical component of food and cultural identity framework for analysing Langkasuka food and culture.

2.Literature review

In the quest for terms to understand the relationship of food, culture, and identity, it was found that these concepts are components interrelated in the field of food anthropology and food sociology (Aktaş-Polat & Polat, 2020). Based on these concepts and terms, the keywords were gleaned and mapped to guide the content analysis of the research reports and related documents.

2.1.Food anthropology: Food identity

From the food anthropology perspective, the structural and symbolic analysis of food increases an understanding of the meaning of taste in individual cultures and societies' diet, food habits, and kitchen practice. They are influenced by cultural differences, modernization and change, communication, religion, social analysis, and identity (Aktaş-Polat & Polat, 2020). Food has become something that is used to reflect local culture. Ethnicity, religion, geography, habitat, or endemic crops all directly affect food identity, which is characterized by its taste, smell, and food characteristics that cannot be distinguished from each other (Dietler, 2007; Saltzman, 2015).

a*. *Cultural differences. Different socio-cultural groups have their way of eating, preparing, and consuming food, thus, making traditions differ in various societies and cultures. Cooking has changed how time is used and has changed social lives, too.

b. Modernization and change. The definition of living only to eat and eating only to live used to describe primitive societies has gradually changed as the industrial process and the means of communication transformed. Traditions related to food also changed over time, corresponding to social change.

c. Communication. Food is the subject and symbol of social relations, and life has social meanings. Food is a tool for people to communicate with each other (Douglas & Gross, 1981; Manderson, 1986). Sensory events such as hearing, sight, taste, and smell also lead to the transmission of cultural elements (Classen, 1997). As a system, food communication established family and friendships by sharing meals, tastes, and values of members in a society.

d*. *Religion. Food is seen as a symbol of faith and has a vital role in traditions and religious identity. The symbolic importance of food eaten for religious purposes is more important than its nutritional value (Fieldhouse, 1995). The meal mediates communication with God or the supreme beings, and spiritual commitment to food rules accompanies the sense of belonging.

e*. *Social analysis. From the social analysis perspective, food facilitates the social order. Lévi-Strauss (2004ok) uses "culinary triangle" to express trilogy analogies of raw, cooked and rotten food for social analysis. In three different ways, food manifests itself as a means of helping the social order (Zagorin, 1977).

f. Identity. Linkages between food and individual or cultural memory have become a cultural experience and an effective tool leading to building social and ethnic groups (Moldanova, 2016), preservation of historical identities, and the discovery of memories (Holtzman, 2006), which is a substance and symbol of ethnic identity and social class. Eating

habits, cooking, consuming, preserving and storing methods, materials used in meals, etc. are the indicators showing that food plays a role in the construction of identity to identify someone in a personal sense and a living element protecting the national identity

2.2.Food sociology: Food culture

In food sociology, the socio-cultural, economic, and philosophical factors inevitably affect people's eating habits (i.e., what, when, why, where, and how they eat). Like a coin, food and social life form two sides of a coin. Food is inseparable from social life as it is at the centre of the social relations chain from production to consumption for two different dimensions, which are (1) production and consumption of food, (2) how people select, acquire, prepare, and share food. Food culture is a demonstration of cooking methods using natural ingredients. For instance, tourists learn to season to taste like a local. Food sociology starts from animal husbandry and also involves selection of raw materials and food preservation. Food preservation is considered a food culture that is presented with traditions related to food from the people of the community that adhere to beliefs, rules, and knowledge passed on from generation to generation (Yaisumlee, Thanyakit, Sakmunwong, & Peatrat, 2019)

a*. *Production and consumption of food. Food focuses on the following for the production and consumption perspectives: the connection between food and status, the modernization in food consumption, and nutrition and gender-based differences in food consumption. People use food to express their social status, prestige, friendship, communication, gifts, and sharing (Fieldhouse, 1995). From the modernization in food consumption, studies (Bauman, 2007; Warde, 1999) emphasize that the occurrence of convenience foods, fast-food consumption, eating out, and eating frozen food led to a reorganization of time and space relations in contemporary society and the disappearance of shared consumption in the context of modernization. The change interprets the transformation in social life with modernization in eating practices and the social transformation based on globalization and modernization through fast food. The occurrence of convenience foods, fast-food consumption, eating out and eating frozen food led to a reorganization of time and space relations in contemporary society and the disappearance of shared consumption in the context of modernization, health concerns, and changes in consumption. As far as nutrition and gender-based differences in food consumption are concerned, gender differences that characterize families and the power relations within the family impact women's food choices and family members' food needs (Charles & Kerr, 1986).

b. Selection, acquisition, preparation, and sharing of food. These factors associate food with culture and social functions. Firstly, in relation to culture, food is a facilitator in cultural exploration, the concrete state of culture's most fundamental social and ideological values (Charles & Kerr 1986; Poulain, 2002), and defines the boundaries of the culture of a society and indicates identity (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Whit, 1999). Secondly, food has a function in society. It has a unifying power (Simmel, 1997). Food and foodways are the indicators of social structure, social status, cultural and social change, social problems, and economic situation (Bennett, Smith, & Passin, 1942), social grouping, relations, symbolism, role performance, and socialization (Seymour, 1983). Symbolically, food is a matter of representation and belief (Drouard, 2015). Moreover, food also defines a six-dimensional social space area, including eatable products, food production, culinary aspect, food habits, temporality, and social differentiation (Poulain & Proença, 2003).

3.Research Method

a. Study identification and selection. An integrated review is provided to enhance a comprehensive search and a systematic approach to review content analysis. Research on food, identity, culture, and tourism in Thai and English was done through a search of databases such as Communication & Mass Media Complete, Emerald Insight, ERIC, Gale Virtual Reference Library, and Google Scholar using the Boolean " and " search engines across all databases. The processing focused on the word Langkasuka local food and Langkasuka cultural food. The database was scanned on a large scale and did not focus only on research from Thailand but also research papers or articles discussing Langkasuka food from other countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, etc. A more detailed electronic and systematic search provided 35 research reports eligible for this content analysis.

b. Data analysis. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. A qualitative analysis was conducted across the interventions reported to describe intervention types, contexts, and change mechanisms. This analysis was performed in smaller groups in the research team but further enriched through discussion of process and emerging findings among all group members. Results were tabulated and used to generate summary descriptions across crucial characteristics.

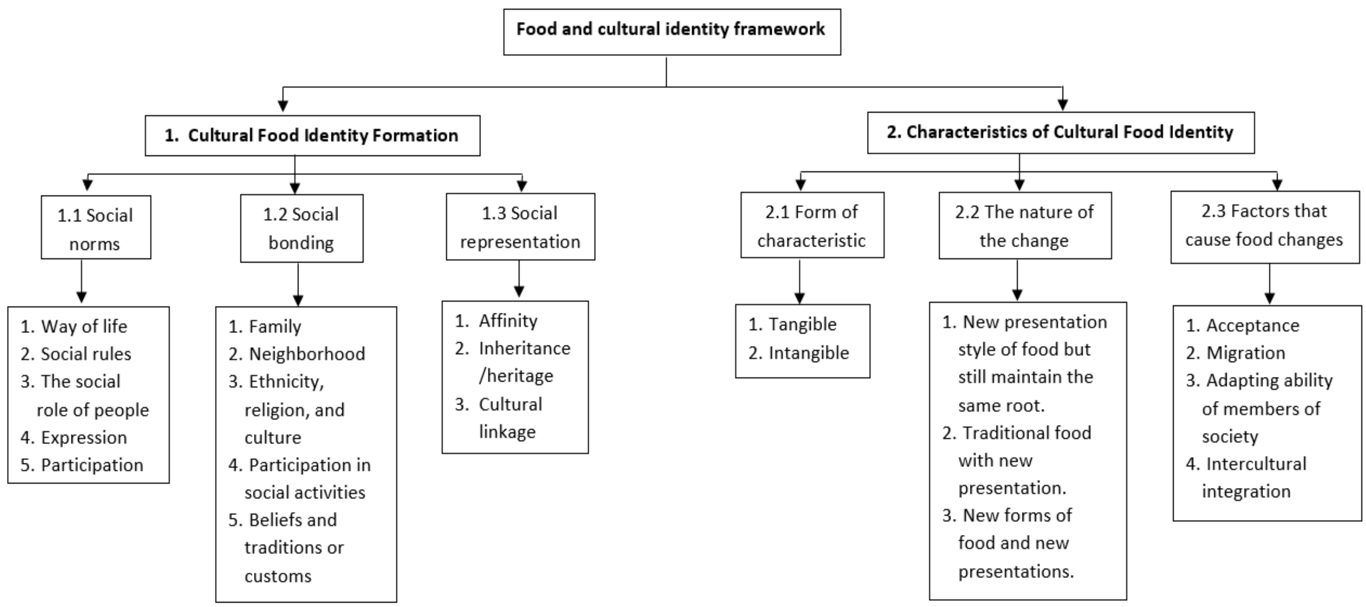
c. Reliability of quality assessment and data extraction. Initial screening was undertaken by one researcher and then checked by another. Disagreements about inclusion were discussed until an agreement was reached. Two reviewers verified the extracted data, made corrections as necessary, and agreed on the assessed study quality using the Strobe checklist (Vandenbrouckel et al., 2007). All four researchers contributed to the literature synthesis.

In line with the research objective, the platform of DiVoMiner was deployed to support the thematic analysis and facilitate data triangulation. It proved ideal at answering research questions concerning changes in the quantity of coverage over time and across the sample documents. The platform is equipped with a keyword retrieval function in English and other languages, including Thai, which quickly facilitated developing and identifying text units containing one keyword or a combination of phrases.

4.Research Findings

The thematic analysis of 35 papers yielded preliminary results. Two components of cultural identity and food identity were identified to form a central component of the theoretical model of food and cultural identity framework shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The food and cultural identity framework. (Nopsuwan, 2022)



4.1.Cultural Food Identity Formation.

Data analysis revealed three factors influencing the formation process of cultural food identity as follows:

1.1 *Social norms* came from five factors.

1.1.1 Way of life refers to how people live in society from birth to death. It is related to four factors: house or housing, medicines, food, and clothing. Individuals may differ, such as the condition of their habitat, terrain, language, culture, and local customs that can be inherited from one generation to the next, such as cooking food from herbs, refraining from eating certain types of meat according to beliefs, etc.

1.1.2 Social rules mean conditions, regulations, laws, customs, and customs that have been established as a guideline for the peaceful coexistence of people in society.

1.1.3 The social role of people refers to the duties of a person who is a member of society. Being the head of the community takes care of the order of the community. Community membership requires obeying and following the advice of community leaders, for example.

1.1.4 Expression when in society refers to the act that is appropriate according to what is determined according to social conditions, such as the illusion of food, proper use of equipment for eating food, etc.

1.1.5 Participation in society means being a member of a community or participating in social activities such as making merit and giving alms to Buddhists, fasting of Muslims, dedicating merit to ancestors during the Qing-ming festival or the Hari Raya Festival, etc.

1.2 *Social bonding* consists of

1.2.1 Family is like a place for cultivating knowledge and experiences for family members, such as making a living for the family, transferring cooking knowledge, recipes, cookbooks, etc.

1.2.2 Neighbourhood residing in the vicinity creates the bonds to be unified, such as eating the same food, cooking the same food having the same seasoning, etc.

1.2.3 Ethnicity, religion, and culture determine differences between groups for easy identification, such as the religious dress of Muslims who adhere to Islam, making offerings to Buddhist monks, etc.

1.2.4 Participation in social activities such as Muslims fasting; they do not eat during sunrise. The popularity of Chinese noodles shows longevity in various auspicious events, etc.

1.2.5 Beliefs and traditions or customs determine a person or society to have characteristics different from other communities, such as the belief of eating the three colours of sticky rice in auspicious ceremonies of Buddhists and Muslims. Muslims refrain from eating pork according to Islamic beliefs, ordination as a monk of a Thai man who has reached the age of 20 years of a Buddhist, etc.

1.3 *Social representation* consists of

1.3.1 Affinity is the expression of a group of people or societies that are the same or similar, such as being of the same religion or living in the same community, etc.

1.3.2 Inheritance/heritage means transferring experience from one generation to the next. It is also inheriting knowledge from ancestors to cook special menus or recipes, such as using specific herbs, spices, condiments, dressing for cooking seasonal food, eating food to nourish or cure diseases, etc.

1.3.3 Cultural linkage means showing the origin of ancestors or reminiscing of the past among the diaspora or migrant groups, history of the community from other peoples in the past. An example is the Muslim culture of using spices for cooking food from India or Indonesia as a result of the migration of Muslims from other cities to live in the three southern border provinces,

4.2.Characteristics of Cultural Food Identity.

This component refers to what appears to be seen or maintained through the transcending of cultural food identity and consists of three factors:

2.1 *Form of characteristic* refers to something reflected as tangible and intangible. Tangibly, it can be concrete, such as a cookbook, recipe, or culinary knowledge. Using experience and conveying a heritage of wisdom can be accumulated and collected in a selection of raw materials. Intangible things include the appearance of food made out of different communities' tastes or smell of spices, herbs used, etc.

2.2 The nature of the change means accepting local raw materials. An example is the adaptation to retain or maintain the flavour of food

2.2.1 New presentation style of food but still maintaining the same root. It is an adjustment, reduction, and change in the cooking process. Food appearance and taste can also reflect original authenticity and meaning.

2.2.2 Traditional food with new presentation methods to suit the era or popularity of raw materials.

2.2.3 New forms of food and new presentations. It is a change in food appearance, taste, cooking, and presenting a different eating style to create a new food recipe.

2.3 *Factors that cause food changes include the following:*

2.3.1 Acceptance of widespread and popular changes.

2.3.2 Migration often leads to a shortage of ingredients or raw materials; therefore, it is necessary to modify the ingredients, recipes, or cooking methods to suit the new environment.

2.3.3 Adapting ability of members of society refers to the arrival of new community members from any place or race through immigration and trade of slaves from different cultures often lead to further adaptation of cooking, ingredients, spices, herbs in the community.

2.3.4 Intercultural integration combines cooking, recipe, procedure, or ingredient to apply to one's original dishes, resulting in new food flavours, new menus, etc.

5.Conclusion and suggestion

People connect to their cultural or ethnic group through food patterns and retain their cultural identity. Identity is crucial in establishing one's identity and denotes differences or social affinity and cultural identity development. Cultural variation may play an essential role in human nutrition. Acculturative and environmental change influences the food habits and health of transitional groups; immigration and trade affect acculturation; both emic and etic members take on a new identity in food culture to have a distinct identity.

In sum, this proposed theoretical model can guide the study related to preserving food wisdom legacy and promoting food tourism. However, this model needs to be further validated and confirmed before using as a research instrument in the next phase of the Langkasuka food identity communication project.

Acknowledgement

This report is part of the dissertation project of Ronnaphop Nopsuwan entitled “Langkasuka food identity communication strategy to promote cultural tourism in three provinces of the southern border of Thailand” which received funding from the National Research Council of Thailand in the fiscal year of 2022.

References

Aktaş-Polat, S., & Polat, S. (2020). A theoretical analysis of food meaning in anthropology and sociology. *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, *68*(3), 278-293. https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=350359.

Bauman, Z. (2007). Vida de consume [Consumption life]. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Bell, D. & Valentine, G. (1997). *Consuming geographies: We are where we eat*. London and New York: Routledge and Taylor & Francis Group.

Bennett, J. W., Smith, H. L., & Passin, H. (1942). Food and culture in Southern Illinois - A preliminary report. *American Sociological Review, 7*(5), 645–660.

Charles, N., & Kerr, M. (1986). Eating properly, the family and state benefit. *Sociology*, *20*(3), 412-429.

Classen, C. (1997). Foundations for an anthropology of senses. *International Social Science Journal, 49*(153), 401-412.

Department of Tourism (2020). Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand. *Creative tourism destination management*. Bangkok: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand

Dietler, M. (2007). 11. Culinary encounters: Food, identity, and colonialism. *The Archaeology of Food and Identity, 1218*. 218-242. https://www.academia.edu/download/31271537/Dietler.ArchFood07.pdf.

Douglas, M., & Gross, J. (1981). Food and culture: Measuring the intricacy of rule systems. *Social Science Information, 20*(1), 1-35.

Drouard, A. (2015). Food, sociology of. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences* (2nd ed.), *9*, 311-315.

Fieldhouse, P. (1995). *Food and nutrition*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-3256-3

Hall, M., Shaples, L., Mitchell, R., Macionis, N., & Cambourne, B. (2003). *Food tourism around the world: Development, management and markets.* Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Holtzman, J. D. (2006). Food and memory. *The Annual Review of Anthropology, 35,* 361-378.

International Culinary Tourism Association. (2006). *What is food tourism?* Retrieved from http://www.worldfoodtravel.org/what-is-food-tourism

Jersey Island Holidays. (2020). *60+ food tourism statistics & facts 2020: What is food tourism?* (2021, March 22). https://www.jerseyislandholidays.com/food-tourism-statistics/

Levi-Strauss, C. (2004). Le triangle culinaire [The culinary triangle] (1965). *Food and History*, *2*(1), 7–19.

Manderson, L. (1986). Introduction: The anthropology of food in Oceania and Southeast Asia. In L. Manderson (Ed.), *Shared wealth and symbol: Food, culture, and society in Oceania and Southeast Asia* (pp. 1-28). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McIntosh, W. A. (1996). Introduction. *Sociologies of Food and Nutrition*, 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-1385-2_1Ministry of Culture (2011)

Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Department of Tourism (2020). *Thailand. Creative tourism destination management.* Bangkok: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand.

Moldanova, T. A. (2016). Пища в индивидуальной и культурной памяти [Food in individual and cultural memory]. *Шаги* [Steps], *2*(4), 162-172.

National Strategy Committee. (2017). *The 4-year Southern Border Provinces Development Plan (2017).* The Southern Border Provinces Group Development Plan, 2019-2021.

Nopsuwan, R. (2022) *Langkasuka food identity communication strategy to promote cultural tourism in three provinces of the southern border of Thailand,* [This research article is the first phase of the dissertation entitled in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Communication Arts], University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand

Office of the Secretariat of the National Strategy Board, (2018) NSCR – The future of Thailand, our future. https://nscr.nesdb.go.th/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/National-Strategy-Eng-Final-25-OCT-2019.pdf

Poulain, J. P. (2002). *Sociologies de l'alimentation: Les mangeurs et l'espace social alimentaire* [Sociology of food: Eaters and the social food space]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Poulain, J. P., & Proenca, R. P. da C. (2003). O espaço social alimentar: Um instrumento para o estudo dos modelos alimentares. Academia.edu - Share research. *Revista de Nutricao, Campinas, 16*(3), 245-256. https://www.academia.edu/6365541/O_espa%C3%A7o_social_alimentar

Saltzman, R. H. (2015). Identity and food. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Food Issues.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Seymour, D. (1983). The social functions of the meal. *International Journal Hospitality Management, 2*(1), 3-7.

Simmel, G. (1997). The sociology of the meal (M. Ritter & D. Frisby, Trans.). In G. Simmel, D. Frisby & M. Featherstone (Eds.), *Simmel on culture: Selected writings* (pp. 130–137). London and New Delhi: Thousand Oaks and Sage Publications.

Vandenbrouckel, J. P., et al. (2007). Strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology (STROBE): explanation and elaboration. *PLoS Medicine, 4*(10), 1628.

Warde, A. (1999). Convenience food: Space and timing. *British Food Journal, 101*(7), 518-527.

Whit, W. C. (1999). Soul food as cultural creation. *Journal for the Study of Food and Society, 3*(1), 37-47 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343131670_A_theoretical_analysis_of_food_meaning_in_anthropology_and_sociology

Wishart, L. & Henderson, J. C. (2004). *Food as a tourism resource*: A view from Singapore. Tourism Recreation Research, 29(3), 69-74.

Yaisumlee, T., Thanyakit, S., Sakmunwong, C., & Peatrat, N. (2019). "Hang leh" culture and belief. Valaya Alongkorn Review, 9(2), 172-186. https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/var/article/view/213511

Zagorin, R. K. (1977). *The sociology of food.* Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Is Airport Experience a Critical Antecedent for Destination Revisit? The Role of Environment in the Covid-19 Era

Pantelitsa Yerimou[a] *, George Panigyrakis [b], Christos Themistocleous [c]

[a] *Department of Public Communication, Cyprus University of Technology, 3040 Limassol, Cyprus; Email: pp.yerimou@edu.cut.ac.cy*

[b] *Department of Public Communication, Cyprus University of Technology, 3040 Limassol, Cyprus; Email: george.panigyrakis@cut.ac.cy*

[c] *Department of Public Communication, Cyprus University of Technology, 3040 Limassol, Cyprus; Email: c.themistocleous@cut.ac.cy*

Abstract

Despite the significance of airport atmospherics and visitors' experiences, relatively few studies address the effect of both the airport environment and experience on the intentions to revisit the destination. This study draws new insights by examining (1) the influence of airport atmospherics on airport experience and willingness to revisit a destination, and (2) the effect of the overall experience evaluations on the intentions to revisit the host country. Sense of place's moderating role on the relationship between atmospherics, experience and destination revisit is also examined. A mixed-method approach was employed; an exploratory qualitative focus group study with industry professionals, and a survey comprised of 604 international travellers. The proposed framework was tested through Structural Equation Modelling. In light of the study's findings, it was revealed that airport atmospherics serve as strong indicators of overall experience evaluations as well as of the willingness to revisit the destination. Additionally, evidence indicate that sense of place did not have a moderating effect in the aforementioned relationships, with respective managerial implications concerning the use of atmospheric stimuli in the airport context and recommendations for future research being provided.

Keywords*: airport atmospherics, experience, destination revisit, sense of place, Covid-19*

1.Introduction

A variety of factors lead to destinations' competitiveness (Tosun, Dedeoğlu, and Fyall 2015). Considering that tourism quality begins straight from the airport (Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo 2020), the focus of experience is an indicator to gain competitiveness, hence repeat travellers (Tuchen, Arora, and Blessing 2020). Airports are undoubtedly visitors' first and last point of contact with a destination (Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo 2020; Nghiêm-Phú and Suter 2018) considered as 'destinations' ambassadors' (Prentice and Kadan 2019, 40). With the outbreak of Covid-19, travellers' airport experiences have 'changed drastically' (Tuchen, Arora, and Blessing 2020, 1) since aviation has been strongly affected from the pandemic (Choi 2021; Piccinelli, Moro, and Rita 2021). Such experiences are strongly influenced by the airports' environment· a reason for emphasizing on the ‘exciting atmosphere’ for over-coming the anxiety in the post-Covid 19 traveling (Choi 2021, 9).

Atmospherics have attracted the attention of the research community for decades and since its significant influence on consumers’ behaviour, they came to the fore as an important marketing tool (Roggeveen, Grewal, and Schweiger 2020; Ali, Kim, and Ryu 2016; Grewal et al. 2014). In this essence, individuals’ evaluation of experiences has been discussed to be influential on their behavioural intentions (Qi and Li 2021). Revisit intention is a key research topic and an important component of behavioural intention (Allameh et al. 2015; Tosun, Dedeoğlu, and Fyall 2015). Lots of travel destinations rely on repeat visitors since are counted as resources for destinations’ revenues and are less costly (Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo 2020; Jang and Feng 2007). In the tourism marketing literature, the willingness to revisit a destination tends to gain a ‘greater attention’ (Kumar and Kaushik 2020, 336). Many studies relied on destination revisit as an outcome of satisfaction, however more recent studies examine the effect of new variables as satisfaction alone cannot predict future behaviours (Abubakar et al. 2017; Allameh et al. 2015).

Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo (2020) called to further examine the way that airports’ environment affect visitors’ perceptions and choices for a destination, which call echoes an earlier argument by Jang and Feng (2007) and Chen and Funk (2010) who claimed that research on understanding tourists’ revisit intentions and their antecedents remains limited. At the same time, airports are servicescapes in which research regarding atmospherics is considered minimal (Moon, Yoon, and Han 2017; Ali, Kim, and Ryu 2016; Geuens, Vantomme, and Brengman 2004). Rare attempts have been made to link the evaluation of airport services on revisit intentions (Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo 2020), thereby raising concerns over their influence in the field (Loi et al. 2017). While transportation is part of travellers’ experience, it remains an under-examined facet on consumers’ future behaviours (Loi et al. 2017). At the same time, there is a ‘globalisation utopia’ in airports (Urry et al. 2016, 13) where sense of place gives ‘a local structure of feeling’ (Gustafson 2001, 6). It is not difficult to understand the call for the integration of the above relationships. Hence, this paper aims to explore the synergy of airport atmospherics on the intention to revisit a destination while also examining the mediating effect of experience evaluations and moderating role of sense of place.

2. Literature Review

2.1.Atmospherics and Experience

Numerous studies captured the effects of airport atmospherics on the experience evaluations. It is evident from previous studies that the use of atmospherics significantly influences airport experience (Han et al. 2020; Nysveen, Oklevik, and Pedersen 2018; Bezerra and Gomes 2016). Based on Bogicevic et al. (2013) findings, shops, restaurants and security have an important influence on experience evaluations. Kim et al. (2016) research results indicated that the sensory aspect of experience· which parts were the physical elements – atmospherics, strongly affected passengers’ evaluations and overall satisfaction. In a more recent study by Figueiredo and Castro (2019), it was found that architectural layout and design, artworks, service staff and artworks were marked as the most important with a high impact on the passengers’ experience. Hence, the following hypotheses are thus tested:

H1: Facility ambience and aesthetics have a positive effect on airport experience.

H2: Functionality positively influence airport experience.

H3: Cleanliness has a positive influence on airport experience.

H4: Atmospherics holistically influence in a positive way experience evaluations.

2.2.Atmospherics, Experience and Destination Revisit

The issue of the atmospherics' influence on destination revisit has become an increasing concern. While there is sufficient empirical evidence in the literature, in the context of airports, Prentice and Kadan's (2019) findings revealed that future behavioural intentions (i.e. destination revisit) are largely affected from the ambience sub-construct of atmospherics. More recently, Prentice, Wang, and Manhas (2021) explored the synergy of the aforementioned relationship in both Indian and Australian airports. As found, the influence of atmospherics stimuli showed significant influences on the willingness of visitors to revisit a destination in both airports. Prior work also found the significant effect of the airport services' evaluation (e.g. signage, duty-free shops) on destination revisit. Precisely, Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo (2020) in recent research indicated that the overall evaluation of the Mauritius airport's services significantly influenced travellers' destination revisit intentions. Future behaviour has been found to be largely affected by the evaluations of the experience. Findings also revealed that the airport experience made a unique contribution to revisit a destination (Prentice, Wang, and Manhas 2021; Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo 2020; Leri and Theodoridis 2019). In a similar vein, results indicated that the airports' servicescape influenced the intention of passengers to revisit the host country (Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo 2020; Prentice and Kadan 2019). Therefore, it is plausible to hypothesized that:

H5: Atmospherics positively influence the intention to revisit the destination.

H6: The relationship between atmospherics and destination revisit is mediated by experience evaluations.

2.3. Sense of place as a moderator

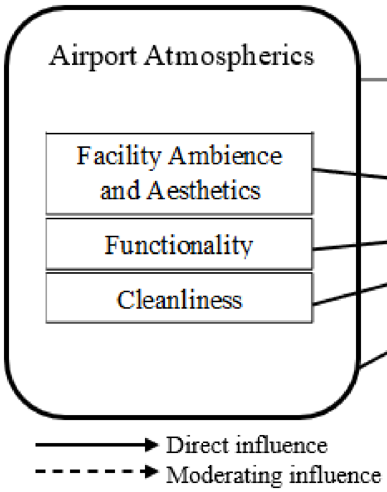
The research findings introduced so far, generally suggest that sense of place acts as a moderating variable (Rowley and Slack 1999; Ariffin and Yahaya 2013; Ali, Kim, and Ryu 2016). Research of Ali, Kim, and Ryu (2016) investigated the influencing role of a Malaysian Airport's physical environment, measuring at the same time the influence of the variable of national identity (i.e. sense of place). Linked with the research of Ariffin and Yahaya (2013), they found that portraying a country's culture and characteristics in the airports, is significantly influencing passengers' satisfaction and experience evaluations towards the airport. More recently, Nghiêm-Phú and Suter (2018) have discussed in their research the importance of cultural representation in the airports on passengers' behaviour toward the host country. As such, the following hypotheses are formed:

H7: Sense of place moderates the relationship between atmospherics and experience evaluations.

H8: Sense of place moderates the relationship between atmospherics and destination revisit.

Given the extant studies, the following proposed conceptual model is formed (Figure 1), which is an extension of the Stimulus – Organism – Response Paradigm (Donovan et al. 1994; Mehrabian and Russell 1974).

Figure 6 Conceptual Model



3. Method

3.1. Pre-Study

Initially, a semi-structured focus groups was conducted, as qualitative data are an investigation process to understand a particular situation (Creswell 2009). This study aimed on (1) providing in-depth understanding of how airport authorities perceive the role of airport environment on passengers' behavioural intentions and whether sense of place is an important attribute for enhancing their experience, and (2) building the questionnaire of the main study (Study 1) along with literature.

3.1.1 Data Collection, Design and Procedure

One focus group session was conducted with the marketing department of an international airport (*n* = 5) held in Cyprus in July 2021. Participants in the focus group were both in managerial and administrative positions, where four out of the five participants were women. The focus group session lasted approximately 1.5 h and was chaired by an experienced researcher to reduce the risk of bias. The focus group discussion was based on the theoretical framework with open-ended questions. The discussion started with general questions about airports today with the questions then going into more detail on passengers' experiences, their evaluations towards the host country and how important they considered the role of sense of place. Likewise, it was asked: *'Today, we also speak about the marketing of places and sense of place. The importance, that is, of having an identity in a space. Do you think that's important?'*

3.1.2 Analysis

Overall, the qualitative findings revealed that airport authorities aim to enhance passengers' experiences through various ways, however they do not look after their evaluations towards the airport and the country. Accordingly, as reported by one of the participants: *'Exactly what experience, impression and image the visitors hold, is not completely clear'.*

The data from the focus group were analysed based on a thematic approach of the research's main constructs· impressions, experience, sense of place, behaviour towards the host country. Through the analysis, participants expressed that they rely on the reviews and comments provided through the international platform of Airports Council International (ACI) regarding the Airport Service Quality (ASQ). Instead, they examined visitors' journey rather than their airport evaluations. In regard to sense of place, the focus group's chair started with a statement where it is said that airports nowadays tend to be anonymous spaces without respect to the country's national characteristics. On this statement, there was a strong positioning from two people in managerial positions supporting that: *'This concerns a minority of airports ... On the contrary, European airports are loaded with national features that do not make them lifeless. Now travel or rather airports are not 'pure' places but there is a traveling commodity'.*

Interestingly, participants discussed about the role of sense of place, as is one of their upcoming marketing communications strategies. As of the visitors' experiences, there was information saturation due to their clear statement at the beginning of the discussion which is something they do not examine with limited information.

3.1.3 Discussion

Study 1 shows that on the one hand airport authorities aim on enhancing visitors' experiences, and on the other hand they do not examine their passengers' airport evaluations straight from the airport but from other organisations. Sense of place has seemed to be a familiar field, as the airport management has been investing in strategies to enhance their national identity through the airport's environment. This indication is in line with the literature where national characteristics in the airport have a critical role on strengthening visitors' experiences and evaluations towards the destination country (Ali, Kim, and Ryu 2016; Ariffin and Yahaya 2013).

3.2.Study 1

3.2.1 Instrument

All constructs were measured through a structured survey based on validated scales in the literature. The airport's atmospherics measure was adapted from Ali et al., (2016), Moon et al. (2016) and Bitner (1992). As shown in Table 1, this construct is divided into three sub-constructs; facility ambience and aesthetics, functionality and cleanliness. The measures for the sense of place variable mirrored those Ariffin & Yahaya (2013) used in their research. Given the adoption of this scale in marketing research, these measurement items likely are relevant to the current research. The scale developed by Singh and Söderlund (2020) was used to measure the overall experience, while the scale of Prentice and Kadan (2019) was used to measure the destination revisit. All the scales were measured according to the seven-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

3.2.2 Sample and Data Collection

Due to security and safety restrictions in the airports' contexts, we used Prolific Academic, a commercial research panel provider to procure a field sample of individuals that travelled within the last month. It is important to note that Prolific Academic ensures 'adequate data quality' (Peer et al. 2017, 158). Approximately, 686 participants were approached out of which 82 were eliminated based on failing to answer the control check or had withdrawn. The criterion according to which they could proceed on filling the questionnaire was based on having travelled within the last month. Therefore, the final sample (N) consisted of 604 international travellers.

The average time to complete the survey was approximately 10 minutes, and since the respondents had completed the survey, they received a reward from Prolific.

The respondents were distributed approximately equally since 49.3% were male and 50.7% female. The majority of those was in the age group of 26-35 (41.6%), mostly Europeans (85.8%). More than half of respondents had low travel frequency (54.5%) with 0-2 trips in a year with the 46.2% indicated travelling for pleasure.

3.2.3 Evaluation of measurement model

Prior to hypotheses testing, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed (SPSS Statistics 25) to determine the scales validity. All variables were accepted except those of temperature, music, aroma and brightness under the construct of facility ambience and aesthetics due to the low factor loading. As a next step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted (SPSS Amos 26) to verify the construct validity of the dataset, with the items less than .50 been discarded (Fornell and Larcker 1981). As shown in Table 1 all the questions met the threshold of .50 except three items under the functionality construct; WiFi, power sockets and mobility services.

Firstly, the four-factor model was subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the maximum likelihood estimation method to ensure construct reliability and validity. Model fit adequacy was assessed by several fit indices as suggested (Civelek 2018; Hamilton and Tee 2015). Results of the preliminary CFA indicated that the measurement model fit the data quite well. The ratio of chi-square to the degrees of freedom values <3 are acceptable while <5 indicates a reasonable fit (Marsch and Hocevar 1985), thus the model's value was in line with the accepted criteria ($\chi2/df$= 3.51). In the same line, the goodness of fit index and comparative fit index had the appropriate fit key numbers >.90 and >.95 respectively (GFI= .926), CFI= .945). Furthermore, the root mean square error of approximation was less than .08 (RMSEA= .065), while the absolute goodness of fit index and normed-fit index were >.85 and >.90 respectively (AGFI= .894, NFI= .926). The standardized root mean square residual was less than .08 threshold (SRMR= .049) which met the established criteria for accepted values.

Table 1 Reliabilities and Validities of variables

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Facility Ambience and Aesthetics	1.The color schemes within the airport were attractive	.87	.89	.78
(Alpha = .882)	2.The architecture of the airport was appealing	.86		
	3.The interior decoration of the airport was appealing	.92		
	No items dropped			
Functionality	4.This airport provided comfortable and spacious seating in the waiting areas	.60	.64	.53
(Alpha = .683)	5.The signs and electronic displays provided information accurately and clearly	.71		
	6.The electronic facilities (e.g. television screens, electronic billboards were informative	.85		
	Items dropped to improve validity			
	The airport's internet/WiFi connection had a good quality	.46		
	The airport provided adequate power sockets for charging electronic devices	.48		
	The mobility services (e.g. elevators, electronic walkways) were properly working	.49		
Cleanliness	7.Restrooms and bathrooms in the airport were kept clean	.70	.67	.55
(Alpha = .799)	8.Retail, dining and entertainment areas were kept clean	.81		
	9.Walkways, exits and baggage claim areas were kept clean	.72		
	No items dropped			
Sense of Place	10.The interior as well as the exterior were designed using the host country's art and design	.72	.81	.63
(Alpha = .880)	11.The uniform of customer service's staff was designed based on the host country's art and design	.71		
	12.I could feel the host country while in the airport	.86		
	13.The airport reflected the national identity of the host country	.87		
	Items dropped to improve model fit			
	The host country's 'flavors' could be sensed everywhere in the airport	.77		
Experience Evaluations	My overall experience at the airport could be described as…			
(Alpha = .826)	14.Memorable	.73	.69	.57
	15.Personal	.72		
	16.Positively Charged	.81		

	No items dropped			
Destination Revisit	17.I intent to revisit the host country in the near future	.54	.74	.61
(Alpha = .732)	18.My experience at the airport made it more likely to revisit Cyprus again	.93		
	19.This airport destination will be my first choice over other airport destinations when to/from/within the host country	.82		
	No items dropped			

Note: Alpha = Cronbach's alpha, CR = Composite reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

In order to determine the discriminant validity for each dimension, average variance extracted (AVE) was firstly calculated (Table 1) with acceptable values being greater or .50. Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's α values met the threshold. The square root of AVE (Table 2) for each construct, should exceed the inter-correlation of the construct (Civelek 2018), thus the values are accepted.

Table 2 Correlations and Validity among constructs

Constructs	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1.Facility Ambience and Aesthetics	**(.884)**					
2.Functionality	.521***	**(.727)**				
3.Cleanliness	.450***	.686***	**(.745)**			
4.Sense of Place	.449***	.309***	.220***	**(.787)**		
5.Overall Experience	.623***	.584***	.507***	.674***	**(.754)**	
6.Destination Revisit	.489***	.488***	.462***	.517***	.720***	**(.781)**

***p<.001, Note: the values written in brackets indicate the square root of the AVE values.

Results of hypothesis testing

The model developed within the scope of the study was tested with SEM. SEM tends to be a 'powerful and versatile technique … to test substantive hypotheses' (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 2000, 201). Bootstrap technique was applied with 2000 resamples and 95 per cent confidence intervals. Bootstrapping is able to evaluate the parameters' accuracy (Civelek 2018). Four regression models were run to test the hypotheses of the present study. It is worth mentioning that, if the beta coefficient is $\leq$.10 it is said that there is a small effect, if $\leq$.30 a medium effect and if $\geq$.50 a large effect.

Firstly, the three sub-constructs of atmospherics were tested individually for their effect on experience, forming hypothesis 1, 2 and 3. Results (Table 3) of Model 1 revealed that facility ambience and aesthetics have a positive effect on experience ($\beta=.399,\ p<.001$). In the same line, both functionality ($\beta=.271,\ p<.001$) and cleanliness ($\beta=.135,\ p<.05$) demonstrated that they positively influence airport experience evaluations. As such, hypotheses *H1*, *H2* and *H3* are supported. To continue with the next hypotheses and Model 2, a second-order construct model was developed for the construct for atmospherics (Table 3), as it offered better information upon the correlated items (Ali, Kim, and Ryu 2016). Facility ambience and aesthetics, functionality and cleanliness were paired together to form holistic atmospherics, therefore *H4* posited that atmospherics positively influence the overall experience evaluations. The present results indicated that the hypothesis is supported ($\beta=.854$, $p<.001$) with atmospherics making unique contributions on experience evaluations. Furthermore, atmospherics as a whole showed that they positively influence destination revisit ($\beta=.827$, $p<.001$) with *H5* being supported. In addition, for Model 3, was proposed that experience mediates the relationship between atmospherics and destination revisit (*H6*). Results revealed that there is semi-mediator effect since the relationship is still significant and positive with a decrease in β coefficient ($\beta=.602$, $p<.001$).

3.2.5 Moderating effect of sense of place

Finally, it was hypothesized that sense of place acts as a moderator between atmospherics and both experience and destination revisit (Model 4). In order to test this effect, atmospherics was multiplied with sense of place to reveal the interaction between the two variables. The results of the moderating effects of sense of place indicated that neither the effect on experience ($\beta=.012$, $p>.05$) nor on destination revisit ($\beta=-.030$, $p>.05$) were found significant. Hence, it is plausible to admit that *H7* and *H8* are not confirmed.

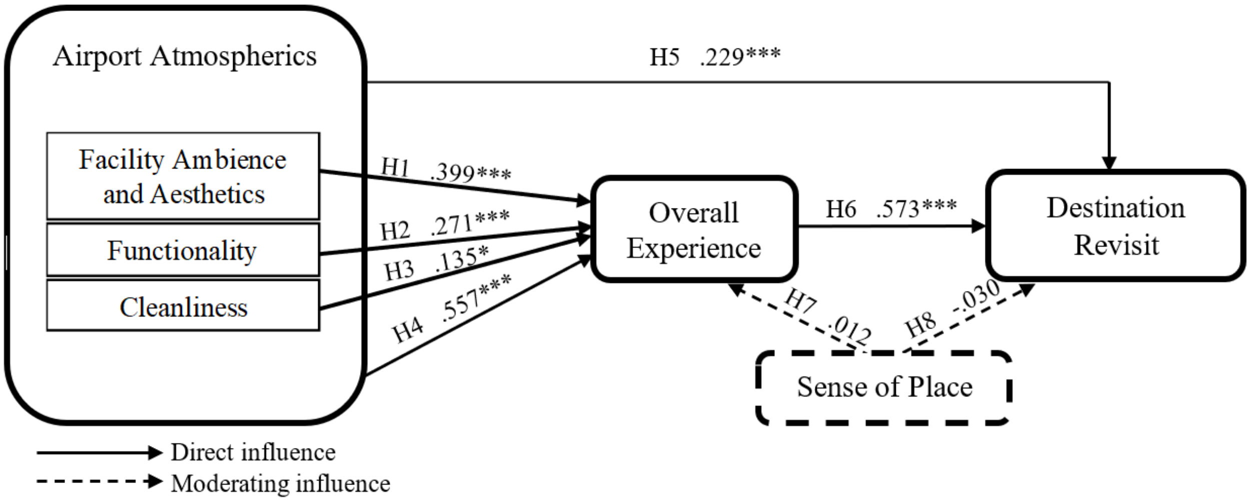
Table 3 Results of research hypotheses

Hypotheses	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
H1: Facility Ambience → Experience	.399***			
H2: Functionality → Experience	.271***			
H3: Cleanliness → Experience	.135*			
H4: Atmospherics → Experience		.854***	.765***	.557***
H5: Atmospherics → Destination Revisit		.827***	.258**	.229**
H6: Experience → Destination Revisit			.602***	.573***
H7: Atmospherics x Sense of Place → Experience				.012
H8: Atmospherics x Sense of Place → Destination revisit				-.030
Model Fit Indices	$\chi 2/df$= 2.678, GFI= .969, CFI= .978, RMSEA=.053	$\chi 2/df$= 4.39, GFI= .928, CFI= .936, RMSEA=.075	$\chi 2/df$= 4, GFI= .934, CFI= .944, RMSEA=.071	$\chi 2/df$= 3.72, GFI= .915, CFI= .932, RMSEA=.067

Notes: Path analysis coefficients are standardized.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Figure 7 Conceptual Model with results



4. Discussions and implications

4.1.Discussions

This study contributes to the existing body of literature in several ways. First, this research confirmed the relationship between airport atmospherics and overall experience evaluations in the airport context, as well as with revisit intentions (Batouei et al. 2020; H. C. Kim et al. 2016). Relatively few studies address the holistic examination of atmospherics on experience, although scholars call for further understanding of these concepts' interrelations. Facility ambience and aesthetics had a higher influence on the airport experience than the constructs of functionality and cleanliness. In the same vein, atmospherics as a holistic construct showed a significant and high impact on both experience evaluations and destination revisit, enhancing its critical role. While overall experience showed a partial mediation on destination revisit, the hypotheses on the moderation of sense of place were rejected due to its insignificant results. Findings are further discussed in terms of managerial and academic implications considering various limitations and directions for future research.

4.2.Managerial Implications

Findings can be the starting platform for airport and destination authorities. Precisely, results imply that destination and airport managers should work to build on the sensory strategies so as to enhance visitors' overall experience and revisit intentions. Furthermore, the present study offers new insights on the role of sense of place on the airport experience. Previous studies showed that sense of place is an important indicator on enhancing travellers' experience, thus the behaviour towards the destination (Varley, Schilar, and Rickly 2020; Ali, Kim, and Ryu 2016). However, the moderation analysis of the current research revealed that none of the relationships between atmospherics and experience nor atmospherics and destination revisit were moderated in the presence of sense of places (Van Oel and Van den Berkhof 2013; Batouei et al. 2020), meaning that authorities shall focus on other atmospheric stimuli. In addition, as some stimuli were stronger than others (i.e. facility ambience and aesthetics) the airport management can review some improvements or additions.

4.3.Theoretical Implications

This study advances the marketing literature through responding to academics' call for the understanding of holistic atmospherics in the airport context (Moon, Yoon, and Han 2017; Urry et al. 2016). Results also substantiate the emergence for linking the experience with behaviour towards the destination by revealing the strong effect of atmospherics on destination revisit (Seetanah, Teeroovengadum, and Nunkoo 2020; Prentice and Kadan 2019). In addition, findings revealed that experience itself had a high impact on the intention to revisit a destination, supporting the results of previous studies (Wattanacharoensil, Fakfare, and Graham 2021; J. H. Kim 2014). Interestingly, the research adds to the foregoing discussion on the need for applying national characteristics in airports (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2017; Kim, 2014), confirming previous research that sense of place is not a strong indicator that enhances the experience (Van Oel and Van den Berkhof 2013).

4.4.Limitations and future research

While this paper has shed some light on an integrative approach to understanding the effect of airport atmospherics on experience and destination revisit having as a moderator sense of place, it is not without limitations. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, online surveys were distributed, however this research method engages limitations. While it is considered as a convenient method ensuring 'adequate data quality' (Peer et al. 2017, 158), visitors needed to recall their memories in order to answer relative questions (Prentice and Kadan 2019). A random sample from the departure areas of the airport could give more insights. Future research could extend this study through collecting data in the airport's area where the experience is clear in travellers minds (Han et al. 2020; Taheri et al. 2020). Furthermore, expanding the qualitative research can provide a deeper understanding of the under-examination relationships.

Future research shall examine the role of destination image on destination revisit since it is considered as a critical antecedent (Chuchu 2020; Tosun, Dedeoğlu, and Fyall 2015; Chen and Funk 2010). Another dimension that might be taken into account for future research is the past experience visitors' hold of a country. According to Huang and Hsu (2009), visitors' past travel experience has been found as a significant indicator while studying the willingness to revisit a destination. What is more, it would be interesting to conduct the same research on specific airports, thus having clearer the influential role of airport atmospherics on each airport, hence conducting a comparative study. Since sense of place seemed not having any influence, the same investigations could be tested with specific cultures to test whether culture is a variable that plays a significant role in the aforementioned synergy. It would also be plausible to examine the same relationships with the end of pandemic in order to clarify any changes in the results.

References

Abubakar, A. Mohammed, Mustafa Ilkan, Raad Meshall Al-Tal, and Kayode Kolawole Eluwole. 2017. "EWOM, Revisit Intention, Destination Trust and Gender." *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 31: 220–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2016.12.005.

Ali, Faizan, Woo Gon Kim, and Kisang Ryu. 2016. "The Effect of Physical Environment on Passenger Delight and Satisfaction: Moderating Effect of National Identity." *Tourism Management* 57: 213–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.06.004.

Allameh, Sayyed Mohsen, Javad Khazaei Pool, Akbar Jaberi, Reza Salehzadeh, and Hassan Asadi. 2015. “Factors Influencing Sport Tourists’ Revisit Intentions: The Role and Effect of Destination Image, Perceived Quality, Perceived Value and Satisfaction.” *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* 27 (2): 191–207. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-12-2013-0159.

Ariffin, Ahmad Azmi M., and Mohd Fahmi Yahaya. 2013. “The Relationship between Airport Image, National Identity and Passengers Delight: A Case Study of the Malaysian Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT).” *Journal of Air Transport Management* 31: 33–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2013.02.005.

Batouei, Amir, Mohammad Iranmanesh, Hasrina Mustafa, Davoud Nikbin, and Teoh Ai Ping. 2020. “Components of Airport Experience and Their Roles in Eliciting Passengers’ Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions.” *Research in Transportation Business and Management* 37 (October): 100585. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rtbm.2020.100585.

Bezerra, George Christian Linhares, and Carlos F. Gomes. 2016. “Measuring Airport Service Quality: A Multidimensional Approach.” *Journal of Air Transport Management* 53: 85–93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2016.02.001.

Bitner, Mary Jo. 1992. “Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees.” *Journal of Marketing* 56 (2): 57. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252042.

Bogicevic, Vanja, Wan Yang, Anil Bilgihan, and Milos Bujisic. 2013. “Airport Service Quality Drivers of Passenger Satisfaction.” *Tourism Review* 68 (4): 3–18. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-09-2013-0047.

Chen, Nan, and Daniel C. Funk. 2010. “Exploring Destination Image, Experience and Revisit Intention: A Comparison of Sport and Non-Sport Tourist Perceptions.” *Journal of Sport and Tourism* 15 (3): 239–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2010.513148.

Choi, Jong Hae. 2021. “Journal of Air Transport Management Changes in Airport Operating Procedures and Implications for Airport Strategies Post-COVID-19.” *Journal of Air Transport Management* 94 (April): 102065. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2021.102065.

Chuchu, Tinashe. 2020. “The Impact of Airport Experience on International Tourists’ Revisit Intention: A South African Case.” *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites* 29 (2): 414–27. https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.29203-478.

Civelek, Mustafa Emre. 2018. *Essentials of Structural Equation Modeling*. *Zea Books*. Lincoln. https://doi.org/10.13014/k2sj1hr5.

Creswell, John W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. *Sage*. Third. California: Sage.

Donovan, Robert J, John R Rossiter, Gilian Marcoolyn, and Andrew Nesdale. 1994. “Store Atmosphere and Purchasing Behaviour.” *Journal of Retailing* 70 (3): 283–94.

Figueiredo, Tathiana, and Rafael Castro. 2019. “Passengers Perceptions of Airport Branding Strategies : The Case of Tom Jobim International Airport – RIOgaleão , Brazil.” *Journal of Air Transport Management* 74: 13–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2018.09.010.

Fornell, Claes, and David F. Larcker. 1981. “Structural Equation Models With Unobservable

Variables and Measurement Error : Algebra and Statistics." *Journal of Marketing Research* 18 (3): 382–88.

Geuens, Maggie, Delphine Vantomme, and Malaika Brengman. 2004. "Developing a Typology of Airport Shoppers." *Tourism Management* 25 (5): 615–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.07.003.

Grewal, Dhruv, Anne L Roggeveen, Nancy M. Puccinelli, and Charles Spence. 2014. "Retail Atmospherics and In-Store Nonverbal Cues: An Introduction." *Psychology & Marketing* 31 (7): 469–71. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20708.

Hamilton, John R., and Singwhat Tee. 2015. "Presenting SEM Models: Journal and Conference Considerations."

Han, Heesup, Hossein G.T. Olya, Elena Nicoleta Untaru, Ana Ispas, Jinkyung Jenny Kim, and Wansoo Kim. 2020. "Impact of Airport Green Atmospherics on Mental Health Value, Image, and Loyalty among Visitors and Workers." *Business Strategy and the Environment*, no. October 2019: 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2425.

Huang, Songshan, and Cathy H.C. Hsu. 2009. "Effects of Travel Motivation, Past Experience, Perceived Constraint, and Attitude on Revisit Intention." *Journal of Travel Research* 48 (1): 29–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287508328793.

Jang, Soo Cheong, and Ruomei Feng. 2007. "Temporal Destination Revisit Intention: The Effects of Novelty Seeking and Satisfaction." *Tourism Management* 28 (2): 580–90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.04.024.

Kim, Hyeon Cheol, Bee Lia Chua, Sanghyeop Lee, Huey Chern Boo, and Heesup Han. 2016. "Understanding Airline Travelers' Perceptions of Well-Being: The Role of Cognition, Emotion, and Sensory Experiences in Airline Lounges." *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* 33 (9): 1213–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2015.1094003.

Kim, Jong Hyeong. 2014. "The Antecedents of Memorable Tourism Experiences: The Development of a Scale to Measure the Destination Attributes Associated with Memorable Experiences." *Tourism Management* 44: 34–45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.02.007.

Kumar, Vikas, and Arun K. Kaushik. 2020. "Does Experience Affect Engagement? Role of Destination Brand Engagement in Developing Brand Advocacy and Revisit Intentions." *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* 37 (3): 332–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2020.1757562.

Leri, Ifigeneia, and Prokopis Theodoridis. 2019. "The Effects of the Winery Visitor Experience on Emotions, Satisfaction and on Post-Visit Behaviour Intentions." *Tourism Review* 74 (3): 480–502. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-07-2018-0092.

Loi, Lawrence Teng Iat, Amy Siu Ian So, Iris Sheungting Lo, and Lawrence Hoc Nang Fong. 2017. "Does the Quality of Tourist Shuttles Influence Revisit Intention through Destination Image and Satisfaction? The Case of Macao." *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 32: 115–23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2017.06.002.

Marsch, Herbert W, and Dennis Hocevar. 1985. "Application of Confirmatory Factor Analysis to the Study of Self-Concept: First-and Higher Order Factor Models and Their Invariance across Groups.” *Psychological Bulletin* 97 (3): 562.

Mehrabian, Albert, and James A. Russell. 1974. *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*. the MIT Press.

Moon, Hyoungeun, Hae Jin Yoon, and Heesup Han. 2016. “Role of Airport Physical Environments in the Satisfaction Generation Process: Mediating the Impact of Traveller Emotion.” *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 21 (2): 193–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2015.1048260.

———. 2017. “The Effect of Airport Atmospherics on Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions: Testing the Moderating Role of Perceived Safety.” *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* 34 (6): 749–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2016.1223779.

Nghiêm-Phú, Bình, and Jillian Rae Suter. 2018. “Airport Image: An Exploratory Study of McCarran International Airport.” *Journal of Air Transport Management* 67 (December 2017): 72–84. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2017.11.011.

Nysveen, Herbjørn, Ove Oklevik, and Per Egil Pedersen. 2018. “Brand Satisfaction: Exploring the Role of Innovativeness, Green Image and Experience in the Hotel Sector.” *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 30 (9): 2908–24. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2017-0280.

Oel, Clarine J. Van, and F. W.Derk Van den Berkhof. 2013. “Consumer Preferences in the Design of Airport Passenger Areas.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 36: 280–90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2013.08.005.

Peer, Eyal, Laura Brandimarte, Sonam Samat, and Alessandro Acquisti. 2017. “Beyond the Turk: Alternative Platforms for Crowdsourcing Behavioural Research.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 70: 153–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2017.01.006.

Piccinelli, Stefania, Sergio Moro, and Paulo Rita. 2021. “Air-Travelers ’ Concerns Emerging from Online Comments during the COVID-19 Outbreak.” *Tourism Management* 85 (December 2020). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104313.

Prentice, Catherine, and Mariam Kadan. 2019. “The Role of Airport Service Quality in Airport and Destination Choice.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 47 (November 2018): 40–48. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.10.006.

Prentice, Catherine, Xuequn Wang, and Parikshat Singh Manhas. 2021. “The Spillover Effect of Airport Service Experience on Destination Revisit Intention.” *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 48 (January): 119–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2021.06.001.

Qi, Hongxia, and Fangxuan Li. 2021. “Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management Travelers ’ Emotional Experiences during the COVID-19 Outbreak : The Development of a Conceptual Model.” *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 47 (April): 389–97. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2021.04.013.

Roggeveen, Anne L., Dhruv Grewal, and Elisa B. Schweiger. 2020. “The DAST Framework for Retail Atmospherics: The Impact of In- and Out-of-Store Retail Journey Touchpoints on the Customer Experience.” *Journal of Retailing* 96 (1): 128–37. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2019.11.002.

Rowley, Jennifer, and Frances Slack. 1999. “The Retail Experience in Airport Departure

Lounges : Reaching for Timelessness and Placelessness Experience.” *International Marketing Review* 16 (4): 363–75.

Seetanah, Boopen, Viraiyan Teeroovengadum, and Robin Nunkoo. 2020. “Destination Satisfaction and Revisit Intention of Tourists: Does the Quality of Airport Services Matter?” *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* 44 (1): 134–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348018798446.

Singh, Reema, and Magnus Söderlund. 2020. “Extending the Experience Construct: An Examination of Online Grocery Shopping.” *European Journal of Marketing* 54 (10): 2419–46. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-06-2019-0536.

Steenkamp, Jan-benedict E M, and Hans Baumgartner. 2000. “On the Use of Structural Equation Models for Marketing Modeling.” *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 17: 195–202.

Taheri, Babak, Hossein Olya, Faizan Ali, and Martin Joseph Gannon. 2020. “Understanding the Influence of Airport Servicescape on Traveler Dissatisfaction and Misbehaviour.” *Journal of Travel Research* 59 (6): 1008–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287519877257.

Tosun, Cevat, Bekir Bora Dedeoğlu, and Alan Fyall. 2015. “Destination Service Quality, Affective Image and Revisit Intention: The Moderating Role of Past Experience.” *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management* 4 (4): 222–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2015.08.002.

Tuchen, Stefan, Mohit Arora, and Lucienne Blessing. 2020. “Journal of Air Transport Management Airport User Experience Unpacked : Conceptualizing Its Potential in the Face of COVID-19.” *Journal of Air Transport Management* 89 (August): 101919. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2020.101919.

Urry, John, Anthony Elliott, David Radford, and Nicola Pitt. 2016. “Globalisations Utopia? On Airport Atmospherics.” *Emotion, Space and Society* 19: 13–20. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2016.03.003.

Varley, Peter, Hannelne Schilar, and Jillian M. Rickly. 2020. “Tourism Non-Places: Bending Airports and Wildscapes.” *Annals of Tourism Research* 80 (September 2019). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.102791.

Wattanacharoensil, Walanchalee, Pipatpong Fakfare, and Anne Graham. 2021. “Airportscape and Its Effect on Airport Sense of Place and Destination Image Perception.” *Tourism Review*, no. May. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-01-2021-0036.

Second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model of Perceived Quality of Generation Y toward Green Products

Nutthapon Jitprapai [a], Jantima Kheokao [b] and Tassanee Krirkgulthorn [c]

[a] *University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand; Email: koonut.skinnex@gmail.com*

[b] *University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand; Email: Jantima.kheokao@gmail.com*

[c] *Boromrajonnai College of Nursing Saraburi, Thailand; Email: tassanee@bcns.ac.th*

ABSTRACT

Besides focusing on maximum profit, businesses are rapidly exploring new strategies to position their green brands in consumers' minds and stay competitive in the marketplace. This quantitative research analyzed the second-order confirmatory factors (S-CFA) of perceived quality of Generation Y toward green products. The sample group was 500 Generation Y individuals. The research instrument was the questionnaire and the IBM SPSS AMOS was used to analyze the model. Data showed that the model consisted of four elements: reason, original manufacturing, corporate image, and product safety. The element weight values were 1.022, 0.931, 0.909, and 0.907, respectively. Chi-square was 284.416, p-value was 0.056, CMIN/DF was 1.147, GFI was 0.954, and RMSEA was 0.017. Firms and businesses can use green brand positioning to market their products better, improve consumers' green brand perceived quality toward green brands, and increase green brand purchase intention. Successful green brand positioning is seen as an advantage for marketers to differentiate their products from competitors' products, giving the impression that their green products are reasonable, thus creating more demand and generating increased intention to purchase more green products.

Keywords*: Second-order confirmatory factor, Perceived quality, Green product, Generation Y.*

1.Introduction

Because of environmental factors such as technology advancement, educational development, behavior and consumer demand for products, changing forms of society, and change in demography structure, climate change is now more and more severe and has adverse effects widely on both global and household levels. Such effects include especially the impact on health problems of people who need food that is safe for their bodies, the impact on people using goods that are contaminated with dangerous substances, and the effect on people served by tools, equipment, and unsafe places. Using green products is a trend that has continued to increase. It is widely studied up to the stage of environmental protection (Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Morgan, 2013).

Therefore, customers are now requesting manufacturers, product owners, and services to realize the danger of using hazardous chemicals in all types of products such as fresh vegetables and fruit, ready-made food, drinks, packages, jewelry, cosmetics, medical supplies, fashion products, and home decoration products. The request makes the marketers interested in a marketing strategy that uses a green market or environment marketing concept to create satisfaction and fill the needs of customers who are aware of the safety of their lives and health. The concept is also environmentally friendly. It does not ruin the environment and the ecosystem of the communities. Moreover, it prevents the decline of the surroundings (Nottakrit Vantamay, 2018).

Product consumption is an essential human activity because consumption behavior and the decision to purchase products and services affect a customer's identity. Using green products to reduce the harmful adverse impact on the environment and increase its sustainability has become an important issue for countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Uthamaputhran, Ahmad, Jaganathan, Hee, & Hee, 2016). The crisis of climate change (Qader & Zainuddin, 2011; Rahim, Zukni, Ahmad, & Lyndon, 2012), the destroyed atmosphere, water, and air pollution, toxic waste, and acid rain are now increasing as the world crisis leads to social, economic, and political problems, and also affects business and people's personal consumption (Chekima, Wafa, Igau, Chekima, & Sondoh, 2016). Therefore, businesses have to consider the interest of each group of customers with their importance and identities. A group of people according to age is known as a "generation;" this began from a western concept, especially in the USA. "Generation" means people living at the same time (Richardson, 1993). Each generation has its unique experience, attitude, and idea that reflect its similar identity (Glass, 2007). There is a way to group people into generations by using years of birth. People born in 1964-1977 are Generation X (Bell & Narz, 2007), and others born in 1977-1999 are Generation Y (Nurieva et al., 2008). This group is essential to the population structure because they are organizations' labor resources. In addition, Generation Y is a group with positive thinking and do not like to follow rules. They are intelligent and accept change. They use technology as a part of their lives to be more comfortable (Hood, 2012; Strauss, & Howe, 2000). They also value a good quality of life, consume quality products, and use good products that are safe for the quality of life (Curtis, 2008). More importantly, Generation Y was found to be more concerned about the long-term effects of products on their health and the environment (Spehar, 2006). Therefore, marketers are interested in attracting Generation Y consumers. Although Generation Y people are young, they can influence other people's purchases, such as those of friends and family. The relationship between Generation Y and their peers can help build social awareness and care for the environment to meet the group norms. For example, Generation Y can influence adults' consumption behavior of green products in western society (Lee, 2011).

This research was based on reviews of research on factors relevant to the importance of Generation Y's consumption behavior and environmental marketing concepts, including current problems and calls for manufacturers or brand owners to produce and sell environmentally friendly products or services (Chaudhary & Bisai, 2018; Hasan & Alice, 2015; Uthamaputhran et al., 2016). The framework for the study is in two parts: 1) Generation Y's consumption characteristics and 2) green marketing ideas. Green products mean products with non-toxic substances to consumers and can be recycled. They are products with impact that is less polluting to the environment, use minimal packaging, and contain natural materials (Khaneghah, Hashemi, & Limbo, 2018).

Research Objective

1. To exanine the goodness of fit of the model of perceived quality factor of the green product from the perspective of Generation Y.

2. To study the perceived quality factor of Generation Y toward green products

2.Literature

The key factors of purchase intention of green products have been identified by several authors. Their key differences are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: *The Key Factors of Purchase Intention of Green Products*

Authors	Product Safety	Reasonable	Corporate Image	Original Manufacturing
Chen, Chen & Tung (2018)	•	•	•	
Cheng & Mitomo (2017)		•	•	
Lung & Chuan-Chuan (2016)		•	•	
Hsu, Chang, & Yansritakul (2017)		•		•
Eles & Sihombing (2017)		•		
Ariffin, Yosof, Putit & Shah (2016)		•		
Marakanon & Panjakajornsak (2017)	•		•	•
Mederios, Riberiro, Cortimilia (2016)	•	•		
Zulfanizy & Wahyono (2019)	•	•	•	•
Cai, Xie & Aguilar (2017)	•	•	•	
Ndofirepi & Matema (2019)	•	•	•	
Harahap, Zuhriyah, & Rahmayanti (2018)	•	•	•	
Mokan, Lee, & Bhoyar (2018)	•	•	•	
Anvar & Venter (2014)	•	•	•	
Smith (2010)	•	•	•	•
Hill & Lee (2012)	•	•		•
Moorthy, Lahori, & Mohamad, (2017).	•	•		

From the synthesis of research on factors affecting the decision to buy or use environmentally friendly products, it was found that there are four significant elements, including product safety, reasonable, corporate image, and original manufacturing. These elements are essential to the perception of quality in green products as the following theoretical concepts are used in this research.

1) Brand perceived quality, according to the concept of Aaker (1991), is that customers can sense the quality of the brand. Most of it is the perception of quality through products and services, which must be created for customers to perceive quality accurately, easily, quickly, and long.

2) Product safety refers to the safety of using and consuming green products certified to standard and quality. The products build up the credibility and trust that result in the experience of consuming products that are harmless to life and the body (Crosby, 1992).

3) Reasonable means the value of money paid to compare the results obtained from a purchase or consumption with the suitability and satisfaction of an environmentally friendly product. Consumers take into account the benefit of the perceived value of how the money is worth to the repeat purchase (Cheng & Mitomo, 2017; Lung & Chuan-Chuan , 2016). This is consistent with the results of a study that looked at factors influencing eco-product consumption behavior in the context of one belt one road. The study results found that the factors of environmental attitudes, product attitudes, social influences, and perceptions of value for money had a positive influence on purchase intentions of environmentally friendly products (Chen, Chen & Tung, 2018).

4) Corporate image refers to the image of the company or owner of an eco-friendly product. The corporate image is a holistic image consisting of management, products or services, brands, stability, people, processes, production standards, and social responsibility. It is consistent with Keller (1998) who addresses the four dimensions of corporate image, including product features and benefits, employees, value and operations, and corporate trust.

5) Original manufacturing means showing where the green products are produced and what consumers perceive and think about when referring to that country (Sameer Mathur, 2014). Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) suggested that a nation's image was made up of factors such as the belief in the country (thought), the impact of the national characters (emotion), and the desire (demand). In addition, Kotler and Gertner (2002) noted the factors affecting the perception of a nation's image, including landscape, history, propaganda, art, and culture. The nation's well-known figures and the current national media and entertainment industries also play a significant role in perceiving both negative and positive national images. They also affect the perception and attitude towards various types of products that have originated from that country.

3.Method

3.1 The research instrument design

3.1.1 Review of textbook and research paper literature on green product purchasing decisions

3.1.2 Prepare questions with guidelines for answering as a tool for interviewing a sample of experts with in-depth interview techniques by studying the concept-related theories and research to cover the scope of research to be studied and achieve the 4 latent objectives, namely Product Safety, Reasonable, Corporate Image, and Original Manufacturing

3.1.3 The researcher brought the draft questionnaire along with the assessment form to the experts. Five people with knowledge of and direct experience with the research topic were assigned to assess the quality of the questionnaire by calculating the index of conformity between the question and the content or research objectives. (Item-Objective Congruence: IOC). The results of the analysis of conformity index, or IOC values, between the questions and the objectives of this research are presented. It appears that the IOC value is between 0.80 and 1.00.

3.1.4 The researcher used the revised draft questionnaire based on expert advice and approved by the research advisor. Let's test (try-out) on a population that is similar to the population of this research. But it was not the same population as 30 people, which was the accepted sample size for the trial.

3.1.5 The results of the experiment (try-out) were analyzed by using the scores obtained from the questionnaire to find the discriminant power. (Discrimination) item by item. In the question section, it is a checklist form. With the standard deviation (Standard Deviation: S.D.) and the questionnaire that looks like a rating scale (Rating Scales) with a correlation coefficient (Corrected Item-Total Correlation) and find the confidence of the questionnaire. (Reliability) in the questionnaire that looks like a scale estimate. With the determination of Cronbach Alpha (Cronbach Alpha) from a statistical program, the power analysis classified as a "Correction Item"–Total Correlation is between 0.38 and 0.83. The alpha coefficient is 0.986.

3.1.6 Modify the questionnaire so that it meets the criteria set before it is used to collect the actual data.

3.2 Population and Sample

The subjects were Generation Y consumers (born 1980–1997) (Srinont, 2018), selected from currently 17,200,002 individuals (National Statistics Office, 2020) who had the behavior of purchasing or using environmentally friendly products. Sample size determination was based on factor analysis research, with 500 perfect sample sizes (Comrey & Lee, 2013), using a simple random sampling method to collect data. Questionnaires were distributed from September 2021 to December 2021.

3.3 Data analysis

The measurement of quality perception of green products is based on Aaker's (1991) brand perceived quality concept. It was divided into four elements: product safety, reason, corporate image, and original manufacturing. Each element consisted of 25 questions, 100 in total. It used 5 rating scales according to the Likert Scale (5 levels) and the second-order confirmatory factor analysis of the IBM SPSS AMOS with four criteria according to the evaluation of data-model fit in Arbuckle (2016), which are 1) Chi-square probability level greater than 0.05; 2) Relative chi-square less than 2; 3) Goodness of fit index greater than 0.90; and 4) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation less than 0.08

4.Result

The second-order confirmatory factor analysis is a conformity testing technique between the data collected from a sample and a defined research model to examine whether the model structure is different from the data collected from the sample or not. There must be a supportive theoretical concept for determining the compulsory conditions for the analysis of elemental weights (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). The second-order confirmatory factor analysis model of perceived quality of Generation Y toward green products had been synthesized from various studies, as shown in Table 1. Therefore, all elements were used to be defined as variables in the conceptual framework of the research and the second-order confirmatory factor analysis, with the results shown in Figure 1 and Table 2.

Figure 1: The Second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model of Perceived Quality of Generation Y toward Green Products

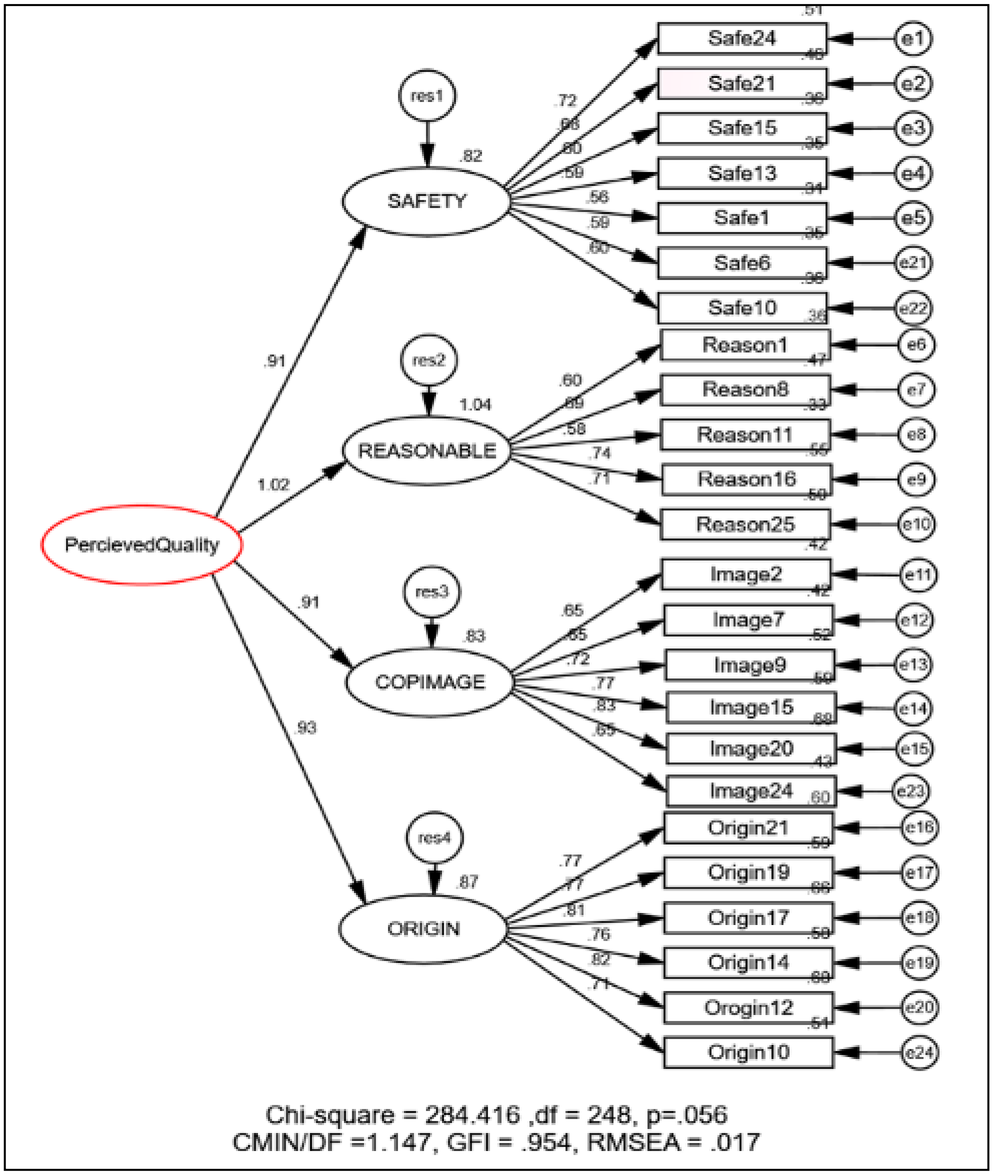


Table 2 Factor Loading of Perceived Quality of Generation Y Toward Green Products

Variable	Variable name		Standard Regression Weight
Reasonable	**Variance = 0.00**	**R^2 = 1.044**	**1.022**
Reason16	Reduce the destruction of the global environment.		0.74
Reason25	Easy and convenient to buy.		0.71
Reason8	Satisfied with the performance after using.		0.69
Reason1	The product quantity is suitable for the price.		0.60
Reason11	Reduce the cost of waste disposal.		0.58
Original Manufacturing	**Variance = 0.03**	**R^2 = 0.868**	**0.931**
Origin12	Innovation and technology of manufacturer.		0.82
Origin17	It has been certified to the standard from the famous manufacturing site.		0.81
Origin21	Show the name’s original manufacturing.		0.77
Origin19	Manufacturing standard's original manufacturing.		0.77
Origin14	The specialist of original manufacturing.		0.76
Origin10	There is a symbol representing the original manufacturing.		0.71
Corporate Image	**Variance = 0.03**	**R^2 = 0.826**	**0.909**
Image20	Show the green product label.		0.83
Image15	There are activities for social care and development.		0.77
Image9	Corporate social responsibility policy.		0.72
Image2	The reputation of the company.		0.65
Image7	The vision of Chief Executive Officer.		0.65
Image24	Giving customers an opportunity to visit the business.		0.65
Product Safety	**Variance = 0.02**	**R^2 = 0.822**	**0.907**
Safe24	Do not use harmful chemicals.		0.72
Safe21	Use biodegradable packaging.		0.68
Safe15	Received product standards and manufacturing standards.		0.60
Safe10	Identify the expiration date.		0.60
Safe13	No news of complaints about product performance.		0.59
Safe6	Take responsibility if there is any abnormality after using the product.		0.59
Safe1	Easy to check product standard numbers.		0.56

The second-order confirmatory factor analysis found that Generation Y's green products' perceived quality elements were consistent with the criteria empirical data of Arbuckle (2016). The chi-square statistic test result was 284.416. The p-value was 0.056 (greater than 0.05) at a statistically significant level of 0.05. The CMIN/DF value was 1.147 (less than 3). The GFI was 0.954 (greater than 0.90), and the RMSEA value was 0.017 (less than 0.08).

The weight of Generation Y's perceived quality toward green products was positive in all four elements. Sorted by weight, reasonable was 1.022, original manufacturing was 0.931, corporate image was 0.909, and product safety was 0. 907.

1) Reasonable consisted of 5 variables, including reducing the destruction of the global environment (Reason16), buying quickly and conveniently (Reason25), being satisfied with the performance after use (Reason8), a quantity of the product is suitable for the price (Reason1) and reducing waste disposal costs (Reason11). The weights of the perceived quality were 0.74, 0.71, 0.69, 0.60, and 0.58, respectively.

2) Original manufacturing consisted of 6 variables, including innovation and technology of the manufacturing country (Origin 12), is certified to the standard from the famous manufacturing site (Origin 17), showing the country name of manufacturer (Origin21), manufacturing standard of the country of origin (Origin 19), country of origin specialization (Origin14), and having a branded logo showing the country of origin (Origin10). The weights of the perceived quality were 0.82, 0.81, 0.77, 0.77, 0.76, and 0.71 respectively.

3) Corporate image consisted of 6 variables, including displaying the green ticker label (Image20), organizing activities for social care and development (Image15), corporate social responsibility policy (Image 9), the reputation of the company (Image 2), management vision (Image 7), and opportunity for customers to visit the business (Image 24). The weights of the perceived quality were 0.83, 0.77, 0.72, 0.65, 0.65, and 0.65 respectively.

4) Product safety consisted of 7 variables, including do not use harmful chemicals (Safe24), use biodegradable packaging (Safe21), receiving a certification of product standards and production standards (Safe15), clearly specifying the date of manufacture and expiration (Safe 10), no news of complaints about product performance (Safe13), take responsibility if there is any abnormality after using the product (Safe6), and easy checking of product standard numbers (Safe1). The weights of the perceived quality were 0.72, 0.68, 0.60, 0.60, 0.59, 0.59, and 0.56 respectively.

The findings supported that Generation Y consumers perceived the quality of green products through the safety element of using or consuming the green product and through the reason that the component of the value of money paid more than buying a similar product, but not for the environment. The corporate image also contributed to the perception of the quality of products or services if the organization had a good image connected to the image of green products. If the country where the product is produced is reputable and accepted, it also makes consumers aware of the quality of that product or service.

4. Conclusions and discussion

From the second-order confirmatory factor analysis based on questions developed from the literature review, variables can be classified and defined as indicators of Generation Y's four elements of perceived quality toward green products, including product safety, reason, corporate image, and original manufacturing. The chi-square statistic test result was 284.416. The p-value was 0.056 (greater than 0.05) at a statistically significant level of 0.05. The CMIN/DF value was

1.147 (less than 3), the GFI was 0.954 (greater than 0.90), and the RMSEA value was 0.017 (less than 0.08). As for each component, the research findings on the most important factors can be discussed as follows:

1) The reasonable component: Reduce the destruction of the global environment (Reason16) (Standard regression weight = 0.74). Nowadays, consumers are more aware of the choice to consume products that are environmentally friendly. Due to the impact of the destruction of the environment and natural resources, it will become a big problem globally well-known in the global warming crisis. Therefore, consumers pay attention to preserving the earth's resources for long-term and sustainable use. Such products include a) products that reduce the emission of toxic substances or ozone-depleting substances into the atmosphere; for instance, air-conditioner factories should eliminate the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs); b) products made from or that can be recycled from recycled materials; c) natural raw materials that are biodegradable, such as drinking straws made from lemongrass instead of plastic straws; d) packaging that avoids generating a lot of waste; and e) Designs that are long-lasting, repairable, and so on. This is in line with the green product marketing concept of Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015): a green product is a product made with non-toxic ingredients and environmentally friendly practices.

2) The original manufacturing component: Innovation and technology of manufacturer (Origin 12) (Standard regression weight = 0.82). One of the important factors in deciding to buy a green product is that the product manufacturer has innovation and technology in the production and design of the product. Production by conventional methods may not be enough to meet various needs. Innovation is needed to help run the business. In addition, innovation does not only create new products and services but also the adoption of a new manufacturing process that results in a more efficient overall operation to deliver goods and services to consumers as efficiently as possible. However, if any business can develop this type of innovation well, it will give a business advantage over its competitors. For example, innovations from successful production include Smart Farmer innovation using systems of AI, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things (IoT) which connects devices related to work, whether it is a watering system, a fertilizer spraying drone, or a farmer, commanded via a smartphone or tablet that can be carried anywhere, providing convenience in the production of farmers as well. If the product is manufactured under reliable innovation and technology, it will result in consumers making purchasing decisions easily and quickly. In summary, outstanding innovation and production technology to create innovative products can be regarded as a stimulus for buying behavior. It is consistent with the model of consumer behavior developed by Kotler and Armstrong (2017) who used the marketing mix: product, price, promotion, to stimulate buying behavior. Especially, innovative product is the type that can be seen most often, most clearly, in products and services that are new to the market. This kind of innovation was born to help people solve problems. It is something that makes human life easier. and often requires the knowledge of science and technology in production.

3) The corporate image component: Show the green product label (Image20) (Standard regression weight = 0.83). A "green label" is a designation given to a product that has been inspected and certified to fulfill environmental standards according to the Green Label Policy and Management Committee's requirements. The maker has chosen to do so whether a distributor or service provider who wants to demonstrate environmental stewardship. Furthermore, environmental labeling or green labeling is a marketing strategy for promoting

environmental protection: a) to demonstrate that it is a product that has a lower environmental impact than similar items that fulfill the same function, which is the concept of sustainable development in the form of voluntary participation; b) to raise consumer awareness of the importance of changing their consumption habits and to put pressure on companies to enhance the quality of goods and services through technology, while also considering the impact on the environment. It is also a means for consumers to choose how much they wish to contribute to environmental protection.

4) The product safety component: Do not use harmful chemicals (Safe24) (Standard regression weight = 0.72). Product contaminants are substances contaminated with food that may come from the production process both in the production process, factory, maintenance, packing, as well as transportation and storage or caused by contamination from the environment present in food production. Some manufacturers mix chemicals in food. Some of these chemicals are harmful to the body. Some species, if consumed in large quantities, can be fatal or harmful but often contaminating chemicals in food. There are shops and products under the concept of health products, organic products, natural products, non-toxic products, and environmentally friendly products that respond to the needs of consumers who are attentive and careful in choosing products that are at risk of chemical contamination. This result is consistent with the green marketing concept. Customers who are concerned about the safety of their lives and health can benefit from a marketing strategy that employs a green market or environmental marketing idea to provide satisfaction and to fulfill a need. In addition, the concept is environmentally friendly. It will not harm the environment or the communities' ecosystems. Furthermore, it will keep the current configuration from deteriorating (Vantamay, 2018).

5. Implications and further research lines

Suggestions based on this study are:

1) The government should support and promote entrepreneurs from upstream, midstream, and downstream to provide various forms of assistance, including giving knowledge on manufacturing operations, making capital standards to obtain safe products for consumers, such as non-toxic products using natural materials, etc.

2) Businesses should apply research findings to design product positioning and marketing communication strategies with Generation Y customers by researching product safety, reasonable, corporate image, and original manufacturing.

3) Further research can study the body of knowledge to develop guidelines for perceiving product quality for the environment by searching for structural equations models to realize the harmonization between the empirical data and the theoretical concepts studied. This includes conducting qualitative research through in-depth interviews with the sample to provide additional information.

6. Limitation

This research aimed to study only the Generation Y consumer who bought the green product. Because it is the perceived quality factor of the green product from the perspective of Generation Y. Therefore, the data was not collected from the samples who did not buy green products.

References

Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Anvar, M., & Venter, M. (2014). Attitudes and purchase behaviour of green products among generation Y consumers in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(21), 183.

Arbuckle, J. L. (2016). *IBM SPSS Amos 20 user's guide.* New York: IBM.

Ariffin, S., Yusof, J. M., Putit, L., & Shah, M. I. A. (2016). Factors influencing perceived quality and repurchase intention towards green products. *Procedia Economics and Finance, 37*(16), 391-396.

Bell, N. S., & Narz, M. (2007). Meeting the challenges of age diversity in the workplace. *The CPA Journal*, *77*(2), 56.

Cai, Z., Xie, Y., & Aguilar, F. X. (2017). Eco-label credibility and retailer effects on green product purchasing intentions. *Forest Policy and Economics, 80*, 200-208.

Chaudhary, R., & Bisai, S. (2018). Factors influencing green purchase behavior of millennials in India. *Management of Environmental Quality: An International Journal*.

Chekima, B., Wafa, S. A. W. S. K., Igau, O. A., Chekima, S., & Sondoh Jr, S. L. (2016). Examining green consumerism motivational drivers: Does premium price and demographics matter to green purchasing? *Journal of Cleaner Production, 112*, 3436-3450.

Chen, C. C., Chen, C. W., & Tung, Y. C. (2018). Exploring the consumer behavior of intention to purchase green products in belt and road countries: An empirical analysis. *Sustainability*, *10*(3), 854.

Cheng, & Mitomo. (2017). The underlying factors of the perceived usefulness of using smart wearable devices for disaster applications. *Telematics and Informatics, 34*(2), 528-539.

Comrey, A. L., & Lee, H. B. (2013). *A first course in factor analysis*. Psychology Press.

Crosby. (1992). Three experts on quality management. *TQLO Publication Research.* July 1992, 92-20.

Curtis, C. E. (2008). Gen X, Y concerned about money but value lifestyle more., *Money Management Executive*, September, 4-5.

Glass, A. (2007). Understanding generational differences for competitive success. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 39*, 2, 98-103.

Eles, S. F., & Sihombing, S. O. (2017, June). Predicting green purchase intention of Generation Y: An empirical study in Indonesia. In *The 3rd PIABC (Parahyangan International Accounting and Business Conference*.

Harahap, A., Zuhriyah, A., & Rahmayanti, H. (2018). Relationship between knowledge of green product, social impact and perceived value with green purchase behavior. *In E3S Web of Conferences* (Vol. 74, p. 04002). EDP Sciences.

Hasan, Z., & Ali, N. A. (2015). The impact of green marketing strategy on the firm's performance in Malaysia. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 172*(27), 463- 470.

Hill, J., & Lee, H. H. (2012). Young Generation Y consumers' perceptions of sustainability in the apparel industry. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*.

Hood, M. (2012). The big shift: The next generation has arrived. *Direct Selling News, January,* 10-14.

Hsu, C. L., Chang, C. Y., & Yansritakul, C. (2017). Exploring purchase intention of green skincare products using the theory of planned behavior: Testing the moderating effects of country of origin and price sensitivity. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *34*, 145-152.

Joreskog, K. G. and Sorbom, D. (1996). *Lisrel8 user's reference guide.* Chicago, IL: Scientific Software International.

Keller, K. L. (1998). *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring and managing brand equity*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Khaneghah, A. M., Hashemi, S. M. B., & Limbo, S. (2018). Antimicrobial agents and packaging systems in antimicrobial active food packaging: An overview of approaches and interactions. *Food and Bioproducts Processing*, *111*, 1-19.

Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2017). *Principles of marketing*. Pearson.

Kotler, P., & Gertner, D. (2002). Country as brand, product and beyond: A place marketing and brand management perspective. *Journal of Brand Management 9*(5), 249-261.

Kumar, P.& Ghodeswar, B. M .(2015). Factors affecting consumers' green product purchase decisions. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning, 33*(3), 330-347.

Lee, K. (2011). The green purchase behavior of Hong Kong young consumers: The role of peer influence, local environmental involvement, and concrete environmental knowledge. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, *23*(1), 21-44.

Leonidou, C. N., Katsikeas, C. S., & Morgan, N. A. (2013). "Greening" the marketing mix: Do firms do it and does it pay off? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *41*(2), 151-170.

Lung, & Chuan-Chuan. (2016). Effect of perceived value and social influences on mobile app stickiness and in-app purchase intention. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 2016*(42-53).

Marakanon, L., & Panjakajornsak, V. (2017). Perceived quality, perceived risk and customer trust affecting customer loyalty of environmentally friendly electronics products. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, *38*(1), 24-30.

Medeiros, J. F., Ribeiro, J. L. D., & Cortimiglia, M. N. (2016). Influence of perceived value on purchasing decisions of green products in Brazil. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 110*, 158-169.

Mokan, K. V., Lee, T. C., & Bhoyar, M. R. (2018). The intention of green products purchasing among Malaysian consumers: A case study of Batu Pahat, Johor. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development*, *9*(10), 996-1001.

Moorthy, M. K., Lahori, M. A., & Mohamad, Z. Z. B. (2017). Perception of Generation Y on adoption of green products: A study on gender difference in Malaysia. *Adoption of Green Products: A Study on Gender Difference in Malaysia*.

National Statistics Office. (2020). *Population and Housing Statistica*. Retrived January 1, 2020, from http://www.nso.go.th/sites/2014en.

Ndofirepi, T. M., & Matema, S. C. (2019).Exploring green purchasing behaviour among college students in a developing economy. *Southern African Business Review*, *23,* 25-pages.

Nurieva, R. I., Chung, Y., Hwang, D., Yang, X. O., Kang, H. S., Ma, L., ... & Dong, C. (2008). Generation of T follicular helper cells is mediated by interleukin-21 but independent of T helper 1, 2, or 17 cell lineages. *Immunity*, *29*(1), 138-149.

Qader, I. K. A., & Zainuddin, Y. B. (2011). The impact of media exposure on intention to purchase green electronic products amongst lecturers. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *6*(3), 240.

Papadopoulos, N., & Heslop, L. (2002). Country equity and country branding: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Brand Management*, *9*(4/5), 294.

Rahim, M. H. A., Zukni, R. Z. J. A., Ahmad, F., & Lyndon, N. (2012). Green advertising and environmentally responsible consumer behavior: The level of awareness and perception of Malaysian youth. *Asian Social Science, 8*(5), 46.

Richardson, J. T. (1993). Definitions of cult: From sociological-technical to popular-negative. *Review of Religious Research*, 348-356.

Sameer Mathur. (2014). *How do marketers influence country of origin effects*. [Online]. Available: http://www.slideshare.net/ProfessorMathur/206-how- do marketers-influence-country-of origin-effects.

Smith, K. T. (2010). An examination of marketing techniques that influence millennials' perceptions of whether a product is environmentally friendly. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *18*(6), 437-450.

Spehar, C. (2006). Marketing to teens: Hip 2 B green. *Natural Foods Merchandiser*, *27*(10), 45-46.

Srinont, M. (2018). Theory of generation and cognitive framework. *MBU Education Journal: Faculty of Education Mahamakut Buddhist University*, *6*(1), 364-373.

Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation* (p. 29). New York: Vintage Books.

Uthamaputhran, L., Ahmad, F., Jaganathan, M., Hee, H., & Hee, C. (2016). Revisiting influence of marketing effectiveness and environmental awareness on buying behaviour of green product: A SEM approach. *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship (GBSE),* 4(5), 6-18.

Vantamay, N. (2018). Sustainability marketing. Bangkok, Thailand: Chulalongkorn University Printing House.

Zulfanizy, K., & Wahyono, W. (2019). The influence of green perceived value, risk and quality toward green purchase intention through green trust. *Management Analysis Journal*, *8*(1).

Sustainability Initiatives in Cypriot Hotels and the way Forward Through Digital Marketing Communication

Leonidas Efthymiou [a], Avros Morphitis [b], Philippos Drousiotis [c] and Yianna Orphanidou [d]

[a] *Faculty of Business School, University of Nicosia, Makedonitissas 46, Nicosia 1701 Cyprus; Email:efthymiou.l@unic.ac.cy*

[b] *Adjunct Faculty of Business School, University of Nicosia, Makedonitissas 46, Nicosia 1701 Cyprus; Email:morphitis.a@unic.ac.cy*

[c] *Adjunct Faculty of Business School, University of Nicosia, Makedonitissas 46, Nicosia 1701 Cyprus; Email:drousiotis.p@unic.ac.cy*

[d] *Faculty of Business School, University of Nicosia, Makedonitissas 46, Nicosia 1701 Cyprus; Email:orphanidou.y@unic.ac.cy*

Abstract

At the intersection of Sustainability and Digital Marketing Communication (DMC), the current paper examines the initiatives of Cypriot hotels while collaborating with the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI), a non-for-profit organization. Also, the paper examines how hotels communicate their sustainability activities and achievements online, on rating platforms (e.g. Trip Advisor), own corporate platforms, social media, and how hotels deal with customers' reactions, feedback, opinions, and market sensitivities concerning sustainability attributes. Drawing on personal Interviews and a Focus Group with various stakeholders, the contribution of this paper is twofold. First, it discusses for the first time how Cypriot hotels collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NOGs) in the field of sustainability. Second, it explains how hotels can utilize Digital Marketing Communication (DMC) along with their Sustainability schemes, to enhance the publicity of such initiatives and cultivate an awareness among the hotels' clientele.

Keywords: *Sustainability, Inclusivity, NGOs, Hotels, Hospitality, Digital Marketing Communication*

1.Introduction

The 26th UN Climate Change conference, held in Glasgow, Scotland between 1st and 12th November 2021, underlined the importance for businesses to engage with sustainable development (Bowcott et al, 2021). In addition, it underlined the importance of adding sustainable and characteristics to existing industry business models (Handley, 2021). '[A] sustainable business model (SBM), represents how a company creates, delivers, and captures value while generating positive effects and/or reducing negative impacts on the environment and society' (Minatogawa et al, 2022: 1). Within this framework, the current paper examines sustainability initiatives in 4- and 5-star hotels in Cyprus. It also explores the collaboration of hotels with a non-for-profit organization, called Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI).

More specifically, it examines how hotels communicate their sustainability activities and achievements online, on rating platforms (e.g. Trip Advisor), own corporate platforms, social media, and how hotels deal with customers' reactions, feedback, opinions, and market sensitivities concerning sustainability attributes. At the same time, it explores whether Digital Marketing Communication (DMC), can be used to enhanced the publicity of hotels' sustainability initiatives, and cultivate an awareness among hotels' clientele.

To address its purpose, the analysis draws on personal Interviews, conducted with hotels managers, and one Focus Group with various industry stakeholders. The paper is organized as follows: the next section, presents the local context, including the Cypriot Tourism Industry and the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI). Then, the analysis offers a review of the literature in the field of Sustainability, Digital Marketing Communication, and Digital Media. After that, a section presents the Research design of the study, prior to presenting the Analysis of Findings. The final section is the 'Conclusion and Recommendations', which explains how Digital Marketing Communication (DMC) can facilitate hotels' sustainability initiatives.

1.1.Local Context

The Tourism and Hospitality Sectors in Cyprus

In Cyprus, tourism and hospitality contribute significantly to the island's economy (Efthymiou, Orphanidou and Panayiotou, 2020; Efthymiou, 2018). The sector contributes about 20% to the Gross Domestic Product (Deputy Ministry of Tourism 2019), whereas, the number of tourists annually is several times higher than the island's population. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, in early 2020, tourist arrivals were growing steadily at a record-breaking pace (e.g., CNA 2020, 2017). Also, more hotels are being built throughout the island, including luxury, high-end, boutique and casino hotels (DomLive, 2021). Nevertheless, sustainability initiatives are either at their infancy stage, or, not very well communicated. As we explain below, a pioneer in this field is the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative.

1.2.The Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative

The following analysis relies on personal discussions and material provided to us by Board Members of the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI). CSTI is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Cyprus. It was established in 2006, following a 2-year long project of the Travel Foundation (2004-2006), a UK charity, which created a partnership with UK leading tour operators, environmental Cypriot NGOs, the Cyprus Tourism Organization – CTO (Deputy Ministry of Tourism as of 2019), Cyprus Travel Agents and small village producers, their communities and associations. CSTI's affiliation with the Travel Foundation played an important role for the development of its international network. At that time, there was no single organization in Cyprus either governmental or not to create awareness and prepare the tourism industry for the era of sustainability. Fifteen years later, CSTI managed to be the leading organization in Cyprus in the field of Sustainability, promoting awareness and providing support to the majority of Hotels in Cyprus. Also, the Cyprus Deputy Ministry of Tourism recognizes and supports CSTI in a number of projects in promoting Cyprus through sustainable actions.

Moreover, CSTI collaborates with organizations and stakeholders in Cyprus and abroad, while developing networks and projects demonstrating the benefits of sustainable tourism. Successful projects of CSTI like the "Water and Energy Saving Project" were replicated in other countries in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. CSTI has also won a global recognition through its projects with Prince Albert foundation of Monaco, the TUI Care Foundation and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). CSTI is a Proud Launch Partner & Signatory of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism (2021) and Proud Signatory of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative - the first from Cyprus to join (2020).

Hotels turn to CSTI to seek support and consultancy for implementing sustainable actions. Cyprus won the Silver Award as the "Best Destination for Responsible Tourism "at the World Travel Market (WTM) for the Minimum Sustainable Standards (MSS).The award was announced at the prestigious World Responsible Tourism Awards ceremony, held on 4th November, 2015. WTM is the leading global event for the travel industry. The MSS was a project developed by the 5-year partnership (Travel Foundation, Cyprus Tourism Organization and CSTI). The award was consider as a great recognition of CSTI's continuing efforts and commitment to promote Cyprus as a sustainable tourist destination. This 5-year partnership proved that public-private partnerships could be a sustainable model for development.

2.Literature review

2.1.Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality sectors

Business Sustainability refers to the ability of organizations to maintain operations at a certain rate in the long term, while taking into consideration sensitivities of broader society. Sustainable requirements are also central in the operations of global organisations, such as the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Wildlife Fund.

Nowadays, people are more conscious of sustainable living and lifestyle choices. They buy products that have been responsibly sourced from environmentally friendly sources, so SMEs will find that this trend could be lucrative for their operations (Álvarez-Herranz & Macedo-Ruíz, 2021). Sustainability in business operations refers to the three pillars of environmental, social, and economic responsibility.

Environmental responsibility refers to the awareness of resources and the environment. Recently there has been a growing trend toward sustainable products. In the past, most companies made it their priority to make a profit, but now in modern society; businesses have become more environmentally responsible and aware of the sustainable future for the current generation and those to come (Álvarez-Herranz & Macedo-Ruíz, 2021). Businesses are creating eco-friendly products, using recycled materials, or helping the environment in some way, such as not polluting or recycling waste materials from their business operations. Businesses seek to be environmentally responsible because it is good for business from a marketing point of view and a moral point of view.

On the other hand, social responsibility is similar to environmental responsibility in that it has also become a trend for businesses to be socially responsible; however, social responsibility refers to the relationship between the business and its employees and its community. The idea here is that companies need to operate sustainably and empower the local communities to create a more sustainable society. When companies operate sustainably, they can work with their employees, suppliers, and customers in a beneficial way for all parties (Alejandrino, Mercante & Bovea, 2021). The prospect means companies should be transparent and honest with their customer base. It would be wrong if a company decided not to tell its customers where they sourced their wood from, giving the impression that it was taken from a sustainable source when it was actually taken illegally or unsustainably. Thus, social responsibility is a company's duty to operate in a beneficial method for society.

Economic responsibility is the primary factor of sustainable operations. Economic sustainability includes employment opportunity, profitability, and taking steps to mitigate social and environmental impacts.

With such considerations, these three pillars are the cornerstones of sustainability in business. The main drivers behind these changes are diverse, but all relate to customer demand. Many companies believe that if they do not become sustainable, they will lose their customer base, especially where there is fierce competition for customers, such as in the hospitality industry or retail sector; this applies even more so for companies like supermarkets, who need to be sustainable as resources are needed from their suppliers (Verma, Jain & Agrawal, 2021). Therefore, sustainability has become a major requirement in the successful operations of SMEs, even in Cyprus.

Regardless of the recognized level of importance of sustainability, both public and private sectors have been criticized for their limited progress in applying the concept. As noted by Bramwell and Lane (2013) "tourism businesses often have few reasons to want to promote sustainable tourism". Additionally, Villarino and Font (2015) analyzed the online presence of 40 hotel websites and found that sustainability is still a less-explored dimension in organizational communication. On the other hand, Tölkes (2018) considers that "sustainability communication sets out to make consumers aware of the availability of sustainable travel products, to inform consumers how these offerings meet their needs and comply with sustainability criteria, and ultimately to stimulate pro-sustainable purchases" (Tölkes, 2018, p. 10).

In September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development SD was adopted by all United Nations member states, who agreed to fully implement the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The focus of all industries and governments is to find ways to communicate their sustainable actions. However, when it comes to sustainability communication among SMEs, it seems that this area remains underdeveloped. Although SMEs are those supporting local communities, the focus is mostly on the activities of big corporations. Also, compared to big corporations, SMEs are often unable to make their sustainability initiatives known. Therefore, the current paper examines how Digital Marketing Communication (DMC) can enhance the implementation and publicity of sustainable initiatives in Cypriot SME hotels. To do so, it presents and discusses the case of the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI), and how it collaborates with a specific number of hotels.

2.2.Digital Media

Digital media has many applications, including real-time decision-making and interactive communication platforms. They are all forms of technological applications used in digital marketing communication, along with their implications for the environment and society (Troise & Camilleri, 2021). Digital media can provide businesses with a wide range of benefits and costs. The benefits include eliminating print media costs, reducing paper usage, production waste minimization, and lower printing costs due to digital data transmission. However, the cost is that of storage, hardware, software, and people.

Digital media can educate customers or the public on environmental issues and concerns. The venture can be done with documentaries, environmental scientific data, short films, or even case studies based on sustainable development. Digital platforms are also useful in educating the public on social issues and concerns. They include the use of infographics to explain corruption, transparency issues, human rights abuses, and how these issues affect businesses in other countries. Digital media are very useful for SMEs as they have a fast-paced environment, demanding quick response times (Krings, Palmer & Inversini, 2021). Thus, digital marketing communication and sustainability collaboration have much potential in revolutionizing public relations and corporate social responsibility in the modern business environment.

2.3.At the intersection of Digital Marketing Communication and Sustainability

Digital Marketing Communication can be used in sustainability initiatives by generating awareness and demand. The venture is achieved with digital marketing communication in the social and environmental sectors, which indicates that such companies will enhance their reputations while committing to their corporate social responsibilities (Thaha et al., 2021). Businesses need to become more aware of their local market and global goals. Towards this end, the current paper embarks to explore the collaboration between Cypriot Hotels and CSTI could be further enhances by the Digital Marketing Communication.

3. Methodology

This paper examines how Hotel SMEs can utilize Digital Marketing Communication towards making known and enriching their collaborative actions with non-profit organisations. To address this purpose, the paper draws on findings collected through Interviews and one Focus Group. The authors contacted eight semi-structured interviews and one Focus group. The participants have been selected form a specific region in Cyprus, Famagusta area. The area has been purposively selected as currently CSTI in partnership with TUI Care foundation and Travel Foundation implement the 'keep our sand and sea plastic free" project with exceptional results, which have been broadcasted' by Euronews and other international media. CSTI has a strong presence in the area with a great number of members of independent and chain hotels.

Table 4: Lists of Participants per Research Method

Focus Groups with Managers	Interviews with Managers
•Hotel Business development consultants •Hoteliers •SMEs tourism entrepreneurs •Academics •Marketing executives •Financial executives •Project Managers	•6 hotels (4-Stars) •2 hotels (5-Stars)

As presented in Table 1, the interviews were conducted with managers in 4- and 5-Star hotels, whereas, the focus group included key industry stakeholders. The purpose of interviews and focus group was to explore stakeholders' ongoing sustainable initiatives; how their sustainable actions are made known to the public; how these activities could be communicated in a better way, how a greater impact can be created, and whether Digital Marketing Communication can be utilized to increase awareness. The study was carried out between November 2019 and July 2021. The findings are presented and discussed in the following section.

4.Findings

The findings can be divided into two main categories: a) individual Hotel entities, and b) Hotel-Groups. Concerning individual entities, the findings reveal that hotels do not have adequate resources to keep up with the requirements of a marketing communication. Such findings are interesting in the light of the 26th UN Climate Change conference, which took place in Glasgow, Scotland between 1-12 November, 2021. The conference, underlined the need for companies' to engage with sustainable development (Bowcott et al, 2021), along with the transformation of different industries' business models for sustainability (Handley, 2021). '[A] sustainable business model (SBM), represents how a company creates, delivers, and captures value while generating positive effects and/or reducing negative impacts on the environment and society' (Minatogawa et al, 2022: 1). However, it seems that not all hotels are ready to adopt the 'UN Climate Conference' suggestions. Drawing on our findings, it seems that attempts to adopt sustainable initiatives by individual Hotel entities might not have the expected results and may end up being unsustainable due to inadequate resources.

Moreover, even though hotels find sustainable practices and their involvement with CSTI beneficial, they do not communicate all relevant actions to their staff and clientele effectively. Sustainability initiatives and achievements are communicated in an analog manner, through employees' discussions on the job. At the same time, instead of developing their own media content, they simply rely on the material produced and uploaded online by CSTI. Their communication approach is analog, fragmented and allows space for improvement, especially in the field of digitization and Digital Marketing Communication. In addition, due to their inability to catch up with digitization, individual hotels miss opportunities to participate in webinars through the CSTI Academy and collaborate with big online tour operators.

Table 2: Individual Hotels' approach to Sustainability and Marketing Communication
•Analog and Individualistic
•Fragmented due to limited resources
•Sustainability initiatives are not communicated to clientele effectively
•Space for improvement through Digitisation and Process Improvement

Group hotels, on the other hand, have a different approach. Marketing and communication is handled by dedicated personnel who are tasked to produce social media content and communicate all sustainable activities. Their approach is systematic and often results to increased awareness among clientele prior to their arrival to the hotel. In addition, this approach enables hotels to align and adopt the philosophy and strategic goals set by CSTI.

Table 3: Group-Hotels' approach to Sustainability and Marketing Communication
•Sustainability initiatives are communicated by dedicated personnel •Production and dissemination of content through Social Media •Systematic and organized approach to Marketing Communication •Strategic alignment between hotels and CSTI

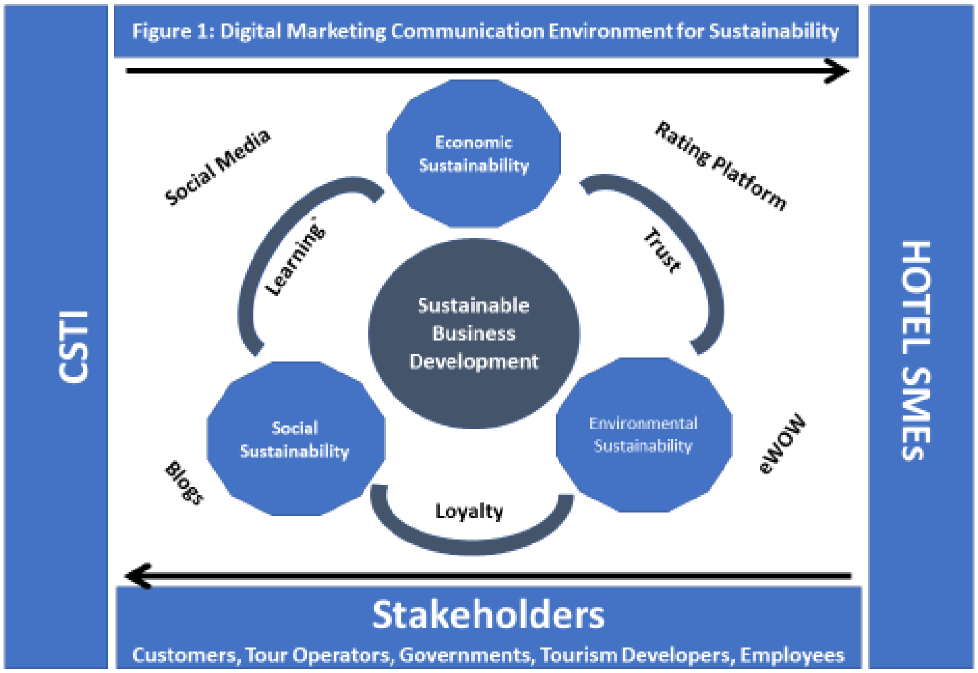
Moreover, the findings suggest that Tour Operators expect by both Independent and Group Hotels, to act responsibly and engage with sustainable tourism activities. They expect hotels to support the local community and create a positive impact, whereas, their engagement with sustainable actions is no longer a choice but a mandatory requirement for business viability. Once again, such findings resonate with existing literature (Efthymiou and Markatos, 2022) and the outcomes of the 26th UN Climate Change conference. It seems that international tour operators, have already aligned the UN's policies sustainable business development (Bowcott et al, 2021), and at the same time, they demand that their partners to adopt a similar approach. Nevertheless, while big hotel groups benefit from CSTI activities and actions, especially in regard to various green certifications and CSR policies, they do not contribute resources in creating awareness around important aspects, such as of the collaboration between hotels and NGOs.

Moreover, according to the stakeholders who participated in the focus group, the attempt to implement sustainability initiatives in the Cypriot hotel sector has been a path full of obstacles. The same applies for the actions of CSTI, which is a non-for-profit organization, relying solely on membership fees and sponsors. However, the most important findings, point to the need for the process to become digitized. The impact of CSTI and its activities could be considerably higher if the results were communicated throughout Cyprus in a consistent way. For instance, the webpage could include an improved website members' section. The existing electronic newsletter, which is distributed to the members, could better fit in the digitization era by being an interactive report, and being available as a hotel app. In addition, CSTI's awareness campaigns need to repeat some of their previously implemented strategies. After 5 years of successful collaborations with TUI Care Foundation, IUCN, Travel Foundation and Prince Albert II foundation, similar strategic collaborations will facilitate sustainable income and growth.

5.Conclusion and Discussion

The current study, identifies a number of weaknesses that could be addressed towards enhancing the implementation and publicity of sustainability in the Cypriot Hotel sector. First, it is important for Independent hotel entities to utilize the technologies and opportunities offered by the digital realm. Digitization is now evident in a very wide range of industries and sectors, including the hospitality (Efthymiou, Orphanidou and Panayiotou, 2019), the cruise industry (Efthymiou et al, 2022) banking (Batiz-Lazo and Efthymiou, 2016a; 2016b), education (Efthymiou and Zarifis, 2021; Doukanari et al, 2021) and platform-based businesses (Sdoukopoulo et al, 2021). While digitization diffuses rapidly, independent hotels will have no option but to resort to DMC and social media. Such an approach will facilitate better collaboration with CSTI, better broadcasting of sustainability activities, and better awareness among the public.

Moreover, it is evident that an efficient communication strategy requires the involvement of all stakeholders in a two-way communication process. This process relies on an ongoing interactive sense-giving and sense-making process that is achieved through the development and enhancement of owned media. It also implies that every hotel should seek to be constantly connected to their stakeholders. A visual representation of this relationship appears in Figure 1.



At the centre of Graph 1, we have Sustainable Business Development, along with its main sustainability components, namely Economic, Social, and Environmental. The relationship of these components cultivate an environment of trust, loyalty and learning among all stakeholders. In other words, stakeholders such as governments, tour operators, and tourism developers (lower box on the graph) learn to trust a hotel for being a responsible citizen, and implementing sustainable practices. Gradually, customers and tour operations express loyalty to the hotel. At the same time, some stakeholder groups, such as employees and customers have the opportunity to become aware and learn about those initiatives. Besides, employees will be responsible to implement them. This dynamic process exists within the Digital Marketing Communication Environment, which includes Social Media, Rating Platforms, electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), Blogs, and other components. All these components can facilitate communication of sustainability initiatives to internal/ external stakeholders and broader audiences. At the same time, the graph presents how the collaboration between hotels and CSTI (the two boxes on the right and left) thrives as a two-way traffic, inside and around the Digital Marketing Communication Environment.

Overall, the graph represents how hotels can utilize Digital Marketing Communication (DMC) along with their collaboration with CSTI, to enhance the publicity of sustainability initiatives and cultivate an awareness of various stakeholders. The accommodation industry should constantly seek ways to improve their online and offline presence to enhance their unique value proposition, and consequently, their competitiveness and profitability.

6.Implications and further research lines

Finally, our findings reveal that collaboration between Cypriot hotels collaborate and non-governmental organizations (NOGs), in the field of sustainability, is indeed possible. It is well known that such partnerships are beneficial, since NGOs possess expertise that companies often lack. This is indeed the case in the field of sustainability, where Cypriot hotels are still in their early stages. Based on our findings, while hotels are aware of the need to adopt a responsible social and environmental approach, they do not possess the know-how. On the other hand, CSTI, one of the first and most advanced Cypriot organizations in its field, has a lot of skills, training, technology and knowledge to share. At the same time, CSTI may act as a bridge between hotels and the digital environment.

Acknowledgments: The authors gratefully acknowledge the significant contribution of the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative.

References

Alejandrino, C., Mercante, I., & Bovea, M. D. (2021). Life cycle sustainability assessment: Lessons learned from case studies. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, *87*, 106517.

Álvarez-Herranz, A., & Macedo-Ruíz, E. (2021). An evaluation of the three pillars of sustainability in cities with high Airbnb presence: A case study of the city of Madrid. *Sustainability*, *13*(6), 3220.

Batiz-Lazo, B. and Efthymiou, L. (2016a), The Book of Payments: Historical and Contemporary Views on the Cashless Economy, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Batiz-Lazo, B. and Efthymiou, L. (2016c), 'Preface: News from the cashless front', in B. Batiz Lazo and L. Efthymiou (eds), The Book of Payments: Historical and Contemporary Views on the Cashless Economy, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. ix–xi.

Berthon, P. R., Pitt, L. F., Plangger, K., & Shapiro, D. (2012). Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: Implications for international marketing strategy. *Business Horizons*, *55*(3), 261–271.

Bowcott, H.; Pacthod, D.; Pinner, D. What COP26 Means for Business. McKinsey. Available online: https://www.mckinsey.com.br/business-functions/sustainability/our-insights/cop26-made-net-zero-a-core-principle-for-business-heres-how-leaderscan-act (accessed 4 February 2022).

Bramwell, B., and Lane, B (2013). Getting from here to there: Systems change, behavioural change and sustainable tourism. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 21 (1) (2013), pp. 1-4.

Doukanari, E., Ktoridou, D., Efthymiou, L. and Epaminonda, E. (2021) The Quest for Sustainable Teaching Praxis: Opportunities and Challenges of Multidisciplinary and Multicultural Teamwork. Sustainability 2021, 13, 7210. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13137210.

Edwards, D., Cheng, M., Wong, I. A., Zhang, J., & Wu, Q. (2017). Ambassadors of knowledge sharing: Co-produced travel information through tourist-local social media exchange. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 29*(2), 690–708.

Efthymiou, L. and Markatos, G. (2022) Carrying Capacity and Sustainable Development. In Buhalis, D. Encyclopedia of Tourism Management and Marketing. Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800377486.carrying.capacity.

Efthymiou, L., Dekoulou, E., Orphanidou, Y., Sdoukopoulos, E., Perra, V.M., Boile, M. and Bras, I. (2022) 'Crisis, adaptation and sustainability: digital system interoperability in the Cruise Industry' in Thrassou, A., Vrontis, D., Weber, Y., Shams, R., Tsoukatos, E., Efthymiou, L. (Eds) Business Under Crisis: Avenues for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability. Book series: Palgrave Studies in Cross-Disciplinary Business Research, In Association with EuroMed Academy of Business, Palgrave Macmillan (Springer), Cham, Switzerland.

Efthymiou, L. and Zarifis, A. (2021) Modelling students' voice for enhanced quality in online management education, The International Journal of Management Education, Volume 19, Issue 2, 2021, 100464, ISSN 1472-8117, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100464.

Efthymiou, L., Orphanidou, Y. and Panayiotou, G. (2020) 'Delineating the changing frontstage and backstage segregation in high-end and luxury hotels' Hospitality & Society, 10(3): 287-312. https://doi.org/10.1386/hosp_00025_1.

Efthymiou, L., Orphanidou, Y. and Panayiotou, G. (2019) 'The latest from the tourism front: Technology, innovation and disruption', The European Financial Review, 2019, 4:5, pp. 39–43.

Efthymiou, L. (2018). Worker body-art in upper-market hotels: Neither accepted, nor prohibited. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 74, pp.99-108.

3Handley, L. The Road to Cop26. CNBC. Available online: https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/02/larry-fink-fears-for-energytransition-warns-of-market-arbitrage.html (accessed on 2 December 2021).

Jermsittiparsert, K (2020). "The Moderation Effect of Supply Chain Information Technology Capabilities on the Relationship between Customer Relationship Management with Organizational Performance of Thai Restaurants and Hotels". In Proceedings of the 2020 11th International Conference on E-Education, E-Business, E-Management, and E-Learning, pp. 338-346.

Jermsittiparsert, K, Sutduean, J, & Sriyakul, T (2018). "Social Customer Relationship Management Capabilities and Customer Relationship Performance: Moderating Role of Social Media (Face-book) Usage among Indonesian Firms". Opcion, 34(86), pp. 1257-1273.

Jermsittiparsert, K, Sutduean, J, & Sriyakul, T (2019). "Determinants Of Social Media Usage (Facebook) to Create Brand Awareness among Indonesian Consumers". International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 5(2), pp. 1272-1289.

Kim, J, Kang, S, Lee, K, H (2021) "Evolution of digital marketing communication: Bibliometric analysis and network visualization from key articles". Journal of Business Research, 130, pp. 552-563

Krings, W., Palmer, R., & Inversini, A. (2021). Industrial marketing management digital media optimization for B2B marketing. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *93*, 174-186.

Munsch, A. (2021). Millennial and Generation Z digital marketing communication and advertising effectiveness: A qualitative exploration. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, *31*(1), 10-29.

Sdoukopoulos, E., Perra, V-M., Boile, M., Efthymiou, L., Dekoulou, P., & Orphanidou, Y. (2021). Connecting Cruise Lines with Local Supply Chains for Enhancing Customer Experience: A Platform Application in Greece. In E. Nathanail, G. Adamos, & I. Karakikes (Eds.), Advances in Mobility-as-a-Service Systems (Vol. 1278, pp. 1086-1096). Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-61075-3_104.

Thaha, A. R., Maulina, E., Muftiadi, R. A., & Alexandri, M. B. (2021). Digital marketing and SMEs: a systematic mapping study. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, *5113*.

Tölkes, C. (2018). Sustainability communication in tourism – A literature review Tourism Management Perspectives, 27 (2018), pp. 10-21, 10.1016/j.tmp.2018.04.002

Troise, C., & Camilleri, M. A. (2021). The use of digital media for marketing, CSR communication, and stakeholder engagement. In *Strategic corporate communication in the digital age*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Verma, V., Jain, J. K., & Agrawal, R. (2021). Sustainability Assessment of Organization Performance: A Review and Case Study. *Operations Management and Systems Engineering*, 205-219.

Villarino, J, Font, X, (2015). Sustainability marketing myopia: The lack of persuasiveness in sustainability communication. Journal of Vacation Marketing, 21 (4) (2015), pp. 326-335

Vipaporn, T, Pakvichap, V, & Jermsittiparsert, K (2019). “Analyzing the Usage of Internet of Things among Indonesian pharmaceutical Customers: Role of Social Media related Determinants”. Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy, 10(2), pp. 352-361.

Xu, Y, Yen, D. C, Lin, B, & Chou, D. C (2002). “Adopting Customer Relationship Management Technology". Industrial Management & Data Systems.

Message Appeals During COVID-19: The Advantage of Farmers' Altruistic Message Appeal in Generating Engagement with Social Media Posts

Dorit Zimand-Sheiner [a], Ofrit Kol [a] and Shalom Levy [b]

[a] *School of Communication, Ariel University, Ariel, Israel; Email: *doritzs@ariel.ac.il*

[b] *Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Ariel University, Ariel, Israel*

Keywords: *Message appeal, social media, direct-to-consumer (D2C), engagement, crisis, agri-food, altruism, egoism*

The global Covid-19 pandemic caused disruption in food supply chains around the world which led small and medium agri-food enterprises to shift sales from the business sector to local individual consumers (Kol, Zimand-Sheiner, and Levy 2021). This shift involved constructing a new home-delivery-oriented operation model (or enhancing an existing one), including a direct-to-consumer supply chain, targeted to local consumers. Supplying produce to local individual consumers highlights an important aspect of the new ecosystem: consumers are now an important factor in the value creation process. According to exchange theory, the direct communication between small and medium agri-food enterprises and the consumer, mainly through social networks, is an important tool for motivating consumers to participate in the exchange process. This has created a substantial increase in the use of social networks by small and medium agri-food enterprises for direct communication with customers (Newton 2020). Persuasive marketing communications, such as brand posts on social media, are essential to this type of food marketing, contributing to financial success (Haase et al. 2018). Even so, local farmers indicated that they encounter difficulties in managing messages in marketing communications channels (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development 2020). Thus, it is important to understand the effectiveness of how farmers use social media messaging. These messages are designed to influence consumers by appealing to their motivations and values and is referred to as message appeal (Zimand Sheiner, Kol, and Levy 2021). Moreover, analysing the message appeals and subsequent consumers engagement enables us to highlight the most effective consumer motivations to buy directly from farmers during a time of crisis.

The literature indicates that during a crisis consumers are motivated in their buying behaviour by either self-care (egoistic motivation) or caring for others (altruism) (Ahuja et al. 2021). Previous research findings on identifying which message (altruistic or egoistic) is more effective in food marketing have proven contradictory. In terms of optimal effectiveness, some favoured altruistic messages (Jäger and Weber 2020), others favoured egoistic messages (Birch, Memery, and De Silva Kanakaratne 2018), and others still found the combination of the two messages to be the most effective (Kareklas, Carlson, and Muehling 2014). Moreover, the relative effectiveness of each motivation has yet to be examined in a time of disruptive change following a crisis. Therefore, closing this research gap is very important for agri-food businesses selling directly to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the current research aim is to monitor farmers' social media communication messages and analyse their posts on Facebook brand pages during the COVID-19 crisis. Specifically, this study (1) explores the main message appeals farmers use in their Facebook brand page communications; and (2) examines their effectiveness reflected in consumer behavioural engagement. Accordingly, the following research questions were constructed:

RQ1 – What are the main message appeals (altruistic or egoistic) farmers used in their Facebook brand page communications during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2 – Which message appeals were more effective in achieving consumer behavioural engagement (i.e., consumer likes, comments, and shares)?

The study employed quantitative content analysis of Facebook posts during six months from the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis on March 13, 2020, to September 18, 2020. Facebook was chosen as the analysed platform due to the high level of penetration of Facebook in Israel: 70.5% penetration. Data was collected from Ifat Group, an Israeli media monitoring and business information company. The data included active Facebook pages of 48 farmers in total, and all their posts were collected during the abovementioned period. Of 1030 collected posts, 1024 posts were found to include messages regarding distribution of food from local farmers directly to consumers. A detailed coding category for the coding book, based on previous studies, was built. Since most posts contained two parts, i.e. text and visual, the coding book referred to each separately. The coding book consisted of the following categories: (1) *Post main message appeals*: Altruistic, egoistic or both equally (2) The altruistic and egoistic message appeals were further coded into four types of altruistic motives (ethnocentric, toward farmers, toward the environment, and maintaining public health), and four types of egoistic motives (economic, emotional, functional, and hedonic values). (3) *Consumer behavioural engagement* was coded by counting consumer behavioural reactions to the post: number of comments, shares and like for every post, as attached to each Facebook post. Cohen's kappa inter-coder reliability was computed to measure agreement between coders and ranged between k = .739 and k = .934, indicating an acceptable level of reliability in content research.

To answer the first research question, we analysed post main message appeal. Table 1 shows that in both text and visuals, farmers used more egotistic message appeals than altruistic message appeals in their posts. Specifically, when egoistic motivation was the main message appeal, the farmers concentrated on functional and emotional motives. However, when altruism was the main message appeal, altruistic feelings toward the farmers were the most frequent messaging used.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for messages in text and visuals (n=1024)

Main message appeal	Valid percent (frequency)	Motives	Valid percent (frequency)
Altruistic (text)	8.4 (86)		
Altruistic (visual)	17.3 (173)		
		Ethnocentrism – text	30.2 (26)
		Ethnocentrism - visual	5.1 (8)
		The farmers – text	38.4 (33)
		The farmers – visual	14 (88)
		The environment – text	3.5 (3)
		The environment – visual	80.9 (127)
		Maintaining public health – text	27.9 (24)
		Maintaining public health - visual	0
Egoistic (text)	67.8 (694)		
Egoistic (visual)	75 (750)		
		Economic value – text	16.5 (115)
		Economic value - visual	11.5 (84)
		Emotional value - text	22 (153)
		Emotional value - visual	3.6 (26)
		Functional value – text	51.1 (356)
		Functional value - visual	51.4 (375)
		Hedonistic value – text	10.5 (73)
		Hedonistic value - visual	33.5 (244)
Both equally (text)	23.8 (244)		
Both equally (visual)	7.7 (77)		

A one-way ANOVA test was used to answer the second research question (see Table 2). The tests showed significant differences among the three text messages in number of 'shares' (F = 8.99, $p < .01$) and 'comments' (F = 4.82, $p < .01$), but not in the 'likes' interaction. Specifically, in the three conditions 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' - altruism received the highest mean score.

For the visual condition (see Table 3), the one-way ANOVA tests showed significant differences among the three post message appeals in all interactions with the post: 'likes' (F = 10.65, $p < .01$), 'shares' (F = 12.37, $p < .01$) and 'comments' (F = 5.75, $p < .01$). In this case, the integration of both altruism and egoism in the message appeal gained the highest mean score in all three interactions: ‘likes’, ‘shares’ and ‘comments’. Altruism had the second highest mean score and egoism the lowest mean score in all interactions.

Table 2. One-way ANOVA test among message appeals in the text and engagement

Engagement	Message appeal	N	Mean	Std.	F	Sig.
Like	Altruism	76	451.9	51.83	1.54	.215
	Egoism	739	279.2	10.27		
	Both equally	206	216.3	15.07		
	Total	1021	284.7	8.9		
Share	Altruism	67	116.8	14.27	8.99	.000
	Egoism	677	36	1.38		
	Both equally	191	82.3	5.95		
	Total	935	57.8	1.89		
Comment	Altruism	59	85.1	11.07	4.82	.008
	Egoism	520	43.6	1.91		
	Both equally	153	72.7	5.88		
	Total	732	55.4	2.04		

Table 3. One-way ANOVA test among message appeals in the visual and engagement

Engagement	Message appeal	N	Mean	Std.	F	Sig.
Like	Altruism	157	80.1	263	10.65	.000
	Egoism	758	68.7	236.76		
	Both equally	83	220.7	579.95		
	Total	998	83.1	287.73197		
Share	Altruism	146	34.1	108.74	12.37	.000
	Egoism	696	19.1	31.42		
	Both equally	77	49.5	89.92		
	Total	919	24	58.08		
Comment	Altruism	115	22.7	75.71	5.75	.003
	Egoism	531	19.8	44.37		
	Both equally	70	43.8	85.36		
	Total	716	22.6	55.91		

Since the results showed that using altruism in the text is more effective for consumer behavioural engagement, we further examined which of the distinct altruistic motives is the most effective (Table 4). It was found that for all interactions with the altruistic posts, altruistic feelings toward the farmers received the highest mean.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics for engagement by altruistic motives

Engagement	Altruistic motives	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Likes	Ethnocentrism	26	33.5	28
	The farmers	33	256.8	719.4
	The environment	3	32	30.5
	Public health	24	105	173.2
	Total	86	139.1	461.2
Shares	Ethnocentrism	22	10.1	11.8
	The farmers	28	77	169.1
	The environment	3	34.6	28.3
	Public health	21	16.5	18.1
	Total	74	38.2	108.1
Comments	Ethnocentrism	19	10.2	13.2
	The farmers	28	59.1	118.9
	The environment	2	10	8.4
	Public health	15	15	16.2
	Total	64	32.7	82

In conclusion, the most interesting and surprising finding of the current research is that while farmers concentrate mainly in egoistic message appeals, during a crisis, consumers are motivated more by messages based on helping others than focused on their own self benefit. These findings make a significant contribution to the debate on which motivation, altruistic or egoistic, is more effective for promoting sustainable (or green) products with the emphasis on the context of a crisis. These findings can be viewed in light of the low self-control perspective which explains the positive relationship between crisis and consumer altruistic inclinations (Ahuja et al. 2021), suggesting that helping others in times of crisis helps individuals to reduce their own anxiety and maintain self-control (Wang et al. 2019). Additionally, self-affirmation theory (Steele 1988) adds another point of view. This theory asserts that individuals are motivated to maintain integrity of the self, which includes being a good group member. Thus, a threat to self-integrity, such as a pandemic, may result in a defensive state that increases motivation to help one's society in order to help one's self. Hence, in our case, altruism is found to be a self-integrity mechanism which leads to higher behavioural engagement. This study contributes to the literature by adding new perspectives to the debate on the effectiveness of altruistic and egoistic message appeals. First it postulates that in a time of crisis, an altruistic message appeal is more effective in creating consumer engagement. Second, the research further adds important insights into the motivating factor that comprise specific message appeals. It demonstrates the importance of looking into various motives rather than the narrow dichotomy of altruism vs egoism – both for theoretical and practical considerations. This viewpoint led to the conclusion that in a time of crisis, altruism toward farmers is the optimal form of messaging, rather than other altruistic or egoistic motives.

References

Ahuja, Kanika K., Debanjan Banerjee, Kritika Chaudhary, and Chehak Gidwani. 2021. "Fear, Xenophobia and Collectivism as Predictors of Well-Being during Coronavirus Disease 2019: An Empirical Study from India." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 67 (1): 46–53. doi:10.1177/0020764020936323.

Birch, Dawn, Juliet Memery, and Maheshan De Silva Kanakaratne. 2018. "The Mindful Consumer: Balancing Egoistic and Altruistic Motivations to Purchase Local Food." *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 40 (October 2017). Elsevier Ltd: 221–228. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.10.013.

Haase, Janina, Klaus Peter Wiedmann, Jannick Bettels, and Franziska Labenz. 2018. "How to Best Promote My Product? Comparing the Effectiveness of Sensory, Functional and Symbolic Advertising Content in Food Marketing." *British Food Journal* 120 (8): 1792–1806. doi:10.1108/BFJ-01-2018-0058.

Jäger, Anna Katharina, and Anja Weber. 2020. "Can You Believe It? The Effects of Benefit Type versus Construal Level on Advertisement Credibility and Purchase Intention for Organic Food." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 257. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.120543.

Kareklas, Ioannis, Jeffrey R. Carlson, and Darrel D. Muehling. 2014. "'I Eat Organic for My Benefit and Yours': Egoistic and Altruistic Considerations for Purchasing Organic Food and Their Implications for Advertising Strategists." *Journal of Advertising* 43 (1): 18–32. doi:10.1080/00913367.2013.799450.

Kol, Ofrit, Dorit Zimand-Sheiner, and Shalom Levy. 2021. "A (Local) Apple a Day: Pandemic-Induced Changes in Local Food Buying, a Generational Cohort Perspective." *Journal of International Management* Forthcomin.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. 2020. *The Ministry of Agriculture Conducts Analysis of the Online Marketing of Fresh Agricultural Produce Directly from Farmer to Consumer during the Corona Period in Order to Offer Farmers Suitable Online Training, Enabling Them to Digitally Market Produce Dir*. https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys Units/Spokesmanship and Publicity Department/publications/2020/Pages/marketing_operation.aspx%0A%0A.

Newton, M. 2020. "How Social Networks Are Helping Indian Farmers Hit By the Coronavirus Lockdowns." *Reset*. https://en.reset.org/blog/how-social-networks-are-helping-indian-farmers-hit-coronavirus-lockdowns-06102020.

Steele, Claude M. 1988. "The Psychology of Self-Affirmation: Sustaining the Integrity of the Self." In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 21:261–302. doi:10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60229-4.

Wang, Yilu, Xin Zhang, Jingyu Li, and Xiaofei Xie. 2019. "Light in Darkness: Low Self-Control Promotes Altruism in Crises." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 41 (3). Routledge: 201–213. doi:10.1080/01973533.2019.1616549.

Zimand Sheiner, Dorit, Ofrit Kol, and Shalom Levy. 2021. "It Makes a Difference! Impact of Social and Personal Message Appeals on Engagement with Sponsored Posts." *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* 15 (4): 641–660. doi:10.1108/JRIM-12-2019-0210.

Consumers' Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Sustainability in the European Fashion Sector: An Empirical Investigation of Different Generation Groups Across Three European Countries

Theodore Kazakis [a], Ioanna Papasolomou [b], Alkis Thrassou [c] and Evi Dekoulou [d]

[a] *Department of Management, School of Business, University of Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: theodkazakis@gmail.com*

[b] *Department of Management, School of Business University of Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: Papasolomou.i@unic.ac.cy*

[c] *Department of Management, School of Business University of Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: Thrassou.a@unic.ac.cy*

[d] *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; Email: dekoulou@jour.auth.gr*

Keywords: *sustainability, consumer behaviour, fast-fashion industry, generation groups*

1.Introduction

The aim of the research study is to investigate the impact of corporate sustainability programs adopted by the European fashion industry on consumers, their mindsets and consumption preferences and choices. Through this investigation there will be an opportunity to have a better understanding on the mechanics that take place in the purchase behaviour and the impact of sustainability programs in it. The research study will use a combination of secondary and primary data sources to:

1. Carry out an in-depth exploration of the relevant literature in order to uncover the existent knowledge and understanding in the areas of sustainability in the fashion industry context and consumer behaviour.

2. Develop a conceptual model integrating the mediating and moderating factors towards sustainability programs, corporate and employer brand and their communication efforts, and consumer behaviour.

3. Propose a set of hypotheses based on the relationships suggested by the conceptual model.

4. Test the conceptual framework (hypotheses) in the European fashion sector by focusing on three of the largest fashion retailers and three different generation groups of consumers namely X, Y and Z representing three European countries.

5. Modify and verify the model based on the empirical evidence.

2.Literature Review

Through the past decades and under different research approaches, the concepts of CSR and sustainability are closely related, and, in many cases, they can be seen used with almost identical meaning (Reilly & Larya, 2018). The existence of the organization establishes corporate sustainability as a concept, while CSR sits closer within the management approach, which can be used to address specific issues within a more focused level (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2020).

Hedstrom (2018) in "What It Is and How to Measure It" supports that sustainability "is the pursuit of a business growth strategy that creates long-term shareholder value by seizing opportunities and managing risks related to the company's environmental and social impacts. Sustainability includes conventional environment, health, and safety (EHS) management; community involvement and philanthropy; labour and workplace conditions as well as elements of corporate citizenship, corporate governance, supply chain, and procurement" (pp. 293). Empirical studies in the area of sustainability focused primarily on understanding the factors that drive corporations to establish such programs, the processes that take part within the organizations in order to develop them and the outcomes the final sustainability strategy and implementation (Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016). The differentiation can be attributed to the point of focus of each study and the examination of different motivators, stakeholders etc. (Brammer & Millington 2004; Campbell 2007; Chin et al. 2013; Kassinis & Vafeas 2006; McWilliams & Siegel 2011).

In the past few decades, the field of Sustainability has become the centre of great interest for both global corporations and a variety of their stakeholders (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Carroll, 1999; McWilliams, Siegel & Wright, 2006; Papasolomou-Doukakis, Krambia-Kapardis & Katsioloudes, 2005; Siegel & Wright, 2006). Heightened interest from internal and external stakeholders (Peloza & Shang, 2010), has been fueled by intense criticism and grass-roots campaigns from pressure groups regarding production, the sourcing of raw materials, the supply chain methods and working conditions (McWilliams, Siegel & Wright, 2006).

2.1. Fashion Industry and Sustainability

In recent decades, the fashion industry has been increasingly connected to considerations on the processes utilized in its production and supply chain. The issues that have been gradually seen on fashion industry and in regard to sustainability, could be connected to recent trends and the wider globalization of the industry. Its operations spread over different functions, different parties external to the organization are involved and there is a vast geographical coverage (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). Turker & Altuntas (2014) attribute one major part to the relocation of manufacturing sites, which had a negative impact on traditional European industries of production. More to that, Turker & Altuntas (2014) underpin the impact of the extended fashion supply chain and the heavy environmental burden it imposes from increased transportation mileage, taking also into consideration the need to provide orders to consumers as fast as possible. Increasing consumption levels and consumer demand over the past decades led businesses to utilize technological advancements in order to achieve mass production that takes over natural resources (Niinimaki & Hassi, 2011). This approach aims on profit maximization by satisfying growing demand disregarding the environmental impact of their ways of working (Turker & Altuntas, 2014).

Turker and Altuntas (2014) argue that the fast fashion industry's processes and structure are closely related to some of its unique elements, such as the "shortened lead-times, fast inventory turnovers and high order fulfilment rates of their products for customer demand”. The fast fashion industry has a highly competitive structure that puts pressure on costs and has an everchanging and impressively fast rate of new products offered in order to capture the latest trends. These conditions require the industry to demonstrate a high degree of flexibility combined with efficiency. However, this very need to maintain high levels of responsiveness, generates various ethical, employment and environmental concerns, according to Turker and Altuntas (2014). These concerns involve possible issues that are being disregarded, in order to achieve the desirable results, possible leading to non-sustainable ways of working.

On the side of the slow fashion industry, sustainability commitment is meant to deal with economic, social, and environmental issues, as Arrigo highlights in his research. More specifically, it is supported that management initiates communication efforts in order to raise awareness of the consumers in order to improve the reputation of the brand towards the company’s goal on sustainable development. (Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2020). Jung and Jin (2010), conducted a research focusing on the differences that can be seen when comparing slow fashion and environmentally sustainable fashion. They pointed out that slow fashion encompasses slow production and consumption (Jung & Jin, 2010).

Pedersen and Andersen (2016) explored the key issues that fashion industry faces in the implementation of more sustainable ways of working. Their suggestion was that most of these issues could be addressed by bringing together internal and external stakeholders and providing a field for common solutions. More to this, Majumdar and Sinha, point out that the lack of support by governmental initiatives and legislation negatively affects the outcome that stem from the sustainability.

2.2. Corporate Brand and Corporate Image

Companies respond to a range of issues when they are engaging with topics of sustainability (Balmer, 2010; Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane, 2020). Corporate brand and corporate image are 2 different yet related terms that can be often identified in literature of consumer behaviour (Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane, 2020). Karaosmanoglu, Altinigne, and Isiksal (2016) investigated the ethical stance of a company, which is connected to the corporate brand. They came to the conclusion that, social sustainability practices improved customer extra-role behaviour within the “firm-serving motivation condition” when a company is known for its ethical stance before sustainability activities. However, these practices were ineffective when a company's ethical visibility is implicit even in the public-serving motivation situation. Finally, Karaosmanoglu, Altinigne, and Isiksal (2016) argue that expressing a company's ethical corporate identity prior to social sustainability practices could be seen as a beneficial strategy for companies in emerging markets

One the other hand, corporate image is related to the perceptions that different stakeholders identify of what is the company and has been connected to financial outcomes to the company (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). Corporate image can be benefited by the sustainability strategy of a corporation as the latter represents a means to communicate with consumers and address the work being done. At the same time, failing in capturing social sustainability needs may conclude to the firm facing negative outcomes (Martinez et al., 2014; Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane, 2020). Corporate image could be the vehicle to pinpoint the original sustainability pillars inside the company. These pillars could be utilized in the long term strategy of social sustainability, in alignment with the company’s culture and key values. (Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane, 2020). The connection of sustainability and corporate image has been supported by existing literature in various areas, such as the consumer attitudes towards the organization (Lombart and Louis, 2014; Perez and Rodriguez-del-Bosque, 2015; Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane, 2020) and the cultivation of a more positive relation between the firm and consumers.

According to Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalan (2020) corporate identity can promote the development and implementation of sustainability initiatives by providing ways to best implement sustainability practices in business practice. Their findings stem from an investigation that was carried in companies in the UK. The research highlighted that corporate identity can be used as a merging platform to define the ways sustainability originates from values and vision, thus creating a common culture. Participants in Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane's (2020) qualitative research claimed that sustainability activities reflected a proactive agenda that demonstrated responsibility towards their stakeholders. However, such initiatives habitually focus on certain stakeholders and not primary ones, like their employees. Such stakeholders can be nearby communities (Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane, 2020).

H1: Consumer knowledge on sustainability agenda of a fashion brand will have a positive relationship to the brands corporate image

2.3. Sustainability in different generations and Employer Branding

The workplace of today consists of 3 generations. In these generations one may see the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Employer branding practices have been increasingly implemented in the last few years by a variety of industries. Employer branding strategies and activities contribute to organization attractiveness to the external audiences as they create, demonstrate, and reinforce the aspects that the company considers most appropriate in order to engage these audiences as an employer (Reis & Braga 2015; Collins & Kanar, 2013). In addition, employer branding is connected to a longer term strategy that builds on the overall agenda of the corporate brand, rather than capturing the recruitment/hiring needs of the company (Reis & Braga 2015).

Heoa and Muralidharana (2019) argue that millennials are a key target of marketing experts in order to support the sustainability characteristics of their products. They examined the connections among major environmental antecedents, such as environmental knowledge, perceived consumer effectiveness, and environmental concern on environmentally conscious consumer behaviour by carrying out an online survey. The younger Millennials of their sample revealed that environmental knowledge and environmental concerns were significant predictors of environmentally conscious consumer behaviour. More to this, perceived consumer behaviour was not directly related to environmentally conscious consumer behaviour. Furthermore, Heoa and Muralidharana (2019) noticed a strong mediating role among millennials of environmental concerns between environmental knowledge and environmentally conscious consumer behaviour, as well as perceived consumer effectiveness and environmentally conscious consumer behaviour.

Reis & Braga (2015) conducted a cross generational study on attitudes towards employer branding. Through their responses, they posited differences with regard to how each generation ranks the various employer attributes, and such ranking is clearer in Generation Y and not very clear among the Baby Boomers. More to this, Baby Boomers tend to prioritize more clearly and focus on the "Interest Value" when choosing an employer; most of the other attributes, although relevant, have no greater differentiation from each other. Younger generations (especially

Generation Y) seemed to be more sensitive regarding various employer attributes, distinguishing them more clearly (Reis & Braga, 2015).

H2: Consumer knowledge on sustainability agenda of a fashion brand will have a positive relationship to the brand's employer brand

H3: Younger generations will be positively connected to intention to support the brand via their purchase behaviour.

2.4. Consumer Behaviour

Consumers are a key stakeholder to the organization and many firms use extensive communication in order to support their social sustainability efforts to their consumers. Sustainability is often connected with consumer behaviour and the wider perception and attitudes towards the organization and its products (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2020, Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Young et al., 2009).

Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir (2020) argue that the fashion industry may find it difficult to promote environmentally friendly clothing in a way that gains sufficient and the desired consumer attention. Consumers may not be able to comprehend the sustainable background of a product as part of its identity, but rather as the total of their identity. It has been noted that consumers may exhibit an intention-behaviour gap regarding sustainable consumption in the means that it is possible that they do not necessarily translate this into sustainable actions (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Young et al., 2009). This means that it is possible that they may use a pro-environmental attitude and intention, but this may not be translating to a respective actual purchase (Rausch & Kopplin, 2020). A growing number of consumers make their purchasing decisions based on organizational behaviour beyond the profit motive (Rausch & Kopplin, 2020).

Park and Sohn (2018) conducted a research regarding consumer perceptions and behaviour toward green fashion, through the lenses of knowledge. The results of their study demonstrate that knowledge was one of the key factors connected to green purchase behaviour. Objective and subjective knowledge showed different influences on green attitude and purchase behaviour, with subjective knowledge having the bigger impact on green purchase behaviour. On the other hand, objective knowledge had significant effects on attitude, but it had no direct impact on green purchase behaviour. Its effects on green purchase behaviour were relatively less than the effects of subjective knowledge shedding light on the positive effect of sustainability on consumers' purchase intentions. Sustainable product attributes positively affect consumers' purchase intentions. Moreover, consumers show positive implicit attitudes toward sustainable luxury compared to sustainable fast fashion. In a research conducted by Rausch & Kopplin (2020), 462 participants were questioned in regard to their perceptions toward sustainable fashion. The quantitative data showed that the consumers' attitude towards the process of creation of the products, but also the sustainable fashion in general has the highest impact on purchase intention. More to that, findings demonstrated that consumers' greenwashing concerns negatively moderate this relation. Finally, the sample of the study, addressed that the aesthetic risk was responsible for a negative impact to the intention behaviour relation.

Desore and Narula (2018) have presented a context that describes the attitudes of consumers towards products that have been produced with sustainable methods. The factors that they posited as potential harmful for the eventual consumer behaviour include lack of knowledge on specific sustainable actions such us the raw materials used or in the supply chain, overpriced products and/or low quality, poorly designed or out of fashion items. Last, participants mentioned the state of confusion regarding labels and greenwashing as a reason for not engaging into purchasing sustainable products.

As of this day, research seems to conclude to a gap between the general attitudes of consumers towards sustainable fashion products and the eventual purchase behaviour. In the present study, there will be an effort to underpin key factors that may shed light in this gap.

H3: Consumer knowledge on fashion brand sustainability will be positively connected with an intention to support the brand via their purchase behaviour.

H4: Social Influence on consumers will have a negative connection to the intention to support the brand via their purchase behaviour.

H5: Consumer Personal Sacrifice will be negatively connected to an intention to support a brand via their purchase behaviour.

2.5. Sustainability and Culture

Sustainability may be considered a global issue, however, the existing literature pinpoints that the main support so far seems to lay on the western cultures and more developed countries (Jain, 2019; Yang, Song & Tong, 2017). Yang, Song & Tong (2017) carried out an extensive literature review on sustainable efforts of the fashion industry and highlight that most of the studies on fashion-related sustainability stem from developed Western markets. However, their findings conclude to a big focus of research to western cultures, whereas, sustainability issues pose more concerns in developing nations rather than developed ones.

Jain (2019) carried out an investigation regarding cultural differences in attitudes toward sustainable practices. In the discussion of existing literature, it became clear that individuals with high collectivism scores have more positive attitude toward a more sustainable lifestyle, demonstrating recycling behaviour, as compared to individuals with low collectivism scores. Consumers in collectivistic culture are willing to spend more on goods that are considered beneficial for the society as compared to consumers in individualistic culture (Jain, 2019). Collective societies place more emphasis on group achievement, and collective benefits rather than individual rewards (Jain, 2019). In collectivistic culture, the concern for nature is driven by anthropocentric value orientation and people preserve the environment to also support their society (Milfont & Duckitt 2006). While in individualistic culture, protection of environment by people is mainly driven by ego centric value orientation (Jain, 2019). Cervellon and Shammas (2013) conducted a research on sustainable fashion and noticed that a culture may be “eco” or “ego” centred. They argue that consumers in certain European countries, such as France and Italy, have a tendency to demonstrate their concerns for the environment in a more social way. On the other side, there are cultures where personal values, such as, quality, health and well-being are the key motivating factors behind sustainable luxury consumption. (Jain, 2019).

H6: More collectivistic cultures will be positively connected to intention to support the brand via their purchase behaviour.

3.Proposed Methodological Approach

Research in the field of sustainability so far seems to focus on conceptualizing sustainability in a theoretical level and providing empirical data on the situation in large corporations, linking sustainability with their antecedents and outcomes, often financial (Papasolomou-Doukakis, Krambia-Kapardis & Katsioloudes, 2005). The present proposal will attempt to create a better understanding of what is the situation of sustainability in the fashion industry today, capturing the situation within a multidimensional context that will put emphasis in different groups of consumers, taking into consideration, aspects such as generations and culture. In the meantime, the research will take into consideration the possible connections of consumer behaviour with both the corporate image and the employer branding. This will assist in reaching a better level of understanding on what the consumers of the fashion industry seem to be looking for today and the various aspects that may determine their purchase behaviour.

The stakeholder theory will be utilized in order to explore these attitudes. The stakeholder theory in social sustainability argues that the sustainability strategy of an organization is the result of the involvement and debate of different stakeholders, both internal and external (Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016). Different groups bring and support their agendas and the end result is a mixture where dominating are those who have increased power, provide their arguments as most urgent and their legitimacy in supporting a claim through their role in the organization (Brammer & Millington 2004; Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016). The stakeholder theory provides a wide basis for connecting social sustainability programs with their end results for the organization (i.e. employer branding, financial) and the wider external environment (i.e. Local societies, environment).

3.1. Research Methodology

In order to design and carry on the proposed research, it is important to choose the proper research philosophy. To do so, the researcher needed to consider the broader topic of sustainability in the fashion industry and, based on the literature review and the key goal of his own work, to examine the research philosophy that will enable his next steps and provide a clear path to follow. The key goal of this research will be to capture in a tangible way the status of consumer behaviour in the sector of fashion industry. This leads to the research methodology for the present proposal to be positivism. The philosophy of positivism will allow an objective representation of the way sustainability affects consumer behaviour towards purchasing of fashion items. Specific hypotheses based on the existing literature will be put into test and the data concentrated will later lead to the confirmation or rejection. To ensure the objectivity of the conclusions of the study, the research will use large samples that will capture different generations and European countries. The research will also be conducted taking into consideration the need to remain independent of any notions of the research or third party. To do so, the main research tool will be an anonymous questionnaire, the data of which completion will be later statistically tested, in order to lead to the extraction of objective and measurable conclusions.

3.2. Systematic Literature Review

In order to investigate the impact of social sustainability in consumers and also a range of stakeholders, the study will be based on two separate yet interrelated phases. The first one is the conceptual phase which builds on an extensive literature review. To achieve this, a systemic literature review will be carried out. Following the initial literature review on the topics of consumer behaviour, sustainability and factors already captured in research, a number of key words where identified in order to concentrate the corpus of existing literature. The key words that have been selected are: Consumer Behaviour, Sustainability, Fashion Industry, Culture, Generation, Employer Branding. These key words where used in the EBSCO. The initial results surpassed 1000, therefore, a use of filters was mandatory. Furthermore, it has been decided to use only one combination of words, in order to create a single pool or results. The keywords will be in research title and keywords. The results will be therefore filtered as peer reviewed and by the origin of academic journal. The sources will be limited to Emerald and Science Direct. More to this, an additional filter will be the date of publishing, accepting only results after the year of 2000. Moreover, the list will be checked in terms of their own references in order to locate any additional pieces of literature that can add value in the original corpus.

The final list of results will be concentrated in a table in order to go through an initial screening. Following the screening, each result will be analysed and synthesized in terms of content in order to lead to distinctive categories. The final outcome of this review will lead to a corpus of literature that will shed light in the present research key topics, but also to the key research gaps of the existing literature.

3.3 Empirical Phase

The second part of the present research is the empirical phase which will explore the attitudes, beliefs, buying decision process of three distinct generation groups namely, generation X, Y and Z from three different European countries. In this phase, sustainability will be seen by the relationships build between consumer attitudes and behaviour to corporate brand and image, as long as the perceived employer brand. In order for this phase to produce tangible and significant results, a deductive approach will be used, by collecting data from different populations. The cross generational investigation stems from the lack of evidence on the consumer behaviour between different ages (Heoa & Muralidharana, 2019; Reis & Braga 2015). The investigation on different countries in this research stem from the lack of evidence in the region of Europe in regard to cultural differences in consumer behaviour towards sustainability in the fashion industry (Jain, 2019; Yang, Song & Tong, 2017).

3.4. Research Sampling

The quantitative part of this research will be carried out via a convenient, non-probability sample. However, in order to be able to test the data that will be provided by the data for significant results, that can be generalized in the wider population, the sample in this study will need to demonstrate a sufficient population in each group. Therefore, each of the 3 generations will be represented by at least 100 participants. Respectively, each of the 3 countries that will participate in the sample will have at least 100 participants. The participants of the 2 younger generations in all 3 countries will be approached via social media posts using teams located in the 3 countries. Regarding the older generation (boomers), there will be a need to also engage in more face to face communication in order to avoid low representation due to a possible lack of use of social media. The researcher will contact organizations for consumers in all countries and provide the tool of the research in order to ask a possible distribution through their channels, for instance through an email newsletter.

3.5. Research Tools

To conduct the research, a quantitative tool will be created and used. This will be a questionnaire in digital form. The questionnaire will consist of 3 parts, demographics (age, gender, country etc.), consumer behaviour and sustainability. The questionnaire will be created in English and will include multiple choice questions answered in a Likert scale.

Following its creation, the tool will be translated and validated in the 3 local languages. To do so, the translation will be initially captured via the forward and backward translation methodology. Using the results to create the 3 consolidated pieces of material, the questionnaires will be discussed by 3 committees including the respective forward and backward translators and 2 subject experts. Once the committee achieves the desired result, the 3 questionnaires will be used in a pilot testing with a small sample. Each participant in this pilot test will complete the questionnaire and later engage in a step by step discussion on their interpretations of each question and what was asked. Having received feedback and following any necessary updates to the content, the questionnaire will later be used in the large-scale sample.

The analysis of the data collected will be carried out via the SPPS tool in order to test the hypotheses of the research. More to this, the Cronbach's a test will be used in order to capture the reliability of the data. Following this, a descriptive analysis will be performed to have a complete image of the key characteristics of the sample and its sub samples. Later, tests (T-test, regression) will be performed in order to investigate statistical significance and lead to a support or rejection of the research hypotheses.

Table 1: Description of key research questions, objectives and hypotheses

RESEARCH QUESTION	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	RESEARCH HYPOTHESES
How does corporate image and employer brand connect to the visibility of the sustainability agenda of the fashion industry brands?	To capture the relationship between the sustainability agenda of fashion industry brands and their corporate image (Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalan (2020)/ and employer brand (Reis & Braga 2015; Collins & Kanar, 2013).	H1: Consumer knowledge on sustainability agenda of a fashion brand will have a positive relationship to the brands corporate image H2: Consumer knowledge on sustainability agenda of a fashion brand will have a positive relationship to the brand's employer brand
How does generation differentiate perceptions towards sustainability?	To capture the perceptions of the 3 generations that constitute the current workforce (Gens Y, Z and X) regarding the clothing industry investigating cultural and behavioral change towards the consumption of clothes (Nadeem, Salo & Laukkanen, 2015; Syaekhoni, Alfian & Kwon, 2017).	H3: Younger generations will be positively connected to intention to support the brand via their purchase behavior.
How does sustainability connect to purchase behavior in the fashion industry?	To capture the different factors that characterize the relationship between sustainability in the fashion industry and the behavior of consumers (Desore & Narula (2018; McNeill and Rebecca Moore, 2015)	H4: Consumer knowledge on fashion brand sustainability will be positively connected with an intention to support the brand via their purchase behavior H5: Social Influence on consumers will have a negative connection to the intention to support the brand via their purchase behavior. H6: Consumer Personal Sacrifice will be negatively connected to an intention to support a brand via their purchase behavior.
How does culture differentiate perceptions towards sustainability?	Capture the perceptions in 3 European Countries with different cultural backgrounds in order to identify the possible impact in purchase behavior (Cervellon & Shammas 2013)	H7: More collectivistic cultures will be positively connected to intention to support the brand via their purchase behavior.

4.Expected Contribution of the Study

The present proposal seeks to provide insights on how Fashion Industry and its relation with sustainability create a new context for consumers and their purchase behaviour, the way they perceive the corporation as an employer, taking into consideration aspects such as culture and generation. The findings that will be generated by the empirical data, will support the creation of tangible suggestion for fashion industry brands and also, pave the road for future research in the field.

References

Abratt, R., & Kleyn, N. (2012). Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate reputations: Reconciliation and integration. *European Journal of Marketing, 46(7/8)*, 1048–1063

Abratt, R., & Mingione, M. (2017). Corporate identity, strategy and change. *Journal of Brand Management, 24(2)*, 129–139.

Adam, M. The Role of Human Resource Management (HRM) for the Implementation of Sustainable Product-Service Systems (PSS)-An Analysis of Fashion Retailers. Sustainability 2018, 10, 2518

Aguinis, H. & Glavas, A. (2012). What We Know and Don't Know About Corporate Social Responsibility A Review and Research Agenda. *Journal of Management*, 38(4), 932-968.

Aguinis, H., & Glavas, A. (2017). On corporate social responsibility, sensemaking, and the search for meaningfulness through work. *Journal of Management*

Arrigo, E (2018). The flagship stores as sustainability communication channels for luxury fashion retailers. *Journal of Retail Consumer Services, 44,* 170–177.

Brammer, S. & Millington, A. (2004). 'The development of corporate charitable contributions in the UK: a stakeholder analysis'. *Journal of Management Studies, 41(8),* 1411–1434.

Campbell, J.L. (2007). Why would corporations behave in socially responsible ways? An institutional theory of corporate social responsibility. *Academy of Management Review, 32(3),* 946–967.

Chin, M. K., Hambrick, D.C. & Trevin, L.K. (2013). Political ideologies of CEOs: the influence of executives' values on corporate social responsibility. Administrative Science Quarterly, 58(2), 197–232.

De Brito, M.P.S.; Carbone, V.; Blanquart, C.M. Towards a sustainable fashion retail supply chain in Europe: Organization and performance. Int. J. Prod. Econ. 2008, 114, 534–553

Desore, A.; Narula, S.A (2018). An overview on corporate response towards sustainability issues in textile industry. Environ. Dev. Sustain., 20, 1439–1459

Di Benedetto, C.A. Corporate social responsibility as an emerging business model in fashion marketing. J. Glob. Fash. Mark. 2017, 8, 251–265.

Diddi, S.; Niehm, L.S. Corporate Social Responsibility in the Retail Apparel Context: Exploring Consumers' Personal and Normative Influences on Patronage Intentions. J. Mark. Channels 2016, 23, 60–76

Diddi, S.; Niehm, L.S. Corporate Social Responsibility in the Retail Apparel Context: Exploring Consumers' Personal and Normative Influences on Patronage Intentions. J. Mark. Channels 2016, 23, 60–76.

Evans, S.; Vladimirova, D.; Holgado, M.; Fossen, K.V.; Yang, M.; Silva, E.A.; Barlow, C.Y. Business Model Innovation for sustainability: Towards a Unified perspective for Creation of Sustainable Business Models. Bus. Strategy Environ. 2017, 26, 597–608

Fontana, E (2018). Corporate Social Responsibility as Stakeholder Engagement: Firm-NGO Collaboration in Sweden. Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag, 25, 327–338.

Frynas, J. G., & Yamahaki, C. (2016). Corporate social responsibility: Review and roadmap of theoretical perspectives. Business Ethics: A European Review, 25(3), 116-129.

Gilbert S. Hedstrom. (2018). Sustainability: What It Is and How to Measure It. De Gruyter. APA 7th Edition (American Psychological Assoc.)

Grappi, S., Romani, S. & Barbarossa, C. (2017). Fashion without Pollution: How consumers evaluate brands after an NGO campaign aimed at reducing toxic chemicals in the fashion industry. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 149,* 1164-1173.

Hong, H.; Kang, J.H. The impact of moral philosophy and moral intensity on purchase behaviour toward sustainable textile and apparel products. Fashion Text. 2019, 6, 16.

How Does Retail Engage Consumers in Sustainable Consumption? A Systematic Literature Review Carmen Bălan Sustainability 2021, 13, 96

Hwang, C.; Lee, Y.; Diddi, S.; Karpova, E. "Don't buy this jacket" Consumer reaction toward anti-consumption apparel advertisement. J. Fash. Mark. Manag. 2016, 20, 435–452.

Jung, S.; Jin, B. (2016). The approach, Sustainable Development of Slow Fashion Businesses: Customer Value. Sustainability

Karaosman, Morales-Alonso & Brun Sustainability (2017). From a Systematic Literature Review to a Classification Framework: Sustainability Integration in Fashion Operations 9, 30.

Kassinis, G. and Vafeas, N. 2006. Stakeholder Pressures and Environmental Performance. *Academy of Management Journal, 49,* 145–159.

Koszewska, M. CSR Standards as a Significant Factor Differentiating Textile and Clothing Goods. Fibres Text. East. Eur. 2010, 18, 14–19.

Lee, J.; Lee, Y (2018). Effects of multi-brand company's CSR activities on purchase intention through a mediating role of corporate image and brand image. J. Fash. Mark. Manag., 22, 387–403.

Lee, S.H.N.; Ha-Brookshire, J.; Chow, P.S. The moral responsibility of corporate sustainability as perceived by fashion retail employees: A USA-China cross-cultural comparison study. Bus. Strategy Environ. 2018, 27, 1462–1475.

Leoni, G (2017). Social responsibility in practice: An Italian case from the early 20th century. Journal of Manag. Hist., 23, 133–151

McWilliams, A. and Siegel, D.S. 2011. 'Creating and capturing value: strategic corporate social responsibility, resource-based theory, and sustainable com- petitive advantage'. *Journal of Management, 37(5),* 1480–1495.

McWilliams, A., Siegel, D. & Wright, P. M. (2006). 'Corporate social responsibility: strategic implications. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43, 1–18.

Nadeem, W.D., Salo, A.J., Laukkanen, T., 2015. Engaging consumers online through websites and social media: a gender study of Italian generation Y clothing consumers. *International Journal of Information Management 35*, 432–442.

Panigrahi, S.S.; Rao, N.S. A stakeholders' perspective on barriers to adopt sustainable practices in MSME supply chain: Issues and challenges in the textile sector. Res. J. Text. Appar. 2018, 22, 59–76

Papasolomou-Doukakis, I., Krambia-Kapardis M.& Katsioloudes M. (2005), Corporate Social Responsibility: The Way Forward? Maybe Not! *European Business Review 17(3),* 263–279.

Pedersen, E.R.G.; Gwozdz, W.; Hvass, K.K. Exploring the Relationship Between Business Model Innovation, Corporate Sustainability, and Organisational Values within the fashion Industry. J. Bus. Ethics 2016, 149, 267–284.

Peloza, J., & Shang, J. (2011). How can corporate social responsibility activities create value for stakeholders? A systematic review. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 39,117-135.

Priyankara, H.P.R.; Luo, F.; Saeed, A.; Nubuor, S.A.; Jayasuriya, M.P.F (2018). How Does Leader's Support for Environment Promote Organizational Citizenship Behaviour for Environment? A Multi-Theory Perspective. *Sustainability, 10*, 271.

Sweetin, V. H., Knowles, L. L., Summey, J. H., & McQueen, K. S. (2013). Willingness-to punish the corporate brand for corporate social irresponsibility. *Journal of Business Research, 66(10),* 1822–1830.

Syaekhoni, M.A.; Alfian, G.; Kwon, Y.S. (2017). Customer Purchasing Behaviour Analysis as Alternatives for Supporting In-Store Green Marketing Decision-Making. *Sustainability, 9*, 2008-2016.

Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir (2020). Corporate Social Responsibility Influencing Sustainability within the Fashion Industry. A Systematic Review. *Sustainability, 12,* 9167

Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir (2019). Sustainability within Fashion Business Models: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability, 11,* 2233.

Tourky, Kitchen & Shaalane (2020). The role of corporate identity in CSR implementation: An integrative framework. *Journal of Business Research, 117* 694–706

Turker, D., & Altuntas, C. (2014). Sustainable supply chain management in the fast fashion industry: An analysis of corporate reports. *European Management Journal. 32*(5), 837-849.

Vallaster, C., & De Chernatony, L. (2006). Internal brand building and structuration: the role of leadership. *European Journal of Marketing, 40(7/8),* 761–784.

Vallaster, C., Lindgreen, A., & Maon, F. (2012). Strategically leveraging corporate social responsibility. California Management Review, 54(3), 34–60. Van de Ven, B. (2008). An ethical framework for the marketing of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics, 82(2),* 339–352.

Woo, H.; Jin, B.H (2016). Culture Doesn't Matter? The Impact of Apparel Companies' Corporate Social Responsibility Practices on Brand Equity. Cloth. Text. Res. J., 34, 20–36.

Yang, L. & Dong, S. (2017). Sustainable product strategy in apparel industry with consumer behaviour consideration. *Sustainability, 9*, 920.

Yang, Song, & Tong (2017). Sustainable Retailing in the Fashion Industry: A Systematic Literature Review, *Sustainability, 9*, 1266

Zhang, Y., Wang, X., & Shen, Y. (2018). Digging deep? Digging more? A research on the influence of corporate CSR theme consistency strategy. *Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science. 1,* 76–93.

Academic and Teaching Realities… The Transitioning Process … Even During the Pandemic

Philip J Kitchen [a]

[a] *ICN-Artem School of Business, Rue de Sergant Blandan, Nancy, France; Email:* philip.kitchen@icn-artem.com

The aim of this working paper abstract is to share some perceived virtual academic realities for Faculty in higher education in the context of the [ongoing] pandemic. Such changes/transformations/and transitions are part and parcel of learning in general and academic learning in particular. Teachers, almost irrespective of the mode of delivery, are now functioning in the new 2021-2022 educational place of space, and thus not only have to consider but also deliver courses and modules in marketing and communication to the best of their ability, and 'as advised' by their august HEI's senior management teams.

Given that almost all have passed or are passing through this process of learning, qualitative research was conducted with academic faculty in 12 countries. Four main topic areas will be addressed:

- The virtual academic reality to be dealt by faculty members
- The educational reality in terms of perceived positive and negative factors
- The perceived reality for businesses during this period
- Perceptions of the post-COVID educational environment
- Student perceptions of teaching during COVID

The outcomes pertain to all aspects of teaching and learning in a higher educational content during a very difficult and turbulent period for faculty and for their student. What has been learning has also to be communicated, using the tools available via this conference mechanism. They are offered in the hope they may prove of value in the teaching of the subjects for which we are collectively and individually responsible.

Select References

Kitchen, P.J., Tourky, M., Petrescu, M., Rethore, C.). (2021), 'Globalisation, Marketing, Sustainability, Tourism and the Hand Mirror of COVID-19', Academy of Business Journal, March, 1, 9-27.

Kitchen, P.J. and Tourky, M. (2020), 'Communications at a Crossroads: What Place for IMC in a post-COVID-19 Landscape?'; 2, December 7-17. Revista de Estudios Empresarials-Segunda, Epoca, Spain.

The Impact of Visual EWOM on Tourists' Information Searches

Jessy Kfoury [a], Ioanna Papasolomou [b], Svetlana Sapuric [c,] Yioula Melanthiou [d]

[a] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: jessykfoury@hotmail.com*

[b] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: papasolomou.i@unic.ac.cy*

[c] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: sapuric.s@unic.ac.cy*

[d] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: melanthiou.y@unic.ac.cy*

Abstract

This research aims at studying the impact of online reviews on tourists' decision-making processes. To fill the literature gap, the focus will be on visual online reviews encountered on social media while tourists are using their smartphones. A quantitative study will be conducted on a sample of international leisure travellers to highlight whether they search and then rely on online reviews or technically known as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) to book a hotel, a restaurant or any other tourism-related service. This consumer behaviour research will reveal a lot of findings that will be beneficial for both the tourism industry and traditional or digital marketers. Also, a framework will be suggested combining the main factors involved in this research: eWOM, social media (SM) and behavioural intention. Thus, this new framework could be a new contribution of perspectives regarding SM, Instagram in particular, and eWOM benefits and impacts in the current era.

Keywords: *Consumer behaviour, eWOM, online reviews, decision-making process, tourism, Instagram.*

1.Introduction

Across the globe, billions of consumers are connected to the internet, thanks to the availability of smartphones and other devices. Part of the internet experience is electronic word of mouth (eWOM) that has become pervasive and reachable, transforming customers into what Blackshaw & Nazzaro (2006) described as "web-fortified" decisionmakers. With the advancement of information technologies, eWOM or online reviews, also known as consumer generated content (CGC), is evolving while the vital interpersonal communication between consumers has remained.

Numerous categories of eWOM communications such as social networking sites (SNS) have been researched previously using numerous methods as well (Dwyer, 2007; Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009). Though the literature in this area is rich, the vast range of SNS platforms, eWOM types, and study methods yielded to a division of the present literature (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014).

Investigating deeply, the internet role is needed and is highly crucial to keep the tourism industry informed. The literature gap lies in the way travellers use CGC sites when preparing their next trip along with the motivational reasons for using them (Balouchi and Aziz, 2017). eWOM has a considerable impact on travellers' decisions (Sotiriadis, 2017) since eWOM is generated by consumers to other consumers informally as part of the information search stage. While the latter stage benefits are growing, travel companies are looking for ways to benefit the maximum out of them (Standing, Tang-Taye and Boyer, 2014).

During the first stage or information search stage, travellers mostly use social media (SM), much more if compared to after their trip (Balouchi and Khanmohammadi, 2015), but using SM or even CGC for choosing a service provider is unstudied (Balouchi and Aziz, 2017). eWOM criteria are important as an information source during the trip preparation plans but the effect on behavioural intention, like booking, is weak (Damayanti, Wibowo and Humaira, 2017). In general, previous researches' principal focus was on SM use and the impact on the travellers' search stage while planning a trip (Leung et al., 2013) and was on CGC which is the foremost eWOM type analysed for its textual content (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2015).

Yet, the role of smartphones and social media, specifically Instagram, in all this planning process should be investigated too, especially since people are logging into their social media accounts several times per day through their smartphones because of its ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and usefulness. Facebook has on average 1.59 billion daily active users (Noyes, 2019), while Instagram has 500 million (Gotter, 2019). There is no doubt that technology is changing, but also it is changing consumers' behaviour. Thus, it is imperative to continue investigations on recognizing and measuring the effects of eWOM in several online forums (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014) and it is a must to study the impact of all those effects from a marketing standpoint. In this study, the effect is translated onto the behavioural intention (booking) and the online forum chosen to study is Instagram.

1.1.Research questions, Aim and Objectives

Companies have started realizing the importance of eWOM, especially on social networking sites (SNS), because it resulted in higher credibility, empathy, and relevance when compared with traditional WOM (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). From one side, Forman, Ghose, and Wiesenfeld (2008) have stated that companies' sales are directly dependent upon eWOM and it could result in an expressive role in consumers' decisions (Liu, 2006). From another side, Wirtz and Chew (2002) stated that WOM plays a vital role regarding repute of the company among customers, especially positive word of mouth (pWOM) which directly enhances the number of customers and also the revenues of the companies. It is worth investigating a new aspect of eWOM and adding a contribution to the literature. Besides, marketers can rely on this study's results to launch updated tactics. They will realize, if indeed, tourists check then rely on visual eWOM. Once marketers realize the travel planning process of leisure tourists, approaching prospective ones will be much easier, even imperative, in their future integrated marketing communications.

The following research questions stipulated the present research study:

RQ1: Do tourists consider eWOM on MSM while planning a trip?

RQ2: How does visual eWOM influence the way consumers process a message?

RQ3: What is the profile of the tourists who check eWOM on MSM?

RQ4: How has Instagram changed the way tourists search for info?

RQ5: What is the impact of visual eWOM (Instagram) on the tourists' booking intentions?

Based on the above research questions the overarching aim of the study is to explore the impact of visual eWOM on tourists' behavioural intentions while browsing mobile social media (MSM) for travel planning.

The study aims to address the following research objectives:

1. To systematically investigate the existent literature on eWOM.
2. To reveal possible literature gaps concerning eWOM and its impact on consumer behaviour.
3. To develop a conceptual model in relation to the impact of visual eWOM based on the existent literature.
4. To explore and understand the impact of Instagram on travellers' purchase behaviours
5. To develop the profiles of travellers using visual eWOM on MSM
6. To test the conceptual model by collecting quantitative data and re-develop it based on the study's findings.

2.Literature review

A systematic literature review was used for the collection of secondary data. It is a review of findings based on a main question: "What is the current state of research on leisure tourists' decision-making process based on online reviews?" The systematic literature review started in July 2019 and ended in January 2020. The methodology for the articles' search, started with a search strategy to hunt scientific articles in an organized way, followed by an application of exclusion/inclusion criteria, then finally a quality appraisal of each article.

The following literature review is based on only forty percent of the scientific articles related to the study yet gives a clear idea about the identified research gap.

2.1.WOM to e-WOM

Starting with defining WOM, Halstead (2002) agrees that WOM has been a sharing act in word of mouth from a single friend or a family member about experiences, whether satisfactory or unsatisfactory, resulting from the use of products or services. Customers do prefer the option of WOM recommendations for minimizing their risk and enhancing their confidence whether online or through their family, friends and acquaintances for making their decision regarding experiencing any new product or service.

Furthermore, eWOM has become the most influential informal conversation with the support of the internet about products, experiences or even their providers (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008) and eWOM emergence has addressed all stakeholders. The power of eWOM showed more promotional results than the traditional tools of the promotion mix (e.g. public relations, traditional word of mouth, sales promotions) (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007; Cheong and Morrison, 2008) and more profitability to companies (Kumar, Petersen and Leone, 2010).

2.2.Impact of e-WOM on Social Media

SM have been used as a modern tool in the broader scenario for describing an array of "Internet-based applications" that have been formed on an ideology of technological foundations typically Web 2.0 (Chan and Guillet, 2011). It is worth highlighting the fact that SM is not defined in the same way around the globe. In general, the main categories of SM as per Sotiriadis (2017) include: “blogs and microblogs, social networking sites, collaborative projects, content community sites and sites dedicated to feedback”.

SM have been regarded as a vital information source when individuals intend to buy a new product or service. For that, online networking sites (e.g. review sites, online communities, and blogs) have turned into a mainstream platform to share data and testimonies. In marketing, analysts and specialists have seen eWOM on SM as imperative data sources which can impressively affect consumers’ data acquisition (Berger and Iyengar, 2013; Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009), decision-making (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and buying conduct (Boley, Magnini and Tuten, 2013) with regards to services particularly.

Chu and Kim (2011) agreed on the importance of social eWOM which has become the most frequently used digital media among both service providers and the customers, as well as on the impact of this eWOM on consumers’ decision making that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, Graham and Havlena (2007) stated SNS have been working as a prominent and significant tool for eWOM within consumers, mainly supporting a key outcome especially for information linked with a product along with the views and feedbacks.

2.3.SM credibility

Berger and Iyengar (2013) called attention to the fact that eWOM via social media significantly affects customers' trust in products and services and are used to minimize perceived risk from one side, and boost buying intentions in online shopping from another side (Park, Lee and Han, 2007). The dimensions of credibility may have varying effects among user-generated-content (UGC) platforms: travel-dedicated ones, e.g. IgoUgo or general SNS, e.g. Facebook; the reason is probably due to the visual elements or something else (Ayeh, Au and Law, 2013). According to Lin, Wu and Chen (2013) and Lee, Park and Han (2011), it all depends upon the strong perceived credibility of eWOM among consumers that positive eWOM results in a higher purchase intention.

Consumer behaviour is divided into two types that are affected by trust: WOM and reviews’ acceptance. It is trust that forecasts whether the information will be embraced on CGC media and WOM (Filieri and McLeay, 2013; Filieri, Alguezaui, and McLeay, 2015). However, it is confirmed already that the emotional aspect of former tourists’ experience sharing does impact credibility (Jacobsen and Munar, 2012). The pictures of those experiences, besides the video recordings and emotional eWOM influence, greatly prospect tourists in person who envision themselves virtually in the experiences of others and influence their travel planning decisions on SNS (Huertas and Marine-Roig, 2018). Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 1: Visual eWOM on SM is perceived as credible.

2.4.eWOM impact on tourists

The literature distinguishes between the eWOM generated from the internet versus the one generated from SNS. When it comes to buying travel-related services, reviews gathered from the SNS are less important than those gathered from the internet (Cataluna, Gaitan and Correa, 2014). While in the travel planning process, almost 50% of students would like to read other consumers’ reviews by using SM; mainly Facebook (82 %), and Instagram (56 %) and YouTube (35 %) alongside other important sources (Zavodna and Pospisil, 2018).

The excess internet usage, as well as social media usage, did affect the tourism field like many other fields (Balouchi and Khanmohammadi, 2015). Nowadays, the internet and social media play a vital role in the travellers' planning process from the first stage of seeking information until their booking stage (Yoo, Gretzel and Zach, 2011). Since booking a vacation is a high-risk and high-involvement purchase, 60% of US travelers consider eWOM reviews (Travel Industry Wire, 2011). Reading eWOM reviews has been increasingly common and affects the traveller's search behaviour (Quintal, Lee and Soutar, 2010) and the decision-making process when arranging voyages (Liang et al., 2013).

SM is viewed as the most significant platform to seek reviews and data while arranging a trip, particularly among the youth (Xiang et al., 2015). And since information and communication technologies (ICTs) keep evolving, they are changing the way travellers gather information (Xiang et al., 2015). Yet, the literature is still missing on how tourists use and create different types of content found online (Munar and Jacobsen, 2013), the next hypothesis comes as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Visual eWOM on SM helps tourists find useful information leading them to a behavioural booking intention.

2.5.Travel 2.0

What was known before as "Web 2.0" for the modern era of the internet and SM is now referred to as "Travel 2.0" for the modern era of tourism platforms' evolution. Travel 2.0 altered how tourists socially interact on the internet, how they search and evaluate touristic information and even how they end up booking products and services (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Hudson and Thal, 2013). There is a big pool of SM for tourism and hospitality including TripAdvisor, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace and Flickr (Mccarthy, Stock and Verma, 2010; Ayeh et al., 2012; Sigala, Gretzel and Christou, 2012). Tourists combine typical travel sites with SM constantly during their planning processes (Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017). For example, tourists run a full hotel search using various Travel 2.0 platforms with TripAdvisor being the most important one, tailed by Facebook, Instagram then YouTube and rarely by Twitter.

TripAdvisor is the most researched (Sotiriadis, 2017) and trusted website for leaving eWOM through which tourists have better knowledge and experience about hotels and restaurants (Huertas and Marine-Roig, 2018) and on the parallel side, they can also share their valuable experience through their feedback during their trip. Whereas TripAdvisor is the most important one among the youth users of SM, Instagram's role is very important while looking for a hotel. Until now, Instagram has not been studied deeply (Harrigan et al., 2017) yet it is becoming trendy and it is influencing users' engagement through videos, photos and hashtags. Several types of research studied SNS generally without focusing on any platform separately (Sotiriadis, 2017); consequently, this study will shed the light on Instagram specifically with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Tourists search for information on Instagram while planning a trip.

2.6.Mobile

Besides Travel 2.0, smartphones too are moving the tourism business aspects to a whole new level with lots of potentials (Wang, Park and Fesenmaier, 2012). Back to tourism, scholars suggest further research to capture the interaction of travellers' information usage on mobile devices since Travel 2.0 along with smartphones intruded travellers' lives and are truly modelling their lives (Pan et al., 2011). Besides, suggestions fall on mobile apps since they are impacting the trip planning in general and the choice of hotels, dining experiences (e.g. Zomato) and attractions in particular (Wang, Park and Fesenmaier, 2012). Consequently, the quick growth of mobile marketing is exciting and worthy of upcoming exploration (Jiang, 2013) leading to the next set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between visual eWOM on SM and its usefulness.

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relationship between visual eWOM on SM and its ease of use.

Some authors tried to define the consumers' demographics who shop through mobile access. Therefore, it is interesting to define the travellers' profiles who use Travel 2.0 on their smartphones during their information-seeking stage. Hence, the next hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 6a: There is a positive relationship between travellers checking visual eWOM on SM and their age.

Hypothesis 6b: There is a positive relationship between travellers checking visual eWOM on SM and their income.

Hypothesis 6c: There is a positive relationship between travellers checking visual eWOM on SM and their educational level.

Hypothesis 6d: There is a positive relationship between travellers checking visual eWOM on SM and their gender.

The literature needs exploring the effect of mobile apps and mobile reviews that stimulate purchase or booking intentions. In the mobile world, some modalities are seriously influential like Yelp.com which is heavily used by travellers to choose a restaurant abroad.

2.7.Visual eWOM

The majority of literature studying eWOM focuses on numerical ratings and numerical volume as metrics (Tirunillai and Tellis, 2012), thus Babic Rosario et al (2016) suggested to study different formats like videos, pictures, and audio records… especially that those visual elements were proven to reduce perceived risk (Park, Lennon and Stoel, 2005). The effect of visuals, like pictures, is even stronger for experience-hedonic products, thus Lin, Lu and Wu (2012) recommended companies to use visual elements while communicating with their audience through eWOM about travel and cuisine. As a result, the following hypothesis is suggested for the visual eWOM:

Hypothesis 7: There is a mutual relationship between Visual eWOM on SM and emotional enjoyment.

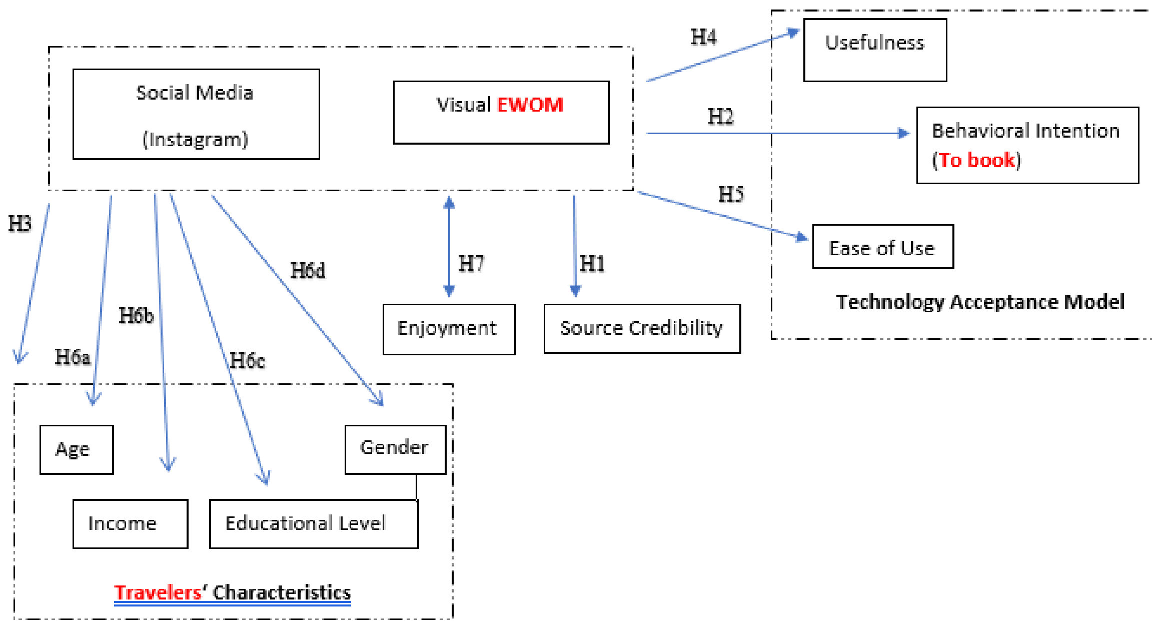
The reviews help a lot when they transfer the consumers' usage experience, when they support the argument, and when the information is positive and they may show emotions strongly (Li and Zhan, 2011). Understanding consumers' visual orientation has been an essential marketing communication tool whether through eWOM channels or traditional WOM.

2.8.Proposed Model

Before proposing a model for this study, it is essential to briefly introduce the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The latter proved to be the right approach used to justify and forecast the application of information technology (Huang, Chou and Lan, 2007) and is nowadays the most referred-to model for examining technological innovations (Rese, Schreiber and Baier, 2014). However, the studies around TAM in the context of CGC are scarce (Balouchi and Aziz, 2017).

The literature reviewed showed that there is a high impact of eWOM and delight on top of the main factors of the TAM (i.e ease of use and usefulness) on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions (di Pietro and Pantano, 2013). eWOM and pleasure were found to significantly impact attitude and intention among consumers, besides the ease of use and helpfulness which are part of the TAM. Thus, a preliminary framework is proposed to conceptualize the links between the impact of the eWOM on tourists' booking intentions inspired by the frameworks of Balouchi & Aziz (2017) and Chong et al. (2018):

Figure 1: Research Preliminary framework



3.Research Methodology

Auguste Comte created the "positivism" theoretical perspective as a reflection of a stiff empirical approach that typically implements the scientific method to study human action. This study will adopt a positivism philosophy whereby a quantitative approach will be used to collect and analyse data. The latter approach is comparable to the ones applied in other contexts that tried to forecast behavioural intention.

Nowadays, positivists are regarded as objectivists; in other words, items surrounding people do exist and are meaningful, yet independently of the people's consciousness of them (Crotty, 1998). In this study, the role of the arch-scientist researcher will be positivist and objective thus independent of his interests, feelings, and values. The role will be limited to gather the data and to interpret the results, without any concern for how humans generate meaning.

The aims of this study are predicting results, situations and behaviours, and testing a theory of the strong correlations between the variables or finding a cause-effect relationship (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012). A research instrument will be used to collect data from a representative sample (Hair et al., 2016) and to measure the proposed research model creating knowledge that fonds solid data.

The ontological philosophy of positivism is an attempt of answering: 'What is the nature of reality?' and it is people's assumptions to have faith in something that makes sense or is real, or the essence of the societal wonder under investigation (Scotland, 2012). Positivism regards knowledge as beliefs that can be tested through an empirical study to be confirmed (or disconfirmed) and are constant and even could be generalized (Eichelberger, 1989). The epistemology will be the philosophical assumption that will guide the study as positivists have a belief that the researchers solely require the correct data gathering and data generating tools to come up with the complete reality for a given topic (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012).

3.1.Methodology

In general, the majority of eWOM studies were empirical over conceptual ones, eight out of ten to be exact (Sotiriadis, 2017), and seventy percent used the quantitative methods (Chan and Ngai, 2011). While the systematic literature review of this study had 81 articles out of 106 that used the quantitative methodology. Therefore, the quantitative research approach will be adopted for this investigation. The methodological strategy will consist of a mono-method of running a cross-sectional survey using the web-based questionnaire technique.

The empirical data will be gathered by distributing a self-administrated online questionnaire directly related to the topic of international tourists' behaviour via SNS. The tourists will be asked to answer standardized questions lasting a few minutes. After collecting the data, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will be performed to examine how accurately the variables represent the theories and to confirm their reliability and validity. Then, the researcher will employ several multiple regression analyses (including Anova) for the different culture (nationalities) that would fill the questionnaire by using the SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and/or R Software.

As well, the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) will be employed since it is appropriate to explore the hypothesized relations between the latent variables if they do exist or not (Chin, Marcolin and Newsted, 2003), thereafter confirming or disconfirming the study hypotheses.

For the experiment to prove its validity, the observed change in booking would be due to one or several independent variables: Instagram, visual eWOM and Travellers' characteristics (age, gender, income, educational level). In addition, an internal consistency would be suggested to be used as a type of reliability, through a correlation of performance on each independent variable compared with the overall booking behaviour across all participants of the survey. Ethically speaking, the quantitative web-survey will be conducted with international tourists on an anonymous basis, and their personal information will not be revealed to third parties whatsoever.

3.2.Sample

The sample will include a large number of tourists who access social media regularly through their smartphones, with the latter being a new variable in the eWOM literature. Consequently, the researcher will follow the recommendation of Song and Yoo (2016) that suggested a sample larger than 285 while including an extra exploratory measure, in addition to different consumer segments. The tourists will be from different generations as recommended by di Pietro and Pantano (2013), since the millennial generation is already known to be more vulnerable to SNS and others' reviews (di Pietro and Pantano, 2013). As well, to identify the tourists' behaviour, the sample will be composed of several important socio-demographic segments as recommended by Zavodna and Pospisil (2018) who already covered the students' segments similarly to Chan and Ngai (2011). Finally, the convenience sampling technique will be applied to gather valid data from real tourists specifically.

4.Conclusion

The rapid development of SM is changing the role of eWOM in the marketing industry more than ever. eWOM is a challenging topic worthy of investigation due to its impact on consumers' emotions and their decision-making process. The originality of this study is based on visual eWOM found on Instagram as a particular SM platform. The latter variables' impact on bookings' will come in parallel with the recommendation of Huertas (2018) to study how travellers use videos and stories on SNS and how much they impact travellers' purchase behaviours. The researchers believe that this quantitative study will be highly beneficial to the tourism industry and to the marketing industry as well.

References

Allsop, D. T., Bassett, B. R. and Hoskins, J. A. (2007) 'Word-of-mouth research: Principles and applications', *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(4), pp. 398–411. doi: 10.2501/S0021849907070419.

Ayeh, J. K. *et al.* (2012) 'Perception and strategies of hospitality and tourisn practititoners on social media', *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2012*. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-7091-1142-0_1.

Ayeh, J. K., Au, N. and Law, R. (2013) '"Do We Believe in TripAdvisor?" Examining Credibility Perceptions and Online Travelers' Attitude toward Using User-Generated Content', *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(4), pp. 437–452. doi: 10.1177/0047287512475217.

Babić Rosario, A. *et al.* (2016) 'The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Sales: A Meta-Analytic Review of Platform, Product, and Metric Factors', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(3), pp. 297–318. doi: 10.1509/jmr.14.0380.

Balouchi, M. and Aziz, Y. A. (2017) 'Explaining and predicting online tourists ' behavioural intention in accepting consumer generated contents', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 8(2), pp. 168–189. doi: 10.1108/JHTT-09-2016-0059.

Balouchi, M. and Khanmohammadi, E. (2015) 'USING LOGARITHMIC FUZZY PREFERENCE PROGRAMMING TO PRIORITIZATION SOCIAL MEDIA UTILIZATION BASED ON TOURISTS ' PERSPECTIVE', *Foundations of Management*, 7, pp. 7–19. doi: 10.1515/fman-2015-0021.

Berger, J. and Iyengar, R. (2013) 'Communication Channels and Word of Mouth: How the Medium Shapes the Message', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(3), pp. 567–579. doi: 10.1086/671345.

Bickart, B. and Schindler, R. M. (2001) 'Internet forums as influential sources of consumer information', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 15(3), pp. 31–40. doi: 10.1002/dir.1014.

Blackshaw, P. and Nazzaro, M. (2006) (2006) 'Consumer-Generated Media (CGM) 101: Word-of-Mouth in the Age of the Web-fortified Consumer', *A Nielsen BuzzMetrics White*

Paper. In Z. Xiand & L. Tussyadiah (Eds)., Information and communication technologies in tourism 2014. New York, NY: Springer, Spring 2nd.

Boley, B., Magnini, V. P. and Tuten, T. L. (2013) 'Social media picture posting and souvenir purchasing behaviour: Some initial findings', *Tourism Management*, 37, pp. 27–30. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2012.11.020.

Buhalis, D. and Law, R. (2008) 'Twenty years on and ten years after the Internet: The state of eTourism research', *Tourism Management*, 29(4), pp. 609–623.

Cataluna, F. J. R., Gaitan, J. A. and Correa, P. E. R. (2014) 'Exploring the influence of eWOM in buying behaviour', *International Journal of Management Science and Information Technology*, (14), pp. 12–26.

Chan, N. L. and Guillet, B. D. (2011) 'Investigation of social media marketing: How does the hotel industry in hong kong perform in marketing on social media websites?', *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 28(4), pp. 345–368. doi: 10.1080/10548408.2011.571571.

Chan, Y. Y. Y. and Ngai, E. W. T. (2011) 'Conceptualising electronic word of mouth activity: An input-process-output perspective', *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 29(5), pp. 488–516. doi: 10.1108/02634501111153692.

Cheong, H. J. and Morrison, M. A. (2008) 'Consumers' Reliance on Product Information and Recommendations Found in UGC', *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), pp. 38–49. doi: 10.1080/15252019.2008.10722141.

Chilisa, B. and Kawulich, B. (2012) 'Selecting a research approach: paradigm, methodology and methods.', *Research Gate*, January, pp. 51–61. Available at: https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=5166267681045925275&hl=en&oi=scholarr.

Chin, W. W., Marcolin, B. L. and Newsted, P. R. (2003) 'A Partial Least Squares Latent Variable Modeling Approach for Measuring Interaction Effects: Results from a Monte Carlo Simulation Study and an Electronic-Mail Emotion/Adoption Study', *Information Systems Research*, 14(2), pp. 189–217. doi: 10.1126/science.143.3610.994.

Chong, A. Y. L. *et al.* (2018) 'Analyzing key influences of tourists ' acceptance of online reviews in travel decisions', *Internet Research*, 28(3), pp. 564–586. doi: 10.1108/IntR-05-2017-0212.

Chu, S. C. and Choi, S. M. (2011) 'Electronic word-of-mouth in social networking sites: A cross-cultural study of the United States and China', *Journal of Global Marketing*, 24(3), pp. 263–281. doi: 10.1080/08911762.2011.592461.

Crotty, M. (1998) *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage Publications.

Damayanti, A., Wibowo, L. A. and Humaira, A. (2017) 'Analyzing the Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth towards Future Behavioural Intention of Tourists.', *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*, 8(4), p. 20. doi: https://doi.org/10.14505//jemt.v8.4(20).13.

Eichelberger, R. (1989) *Disciplined inquiry: Understanding and doing educational research*. Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd.

Filieri, R., Alguezaui, S. and McLeay, F. (2015) ‘Why do travelers trust TripAdvisor? Antecedents of trust towards consumer-generated media and its influence on recommendation adoption and word of mouth’, *Tourism Management*, 51, pp. 174–185. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2015.05.007.

Filieri, R. and McLeay, F. (2013) ‘E-WOM and Accommodation: An Analysis of the Factors That Influence Travelers’ Adoption of Information from Online Reviews’, *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(1), pp. 44–57. doi: 10.1177/0047287513481274.

Forman, C., Ghose, A. and Wiesenfeld, B. (2008) ‘Examining the relationship between reviews and sales: The role of reviewer identity disclosure in electronic markets’, *Information Systems Research*, 19(3), pp. 291–313. doi: 10.1287/isre.1080.0193.

Gotter, A. (2019) *The 43 Instagram Statistics You Need to Know in 2019*, *AdEspresso*. Available at: https://adespresso.com/blog/instagram-statistics/ (Accessed: 5 September 2019).

Graham, J. and Havlena, W. (2007) ‘Finding the “missing link”: advertising’s impact on word of mouth, web searches, and site visits.’, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(4), pp. 427–435.

Hair, J. F. J. *et al.* (2016) *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage Publications.

Halstead, D. (2002) ‘Negative word of mouth: Substitute for or supplement to consumer complaints?’, *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behaviour*, 15, pp. 1–12.

Harrigan, P. *et al.* (2017) ‘Customer engagement with tourism social media brands’, *Tourism Management*, 59, pp. 597–609. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2016.09.015.

Hennig-Thurau, T. *et al.* (2004) ‘Electronic Word-of-Mouth Via Consumer-Opinion Platforms’, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(I). doi: 10.1002/dir.10073.

Huang, L.-S., Chou, Y.-J. and Lan, I.-T. (2007) ‘Effects of Perceived Risk, Message Types, and Reading Motives on the Acceptance and Transmission of Electronic Word-of-Mouth Communication’, *Contemporary Management Research*, 3(4), pp. 299–312. doi: 10.7903/cmr.93.

Huertas, A. and Marine-Roig, E. (2018) ‘Searching and sharing of information in social networks during the different stages of a trip.’, *Cuadernos de Turismo*, 42, pp. 185–212.

Jacobsen, J. K. S. and Munar, A. M. (2012) ‘Tourist information search and destination choice in a digital age’, *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 1(1), pp. 39–47. doi: 10.1016/j.tmp.2011.12.005.

Jiang, M. (2013) *Effect of Online Review Modality on Online Shoppers’ Attitude and Behaviour*. Michigan State University.

King, R. A., Racherla, P. and Bush, V. D. (2014) ‘What We Know and Don’t Know About Online Word-Of-Mouth: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature’, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28, pp. 167–183. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2187040.

Kumar, V., Petersen, J. A. and Leone, R. P. (2010) ‘Driving profitability by encouraging customer referrals: Who, when, and how’, *Journal of Marketing*, 74(5), pp. 1–17. doi:

10.1509/jmkg.74.5.1.

Lee, J., Park, D. H. and Han, I. (2011) ‘The different effects of online consumer reviews on consumers’ purchase intentions depending on trust in online shopping malls: An advertising perspective’, *Internet Research*, 21(2), pp. 187–206. doi: 10.1108/10662241111123766.

Leung, D. *et al.* (2013) ‘Social Media in Tourism and Hospitality: A Literature Review’, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 30(1–2), pp. 3–22. doi: 10.1080/10548408.2013.750919.

Li, J. and Zhan, L. (2011) ‘Online Persuasion: How the Written Word Drives WOM. Evidence from Consumer-Generated Product Reviews’, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51(1), pp. 239–257. doi: 10.2501/jar-51-1-239-257.

Liang, S. W. J. *et al.* (2013) ‘Antecedents of travellers’ electronic word-of-mouth communication’, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(5–6), pp. 584–606. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2013.771204.

Lin, C., Wu, Y.-S. and Chen, J.-C. V. (2013) ‘Electronic word-of-mouth: The moderating roles of product involvement and brand image’, *Proceedings of 2013 International Conference on Technology Innovation and Industrial Management*, pp. 29–47.

Lin, T. M. y., Lu, K. Y. and Wu, J. J. (2012) ‘The effects of visual information in eWOM communication’, *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 6(1), pp. 7–26. doi: 10.1108/17505931211241341.

Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E. and Pan, B. (2008) ‘Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management’, *Tourism Management*, 29(3), pp. 458–468. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011.

Liu, Y. (2006) ‘Word of mouth for movies: Its dynamics and impact on box office revenue’, *Journal of Marketing*, 70(3), pp. 74–89. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.70.3.74.

Lu, W. and Stepchenkova, S. (2015) ‘User-Generated Content as a Research Mode in Tourism and Hospitality Applications: Topics, Methods, and Software’, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*, 24(2), pp. 119–154. doi: 10.1080/19368623.2014.907758.

Mccarthy, L., Stock, D. and Verma, R. (2010) ‘How Travelers Use Online and Social Media Channels to Make Hotel-choice Decisions’, *Cornell Hospitality Report*, 10(18), pp. 6–18. Available at: http://scholarship.sha.cornell.edu/chrpubs.

Munar, A. M. and Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2013) ‘Trust and Involvement in Tourism Social Media and Web-Based Travel Information Sources’, *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 13(1), pp. 1–19. doi: 10.1080/15022250.2013.764511.

Noyes, D. (2019) *The Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics – Updated July 2019*, *Zephoria Digital Marketing*. Available at: https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/ (Accessed: 5 September 2019).

Pan, B. *et al.* (2011) ‘The dynamics of search engine marketing for tourist destinations’, *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(4), pp. 365–377. doi: 10.1177/0047287510369558.

Park, D. H., Lee, J. and Han, I. (2007) ‘The effect of on-line consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: The moderating role of involvement', *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 11(4), pp. 125–148. doi: 10.2753/JEC1086-4415110405.

Park, J., Lennon, S. J. and Stoel, L. (2005) 'On-line product presentation: Effects on mood, perceived risk, and purchase intention', *Psychology and Marketing*, 22(9), pp. 695–719. doi: 10.1002/mar.20080.

di Pietro, L. and Pantano, E. (2013) 'Social network influences on young tourists : An exploratory analysis of determinants of the purchasing intention', *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 15(1), pp. 4–19. doi: 10.1057/dddmp.2013.33.

Quintal, V. A., Lee, J. A. and Soutar, G. N. (2010) 'Tourists' information search: the differential impact of risk and uncertainty avoidance', *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12, pp. 321–333.

Scotland, J. (2012) 'Exploring the Philosophical Underpinnings of Research: Relating Ontology and Epistemology to the Methodology and Methods of the Scientific, Interpretive, and Critical Research Paradigms', *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), pp. 9–16. doi: 10.5539/elt.v5n9p9.

Sigala, M., Gretzel, U. and Christou, E. (2012) *Social Media in Travel, Tourism and Hospitality: Theory, Practice and Cases,*. Farnham, Surrey, Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.

Song, S. and Yoo, M. (2016) 'The role of social media during the pre-purchasing stage', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 7(1), pp. 84–99. doi: 10.1108/JHTT-11-2014-0067.

Sotiriadis, M. D. (2017) 'Sharing tourism experiences in social media: A literature review and a set of suggested business strategies', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(1), pp. 179–225. doi: 10.1108/IJCHM-05-2016-0300.

Standing, C., Tang-Taye, J. P. and Boyer, M. (2014) 'The Impact of the Internet in Travel and Tourism: A Research Review 2001-2010', *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 31(1), pp. 82–113. doi: 10.1080/10548408.2014.861724.

Tirunillai, S. and Tellis, G. J. (2012) 'Does chatter really matter? Dynamics of user-generated content and stock performance', *Marketing Science*, 31(2), pp. 198–215. doi: 10.1287/mksc.1110.0682.

Travel Industry Wire (2011) *Traveler Reviews Weigh Heavily in Travel Booking Decisions*. Available at: https://www.travelindustrywire.com/article60066.html.

Trusov, M., Bucklin, R. E. and Pauwels, K. (2009) 'Effects of Word-of-Mouth Versus Traditional Marketing: Findings from an Internet Social Networking Site', *Journal of Marketing*, 73, pp. 90–102. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.73.5.90.

Varkaris, E. and Neuhofer, B. (2017) 'The influence of social media on the consumers' hotel decision journey', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 8(1), pp. 101–118. doi: 10.1108/JHTT-09-2016-0058.

Wang, D., Park, S. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2012) 'The Role of Smartphones in Mediating the Touristic Experience', *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(4), pp. 371–387. doi: 10.1177/0047287511426341.

Wirtz, J. and Chew, P. (2002) ‘The effects of incentives, deal proneness, satisfaction and tie strength on word-of-mouth behaviour’, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 13(2), pp. 141–162. doi: 10.1108/09564230210425340.

Xiang, Z. *et al.* (2015) ‘Adapting to the Internet: Trends in Travelers’ Use of the Web for Trip Planning’, *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(4), pp. 511–527. doi: 10.1177/0047287514522883.

Yoo, K.-H., Gretzel, U. and Zach, F. (2011) ‘Travel Opinion Leaders and Seekers’, in *R. Law et al. (eds.), Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism © Springer-Verlag/Wien*, pp. 525–535. doi: 10.1007/978-3-7091-0503-0_42.

Zavodna, L. S. and Pospisil, J. Z. (2018) ‘Social media use among Czech university students during the travel process’, *Tourism and hospitality management*, 24(1), pp. 1–15. doi: 10.20867/thm.24.1.7.

Framing Effects Among Complaint Bystanders: Small Changes of Words – Big Changes of Attitude

Wolfgang Weitzl [a], Udo Wagner [b] and Charlotte Pichler [c]

[a] *Digital Business Institute, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, Wehrgrabengasse 1-3, A-4400 Steyr, Austria; Email: wolfgang.weitzl@fh-steyr.at*

[b] *Department of Marketing, University of Vienna, Oskar-Morgenstern-Platz 1, A-1090 Vienna, Austria; Email: udo.wagner@univie.ac.at*

[c] *Department of Management, Seeburg Castle University, Seeburgstrasse 8, A-5201 Seekirchen am Wallersee, Austria*

Abstract

This research sheds light on how companies should apply attribute and goal framing in their public responses to online complaints for eliciting favorable reactions by social media bystanders. In contrast to earlier findings, we show that responses in which companies apply positive or negative attribute framing can have similar effects. Furthermore, we demonstrate that for goal framing, a positively framed recovery message is more effective than a negative one. Here, these messages benefit from being perceived as a sincere apology, which triggers bystanders' benevolence. These insights suggest that marketers should re-consider the usage of differently framed messages in the online complaining context.

Keywords: *online complaining, online service recovery, webcare, framing*

1.Introduction

Online complaining has become an important instrument for many dissatisfied customers. With their public complaint, they want to express their discontent about a service failure (i.e., a situation when consumption expectations are not met by the perceived performance of a product, service, or brand) and wish to share their negative experience, thoughts and feelings with the involved company and other interested consumers. For companies, online complaints often offer a (final) chance to recover their dissatisfied customers when an appropriate response is given. Online service recoveries refer to a company's reactions following a customer's complaint in the form of a public response (often a social media posting) aimed at repairing the customer-company relationship. They are regularly summarized under the term (reactive) '*webcare*' (van Noort and Willemsen 2012). Past research (e.g., Weitzl and Hutzinger 2017) shows that alternative response styles can lead to different reactions among complainants (i.e., consumers voicing the online complaint) and complaint bystanders (i.e., consumers witnessing another consumers' public complaint and the company's response when looking for product information online). This primarily includes research on the 'classic' response styles like accommodative, defensive and no-responses (e.g., Hutzinger and Weitzl 2021). However, little is yet known about the reactions to companies' recovery responses of complaint bystanders when the criticized company which responds to the public negative review applies different types of ‘framing’. The objective of this research is hence to investigate the effects of attribute and goal framing on complaint bystanders.

2. Background

Framing refers to a phenomenon in which individuals show inconsistent preferences or choices when identical information is presented differently (either positive or negative) (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). The existence of such biasing effects is well-documented in the psychological and marketing literature (e.g., Hoolbrook and Hirschman 1982; Bradley and LaFleur 2016; Carpenter and Moore 2009). In their work, Levin et al. (1998) describe several types of framing in terms of the framed object, including ‘attribute framing’ and ‘goal framing’.

In ‘*attribute framing’*, the object of the frame (e.g., purchase-relevant information conveyed in the complaint response) is an attribute of the decision option, which can be either framed positively or negatively. The attribute framing effect occurs when superficial variations in the description of a single aspect of the offer triggers consumers to make either additional positive or negative associations about the decision option, which consequently influences the overall valence of further option evaluations. For instance, in a frequently cited example (Levin and Gaeth 1988), the authors show that framing the description of ground beef as 75% lean rather than 25% fat leads to more favorable evaluations of the product. People react more favorable to *positively framed attributes* than to negative ones, even though the quality of the product is the same. This effect has been shown to have very robust valance-consistent influences (i.e., *positive* is more favored than negative) across diverse areas of application over the years (e.g., Levin and Gaeth 1988; Levin et al. 2002). Concerning the effect’s significance, Janiszewski et al. (2003) claim that attribute-framed messages often evoke decision-relevant information from the decision maker’s unconscious memory and that overcoming the influence of attribute framing is almost impossible.

Scholars typically argue that positive attribute-framed messages activate favorable associations in the recipient’s minds, while negative attribute-framed information leads to unfavorable associations. These affect-focused associations consequentially have an impact on the individual’s judgment of the decision option (Levin and Gaeth 1988). Furthermore, it is suggested that this associative process is analogous to priming effects (Herr, 1989). Positive priming leads to more favorable evaluations than negative priming (i.e., associative priming) (Herr et al. 1983). Hence, in the complaining context, a recovery response, which comprises *positive attribute framing*, should lead to a more favorable post-recovery attitude towards the company among complaint observers than a response comprising negative attribute framing (H1).

Another type is ‘*goal framing’*, which refers to how framing can influence an individual’s goals. More specifically, Levin et al. (1998) argue that goal framing is distinct from attribute framing as the emphasis of the former is on the way in which object-related behaviors affect goal satisfaction rather than on attributes of the object itself. A further particularity of goal framing is that both positive and negative framing focus on the same goal. In contrast, in attribute framing, positive and negative framing could focus on different aspects of the object (e.g., satisfactory recovery offer vs. pain-reducing recovery offer).

Earlier research demonstrates that *negatively framed goals* are more influential than positively framed goals (e.g., Meyerowitz and Chaiken 1987; Tversky and Kahneman 1991). Typically, goal framing is explained by a ‘negativity bias’, which guides persons’ information processing and personal judgments. Here, *negative* framing has a systematic stronger influence on evaluations as well as judgments and leads to more brand-favorable outcomes than objectively equivalent, but positively framed information (Fiske and Taylor 1991). This is because people are more motivated to avoid losses than to attain a gain of equal (objective) magnitude (Meyerowitz and Chaiken 1987). However, researchers have begun to identify the boundary conditions of this effect: For example, some scholars show that in low involvement situations, the goal framing effects said to be based on the negativity bias becomes weaker or gets even reversed (e.g., Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy 1990; Rothman et al. 1993). Here, a 'positivity bias' in goal framing is identified, which means that a positively goal-framed message has greater persuasive impact and leads to more favorable outcomes than a negatively goal-framed message in low involvement situations. Hence, we hypothesize that for complaint *observers* who are typically lowly involved as they are not the directly affected person of the service failure, a recovery response including *positive goal framing*, should lead to a more favorable post-recovery attitude towards the company among (passive) complaint observers than a response comprising negative goal framing (H2).

3. Methodology

For shedding light on the role of recovery response framing, a scenario-based, online experiment with a 2 (*frame type*: attribute vs. goal) × 2 (*frame valence*: positive vs. negative) between-subjects design was conducted. In this experiment, 207 respondents (M_{age} = 31.5; female: 61.8%) drawn from a convenience sample had to imagine being potential customers of a restaurant, who consult its official Facebook page to collect information for their decision to visit the restaurant in the near future. On this page, all participants found a standardized negative consumer review discussing a service failure. Depending on a random assignment to one of the four experimental groups, participants saw a specifically framed response by the involved restaurant (a positively/negatively attribute-framed response: a coupon saving 90% on drinks vs. a coupon drinks' price only 10%; a positively/negatively goal-framed response: a voucher saving 10% on the whole bill if granting the restaurant a second chance vs. missing the opportunity of saving 10% on the whole bill if not revisiting the restaurant). The group sizes were almost identical (n ~ 51). During the experiment the respondents had to answer a series of questions concerning their evaluation of the restaurant at three stages of the decision process (i.e., (i) before and (ii) after seeing an online complaint as well as (iii) after witnessing the company's webcare response on Facebook; the latter have been used in this paper). All key variables were measured with established multi-items scales (e.g., for measuring 'attitude towards the restaurant' items such as "I feel pleasant about this restaurant" have been adapted from Choi and Choo (2016)) and were checked for their reliability and validity before hypotheses testing. The stimuli were pretested and the manipulation checks in the main study were successful.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Main analyses

For testing hypotheses 1 and 2, two independent samples *t*-tests were used to compare respondents' post-recovery attitude towards the restaurant in the positive and the negative framing conditions. Against H1, the first test concerning attribute framing did not show a significant difference in the scores for the positive (M = 4.83, SD = 1.43) and the negative attitude-framed recovery message (M = 4.45, SD = 1.09) condition; t_{101} = 1.49, p = 0.139. However, supporting H2, the second *t*-test focusing on goal framing highlighted a significant difference in respondents' post-recovery attitude between the positively (M = 4.98, SD = 1.08) and the negatively framed response to the complaint (M = 4.38, SD = 1.03); $t_{102} = 2.88$, $p < 0.01$. These findings suggest that relatively uninvolved complaint observers are not definitely more receptive to positive attribute-framed messages as compared to negative ones (even though tendencies exist). Furthermore, they are more receptive to positive goal-framed messages then negatively framed responses. Both findings are in sharp contrast to the prevalent scientific opinion concerning the dominating influence of positive attribute framing. The second result shows the likelihood of a 'positivity bias' in the online complaining context.

4.2 Additional analyses

To investigate reasons for the two above mentioned effects, we used Model 4 in the PROCESS macro (Hayes 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples. Here, we ran two independent models: one for attribute and one for goal framing with frame valence (positive vs. negative) as the independent variable (IV), the concept of 'perceived apology' (i.e., the extent to which the corporate response is regarded as a sincere excuse) as the mediator and 'attitude towards the restaurant' as the dependent variable (DV). Relying on justice theory, the level of perceived excuse should act as a proxy for the restoration of distributive justice by the webcare response. Restored justice is likely to trigger positive consumer reactions. The results for attribute framing showed neither a direct or indirect effect of the IV on the DV, while the model for goal framing demonstrated that the indirect effect of framing valence on attitude via apology perception was significant (indirect effect = 0.41, boot SE = 0.13, BCI [0.68,0.18]). Hence, a company's positive goal-framed response is more positively evaluated as an appropriate apology, which makes it more effective than a negative goal-framed response. Furthermore, in terms of eliciting favorable post-recovery attitudes the former dominates the other response styles significantly or with a tendency.[7]

5. Conclusions and implications for theory and practice

The current research draws scholars' attention to the need to further investigate framing effects in the context of online complaining. While much research has been conducted on the topic of service recoveries via social media, little is known about consumers' reactions to corporate responses which apply either (positive/negative) attribute or goal framing. This research is one of the first to shed light on the special case of individuals (i.e., complaint observers) who witness a dissatisfied customer's public online complaint and the framed response by the involved company. It is well known that many consumers source product information from fellow shoppers online before making a purchase and that the way companies react to overt criticism is critical for the observers' ultimate purchasing decision. Research suggests that framing these corporate responses in a certain way can strongly influence observers' attitude towards the company (e.g., Her and Seo 2017). However, some of the existing conclusions have to be revised in the light of the present study: First, in contrast to the assumingly *very robust* valence-consistent influences for attribute framing (i.e., positive framing – such as "We give you a voucher, with which you will safe 90% of the total amount at your next visit." – is more favored than negative framing – such as "We will give you a voucher, with which you will only pay 10%

[7] The collected empirical data also allowed further analyses across the sequential stages of the decision process. This demonstrated, among others, that respondents have changed their attitude between directly witnessing a complaint and seeing a company's response in the positive framing conditions. The smallest attitude change was visible in the negatively goal-framed condition. Nevertheless, the attitude became more favorable also in this condition.

of the total amount at your next visit.”), this research shows that also negative framing can have similar effects. Second, we further show that for goal framing, a positive valence conveyed in the recovery message is more effective than a negatively framed information. This means that in the current research context (i.e., low involvement decisions) a ‘positivity bias’, where the positively framed goal is perceived as a sincere apology, is more likely than the regularly assumed ‘negativity bias’. These insights suggest that in terms of framing effects, scholars should consider the specific boundary conditions given in the context of online complaining.

Ultimately, this research should enable practitioners to better communicate with potential customers by means of adequately framed messages, which follow an existing customer’s complaint on social media. Online complaints and a company’s reactions are not only the ‘moment of truth’ for the dissatisfied customers posting a negative comment, but also for the firm’s future customers (Weitzl and Hutzinger 2017). Favoring positive goal framing instead of negative goal framing or attribute framing in general, can stimulate a favorable attitude towards the decision option.

References

Bradley, G. T., and LaFleur, E. K. (2016). “Toward the Development of Hedonic-Utilitarian Measures of Retail Service.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 32: 60-66.

Carpenter, J. M., and Moore, M. (2009). “Utilitarian and Hedonic Shopping Value in the US Discount Sector.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 16(1): 68-74.

Choi, Y. H., and Choo, H. J. (2016). “Effects of Chinese Consumers' Relationship Benefits and Satisfaction on Attitudes toward Foreign Fashion Brands: The Moderating Role of Country of Salesperson.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 28: 99-106.

Fiske, S. T., and Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social Cognition*. McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Her, E., and Seo, S. (2017). “Health Halo Effects in Sequential Food Consumption: The Moderating Roles of Health-Consciousness and Attribute Framing.” *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 62: 1-10.

Herr, P. M. (1989). “Priming Price: Prior Knowledge and Context Effects.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(1): 67-75.

Herr, P. M., Sherman, S. J., and Fazio, R. H. (1983). “On the Consequences of Priming: Assimilation and Contrast Effects.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 19(4): 323-340.

Holbrook, M. B., and Hirschman, E. C. (1982). “The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2): 132-140.

Hutzinger, C., and Weitzl, W. J. (2021). “Co-Creation of Online Service Recoveries and Its Effects on Complaint Bystanders.” *Journal of Business Research*, 130: 525-538.

Janiszewski, C., Silk, T., and Cooke, A. D. (2003). “Different Scales for Different Frames: The Role of Subjective Scales and Experience in Explaining Attribute-Framing Effects.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3): 311-325.

Levin, I. P., and Gaeth, G. J. (1988). “How Consumers are Affected by the Framing of Attribute Information Before and After Consuming the Product.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(3): 374-378.

Levin, I. P., Gaeth, G. J., Schreiber, J., and Lauriola, M. (2002). “A New Look at Framing Effects: Distribution of Effect Sizes, Individual Differences, and Independence of Types of Effects.” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 88(1): 411-429.

Levin, I. P., Schneider, S. L., and Gaeth, G. J. (1998). “All Frames are Not Created Equal: A Typology and Critical Analysis of Framing Effects.” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 76(2): 149-188.

Maheswaran, D., and Meyers-Levy, J. (1990). “The Influence of Message Framing and Issue Involvement.” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 27(3): 361-367.

Meyerowitz, B. E., and Chaiken, S. (1987). “The Effect of Message Framing on Breast Self-Examination Attitudes, Intentions, and Behavior.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(3): 500.

Rothman, A. J., Salovey, P., Antone, C., Keough, K., and Martin, C. D. (1993). “The Influence of Message Framing on Intentions to Perform Health Behaviors.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 29(5): 408-433.

Tversky, A., and Kahneman, D. (1974). “Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases: Biases in Judgments Reveal Some Heuristics of Thinking Under Uncertainty.” *Science*, 185(4157): 1124-1131.

Tversky, A., and Kahneman, D. (1991). “Loss Aversion in Riskless Choice: A Reference-Dependent Model.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 106(4): 1039-1061.

Van Noort, G., and Willemsen, L. M. (2012). “Online Damage Control: The Effects of Proactive versus Reactive Webcare Interventions in Consumer-Generated and Brand-Generated Platforms.” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(3): 131-140.

Weitzl, W., and Hutzinger, C. (2017). “The Effects of Marketer- and Advocate-Initiated Online Service Recovery Responses on Silent Bystanders.” *Journal of Business Research*, 80: 164-175.

Toward [Globally] Integrated Marketing Communications: A Time and a Season?

Philip J Kitchen [a]

[a] *ICN-Artem School of Business, Rue de Sergant Blandan, Nancy, France; Email: philip.kitchen@icn-artem.com*

This working paper abstract addresses several recent themes in the marketing communication domain, particularly in the context of global integration of the same and the ongoing now partially ignored pandemic. We commence by considering the close relationship between financial prospects and budgetary reactiveness – all leading to significant changes in share of communication spending by medium between 2018 and 2021. Advertising is chosen as an example because of the availability of data. That said, it is estimated that total communication spend upon corporate and marketing communications in an attempt to convince consumers, customers and prospects of relatively trivial brand elements, and to ostensibly build brand value, may now be over US$1 trillion (that is $1,000,000, 000, 000).

The transition of communication of branding and communication that began in the early 1990s, has now affected almost every marketplace/space on the planet, and this despite the obdurate persistence of certain marketplace structures. It has been argued that marketplace power was transitioning into the hands of customers and consumers (see Kitchen and Tourky 2022), but this power is limited in certain ways… i.e. the nationalisation of the internet from a purchasing perspective, and the concomitant failure to provide post-sales service across the planet. Meanwhile, most public sector organisations seek to ensure users contacting them will face significant barriers (Taylor et al 2021, Kitchen & Taylor, 2021).

In these erratic and unpredictable environs, amid the maelstrom of change, certain theoretical foundations still hold resonance and value such as semiotics, information processing and hedonism, whereas other stalwarts such as elaboration likelihood must now be viewed askance (Kerr et al, 2015; Kitchen et at, 2014).

It is in these circumstances that integrated marketing communications (IMC) and its global equivalent (GIMC), must be re-evaluated. IMC itself can be adopted in various forms, it has faced challenges both of decline and resurgence in times of economic boom and bust. The forces of change such as medias, technologies, markets, ROI, consumers, communication itself, and adoption will continue to swirl. Yet, IMC has managed not only to survive, but also to grow. There is indeed no lack of new theories, exegesis and explanada. Will these be sufficient to point a meaningful direction toward the future? That is the point of this paper.

References

Kerr, G., Schultz, D.E., Kitchen, P.J., Mulhern, F., and Beede, P. (2015), 'Does Traditional Advertising Theory Apply to the Digital World: A Replication Analysis Questions the Relevance of the ELM', Journal of Advertising Research, 55 (4), 390-400.

Kitchen, P.J., Kerr, G., Schultz, D.E., McColl, R. and Pals, H. (2014), 'The Elaboration Likelihood Model: Review, Critique and Research Agenda', European Journal of Marketing, 48 (11-12), 2033-2050.

Kitchen, P.J. and Tourky, M.E. (2022), Integrated Marketing Communications: A Global Brand-Driven Approach, Palgrave-Macmillan & Elsevier.

Kitchen, P.J. (2020), 'The Janus Face of Customer Service', Editorial', European Journal of Marketing, 54 (10), 2289-2293. 2020, (with Taylor, C.R.) https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-10-2020-976.

Taylor, C.R., Kitchen, P.J., Surtees, K. and Malcolm, J. (2020), 'Addressing the Janus Face of Customer Service: A Typology of New Age Service Failures', European Journal of Marketing, 54 (10), 2295-2316.

Media Multitasking Behaviour among Young Population

Fotini Theodorakioglou [a], Leonidas Hatzithomas [b] and Angelos Mouratidis [c]

[a] *Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Greece, Egnatia 156, Thessaloniki 546 36 Greece; Email: fonitheod@uom.edu.gr*

[b] *Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Greece, Egnatia 156, Thessaloniki 546 36 Greece; Email: hatzithomas@uom.edu.gr*

[c] *Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Greece, Egnatia 156, Thessaloniki 546 36 Greece; Email: amouratidis@uom.edu.gr*

Keywords*: media use, media multitasking*

Several prior studies have indicated that media multitasking is a rapidly growing societal trend: Pilotta and Schultz (2005) in a survey of 14,800 respondents showed that almost all audiences (81%) engaged in simultaneous media usage and spent 40% to 65% of their media time consuming different media simultaneously. Moreover, Deloitte (2016 as quoted in Brasel and Gips 2017) revealed that 92% of respondents consumed other media while watching TV. Similarly, half of the Dutch population consumed multiple screens simultaneously at least once a week, on average three days a week, for 77 to 96 minutes per day (Segijn et al., 2017). According to Segijn et al. (2017), however, details about how consumers use the media are still under-researched. The present study examines the prevalence levels of media multitasking among the young population in Greece, extending the findings of previous research. The way people use media is a critical issue in Integrated Marketing Communications.

The present study included a sample of 348 university students aged 18-24 years from Greece (193 females, 56%). Participants were asked to fill out an online self-reported questionnaire which examined issues related to how people use the media and perform various tasks simultaneously. The questionnaire measured frequency of multitasking (Collins, 2008), multi-media channel preference (Robinson and Kalafatis, 2017), multiscreening at home (adapted from Segijn et al., 2016), frequency of combining TV with the Internet (Collins, 2008), preference for multitasking (Wang et al., 2012) and perceived multitasking ability (adapted from Sanbonmatsu et al., 2013).

The main purpose of this study was to examine how often students multitask with the media. Our results indicated that the majority of students in Greece (73,5%) multitask with the media frequently. These findings are consistent with those of prior studies showing that young people engage in a significant amount of media multitasking activities (Jeong and Fishbein, 2007). In some cases, gender can be a predictor of media multitasking behaviour; for example, females consume more audio media while engaging in other activities than men (Jeong and Fishbein 2007). Our results do not suggest that the gender of media users influences the frequency with which they multitask.

The second purpose of this study was to examine multiple-media channel preference. According to Robinson and Kalafatis (2017, 1437) 'multi-media channel preference emphasizes the liking for multiple streams of stimulation, switching back and forth between media'. The findings of our research showed that two-thirds (66.7%) of the students enjoy carrying out several media tasks simultaneously, while most of them (76.5%) like switching back and forth between different media.

Table 1. Results

Scales **Variables**	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Frequently**
Frequency of multitasking	14.7%	11.8%	73.5%
Do more than one media activity at a time	20.4%	12.9%	66.7%
Switch back and forth among media	12.9%	10.6%	76.5%
Switch between two media at home	17.0%	14.7%	68.3%
Use two media simultaneously at home	43.4%	23.9%	32.7%
Frequency of using the Internet and watching TV at the same time	20.1%	5.5%	74.4%
Consider myself a multitasker	6%	12.6%	81.4%
Multitask when using a computer	15.8%	10.6%	73.6%
Get more things done when multitasking	42.8%	16.7%	40.5%
Multitask whenever possible	17.2%	16.7%	66.1%
Scales **Variable**	**Below average**	**Average**	**Better than average**
Ability to multitask compared to classmates	6.9%	27.0%	66.1%

Scales **Variables**	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Frequently**

Frequency of multitasking	14.7%	11.8%	73.5%
Do more than one media activity at a time	20.4%	12.9%	66.7%
Switch back and forth among media	12.9%	10.6%	76.5%
Switch between two media at home	17.0%	14.7%	68.3%
Use two media simultaneously at home	43.4%	23.9%	32.7%
Frequency of using the Internet and watching TV at the same time	20.1%	5.5%	74.4%
Consider myself a multitasker	6%	12.6%	81.4%
Multitask when using a computer	15.8%	10.6%	73.6%
Get more things done when multitasking	42.8%	16.7%	40.5%
Multitask whenever possible	17.2%	16.7%	66.1%
Scales **Variable**	**Below average**	**Average**	**Better than average**
Ability to multitask compared to classmates	6.9%	27.0%	66.1%

To gain better insights into multi-media channel preference, the third purpose of this study was to explore media multitasking behaviour at home. According to our findings, when students are at their homes, they prefer switching between different media (68.3%) instead of consuming them simultaneously (32.7%). In this case, gender plays a role as more women (63%) compared to men (52%) often use more than one medium at a time. Taking also into consideration the previous mentioned findings, this survey proves evidence of young population’s habit to switch between media when they media-multitask.

The fourth purpose of this study was to examine how often students use the Internet while they watch TV. Interestingly, the present survey showed that 74.4% frequently browse the Internet while they watch TV. In the same vein, the Middletown Media Studies survey (as quoted in Jeong and Fishbein, 2007, 365) found that 59% of consumers are likely to multitask with the

Internet and 46% of them are likely to multitask with television. Collins (2008) and Jeong and Fishbein (2007) found no difference between boys and girls adolescents in the likelihood of combining television viewing with the use of the Internet. In line with previous finding, our survey showed that male and female students do not differ substantially on the frequency they combine TV with the Internet.

The fifth purpose of this survey was to examine how participants perceive their multitasking ability and their preference for multitasking. Our findings indicated that the majority of students (81.4%) think of themselves as multitaskers, while 66.1% of them consider themselves better multitaskers compared to their classmates. About 73.6% of students tend to multitask when they use computers, while gender does not play a role, supporting past findings (Kazakova et al., 2015). However, only 40.5% of students feel confident that they actually can get more things done when they multitask. Two thirds of the participants (66.1%) multitask whenever possible, while gender does not play a role.

This survey attempted to provide a better understanding on how young people use their time and the media in the new media landscape. Findings confirm that media multitasking behaviour is prevalent among young generations in Greece. Further research should take a closer look at the relationships between personality characteristics and individual's media consumption habits. Finally, as in the current media landscape more and more people spend time watching TV online on an internet-connected device (e.g., watch Netflix on computer), it would be interesting to explore the way people watch online TV while they surf the Internet on the same device, and how this affects marketing communications.

References

Brasel, S.A. and J. Gips. 2017. "Media multitasking: How visual cues affect switching behaviour." *Computers in Human Behaviour* 77: 258-265.

Collins, R.L. 2008. "Media multitasking: Issues posed in measuring the effects of television sexual content exposure." *Communication Methods and Measures* 2(1-2): 65-79.

Jeong, S.H. and M. Fishbein. 2007. "Predictors of multitasking with media: Media factors and audience factors." *Media Psychology* 10(3): 364-384.

Kazakova, S., Cauberghe, V., Pandelaere, M. and P. De Pelsmacker. 2015. "Can't see the forest for the trees? The effect of media multitasking on cognitive processing style." *Media psychology* 18(4): 425-450.

Pilotta J.J. and D.E. Schultz. 2005. "Simultaneous Media Experience and Synesthesia." Journal of Advertising Research 45(1): 19-26.

Robinson H.R. and S.P. Kalafatis. 2017. "The 'Polychronicity - Multiple Media Use' (P-MMU) scale: a multi-dimensional scale to measure polychronicity in the context of multiple media use." Journal of Marketing Management 33(17/18): 1421-1442.

Sanbonmatsu, D.M., Strayer, D.L., Medeiros-Ward, N. and J.M. Watson. 2013. "Who multi-tasks and why? Multi-tasking ability perceived multi-tasking ability, impulsivity, and sensation seeking." PloS one 8(1) p.e54402.

Segijn, C.M., Voorveld, H.A. and E.G. Smit. 2016. "The underlying mechanisms of multiscreening effects." *Journal of Advertising* 45(4): 391-402.

Segijn, C.M., Voorveld, H.A., Vandeberg, L., Pennekamp, S.F. and E.G. Smit. 2017. "Insight into everyday media use with multiple screens." *International Journal of Advertising* 36(5): 779-797.

Wang, Z., David, P., Srivastava, J., Powers, S., Brady, C., D'Angelo, J. and J. Moreland 2012. "Behavioural performance and visual attention in communication multitasking: A comparison between instant messaging and online voice chat." *Computers in Human Behaviour* 28(3): 968-975.

Blurring Boundaries Between Advertising, Journalism, and Public Relations: Challenges and Conflicts

Sabine Einwiller [a] and Lina Stürmer [b]

[a] *Department of Communication, University of Vienna, Kolingasse 14-16, 1090 Vienna Austria; Email: sabine.einwiller@univie.ac.at*

[b] *Department of Communication, University of Vienna, Kolingasse 14-16, 1090 Vienna Austria; Email: lina.stuermer@univie.ac.at*

***Keywords**: Hybrid Content; Blurring Boundaries; Communication Ethics; Role Conflicts*

As consumers become more avoiding and resistant to traditional forms of advertising (Kaikati and Kaikati 2004), companies and brands are trying to communicate content that is more informative, entertaining and also less bothering (Tutaj and van Reijmersdal 2012). The content is more issues-related and less focused on the company or its products directly, and instead of using promotional language, a journalistic communication style is often applied. Furthermore, digitalization and thus the rise of new communication technologies make it easier for companies to produce and distribute their own content (e.g. customer magazines, podcasts or blogs), which are often of high editorial quality. These developments lead to a blurring of boundaries between advertising, journalism and public relations (PR) and to what has been called "hybrid forms of content" (Taiminen et al. 2015), which include sponsored content, native advertising as well as company owned media like customer magazines.

The problem with hybrid content is that there is often a lack of transparency concerning its promotional intent. This makes it difficult for recipients to activate their persuasion knowledge (Friestad and Wright 1994) and consequently to process the message critically. The editors of the hybrid content, on the other hand, are expected to generate impact for their clients, which may be higher when the commercial intent of the content is disguised. Yet, communicators also have to meet transparency expectations of the media consumers and are required to follow ethical standards in communication practice that are set out in codes of conduct (Ikonen, Luoma-aho, and Bowen 2017). They also have role perceptions which imply their professional conduct as PR practitioner, journalist or marketing communicator. Consequently, market requirements, ethical guidelines and role perceptions can lead to conflicts of interest and ethical challenges. Depending on their backgrounds, which may be in PR, advertising, or journalism, practitioners may experience different challenges or experience these conflicts and challenges differently. This study aims to investigate the following research questions:

RQ1: Which conflicts of interest and ethical challenges do communication practitioners from different fields experience due to the blurring of boundaries between advertising, journalism and PR?

RQ2: How do communication practitioners from different fields deal with the conflicts and challenges they experience due to the blurring of boundaries between advertising, journalism and PR?

Conflicts of interest can be analysed using the organisational role theory (Katz and Kahn 1978). Steinmann, Zerfass and Ahrens (1993) transferred this theory to PR practice and differentiated between three types of conflicts: 1) *inter-role-conflicts,* which are conflicts, that practitioners have with themselves; 2) *intra-sender-conflicts* occur between the practitioner and the client or employer; and 3) *inter-sender-conflicts* can be described as discrepancies between the interests of communication practitioners and a) journalists/media and b) the audience. Extant research often focusses on inter-role-conflicts, for instance when freelance journalists have a secondary employment in PR (e.g., Koch and Obermair 2014). Yet, research that addresses all forms of conflict and includes communication professionals from different fields is scarce. This study seeks to address this research gap.

In a first step, we conducted a preliminary study, where we conducted two focus groups with practitioners from agencies, companies and media. Results provide several indications for the different role conflicts and conflicts of interest between actors (Steinmann, Zerfass and Ahrens 1993). For example, inter-role-conflicts were observed in journalists, who claimed to oppose writing sponsored content because of its deceptive nature, but feel better when writing for a corporate publication as they perceive this as more transparent. Intra-sender-conflicts occur when clients urge the practitioner to use unobtrusive or no advertising disclosure in sponsored content, or when the advertising department asks the PR practitioner to provide undisclosed editorial content. The focus groups also revealed inter-sender-conflicts between PR practitioners and journalists/media which, for example, arise when PR practitioners are of the opinion that journalists tend to report negatively about their brand or company, which motivates them to circumvent the journalist and publish their own content.

In the ongoing second phase of the research project, we answer the research questions in depth by means of 45 qualitative interviews with practitioners from the different fields of communication practice. Interviewees, who are assured full anonymity, are practitioners that either work for agencies, companies or media and are confronted with blurring boundaries in their work routines, e.g. practitioners working in the field of corporate publishing. Qualitative interviews allow for an individual and flexible interview situation, in which participants can openly speak about their personal experiences and opinions. The interviews follow an interview guide containing questions on participants' area of work, their perception of blurring boundaries, perceived challenges and conflicts of interest. After transcribing the interviews, the data will be analysed by structural content analysis (Kuckartz 2013).

The results from this study should be of interest for practitioners from all fields of communication, especially for those working on the boundaries between PR, advertising and journalism. The findings will contribute to research on current ethical challenges as well as conflicts of interest in communication practice. Based on the results, we intend to develop a training program for practitioners and students in communication and marketing, that provides specific case examples of ethical challenges including strategies and recommendations for how handle the situations. Beyond practical insights into professionals' experiences, this study is of use for practitioners and future practitioners, as the training program is intended to provide helpful guidance for challenging situations.

References

Friestad, M., and P. Wright. 1994. "The Persuasion Knowledge Model: How People Cope with Persuasion Attempts." *Journal of Consumer Research* 21 (1): 1-31.

Ikonen, P., V. Luoma-aho, and S. A. Bowen. 2017. "Transparency for Sponsored Content: Analysing Codes of Ethics in Public Relations, Marketing, Advertising and Journalism." *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 11 (2): 165-178.

Katz, D., and R. L. Kahn. 1978. *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. New York: Wiley.

Koch, T., and M. Obermaier. 2014. "Blurred Lines: German Freelance Journalists with Secondary Employment in Public Relations." *Public Relations Review* 40 (3): 473-482.

Kuckartz, U. (2013). *Qualitative Text Analysis: A Guide to Methods, Practice and Using Software*. SAGE Publications.

Steinmann, H., A. Zerfaß, and R. Ahrens. 1993. "Ethische Problemfelder der Public Relations-Beratung." *prmagazin* 10: 33-40.

Taiminen, K., V. Luoma-aho, and K. Tolvanen. 2015. "The Transparent Communicative Organization and New Hybrid Forms of Content." *Public Relations Review* 41 (5): 734-743.

Tutaj, K., and E. A. van Reijmersdal. 2012. "Effects of Online Advertising Format and Persuasion Knowledge on Audience Reactions." *Journal of Marketing Communications* 18 (1): 5-18.

Looking into the Role of Message Congruency in how the Information in DMO - and Tourist - Generated Contents is Processed

Beatriz García-Carrión [a], Salvador del Barrio-García [b], Francisco J. Muñoz Leiva [c], Lucia Porcu[d]

[a] *Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales, University of Granada, Campus de Cartuja s/n, Granada 18071 Spain; Email: beatrizgarcia@ugr.es*

[b] *Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales, University of Granada, Campus de Cartuja s/n, Granada 18071 Spain; Email: dbarrio@ugr.es*

[c] *Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales, University of Granada, Campus de Cartuja s/n, Granada 18071 Spain; Email: franml@ugr.es*

[d] *Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales, University of Granada, Campus de Cartuja s/n, Granada 18071 Spain; Email: luciapor@ugr.es*

Keywords: *e-WOM, Destination Management Organization, attention, gastronomic tourism, social networks*

1.Introduction

Nowadays, social networks have become a competitive advantage for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) not only to enhance communication in business-to-consumer (B2C) exchange relationships but also as an effective means to manage tourist-generated contents (via electronic word of mouth – e-WOM), which are considered a powerful vehicle for interpersonal communication leading to customer engagement (Pino et al., 2018). Previous studies have shown that social networks exert a strong effect on tourist behaviour (Dijkmans et al., 2015). However, there are still some research gaps about the role they play in attracting and retaining tourists, how they should be incorporated into destination communication strategies (Luo & Zhong, 2015). Moreover, some authors have highlighted an inefficient use of social networks by DMOs (Chan & Guillet, 2011), failing to listen and interact with customers (Phelan et al., 2013).

The current communication environment is undoubtedly challenging both for tourists and businesses operating in the tourism industry. In this regard, tourists are exposed to and receive a great number of messages from a wide range of sources and media, including social networks, which are serving as a vehicle for both DMO- and user- or tourist- generated contents (i.e., e-WOM). When it comes to an increasing variety of sources, a crucial question needs to be answered: which is the role of message congruence in the way the information is processes and integrated in the consumers' mind and in their response and behaviour?

Moreover, the use of social networks to disseminate communication strategies has enabled DMOs to increase the coverage of their messages, giving rise to a new question about how these messages are interpreted by the different target audiences. Prior research on generational cohorts has revealed differences among users in terms of behaviour (Monaco, 2018; Krishen et al., 2016) and in the processing of tourism information on social networks (Espigares-Jurado et al., 2020).

With these premises in mind, the present research attempts to delve into this area by focusing on two of the most representative generations of Internet users, namely Millenials and Generation Z, analyzing how they attentively process each of the informational elements in DMO- and tourist-generated contents delivered through social networks and examining how they respond to them. In addition, this study focused on gastronomy, which represents an increasingly relevant motivation leading tourists to opt for a specific destination (López-Guzmán et al., 2017) and a strategic element that not only helps to differentiate the tourism offer, but is determinant when it comes to define the destination image and brand (UNWTO, 2017).

To purse the above-mentioned research aims, this study takes a neuroscientific approach applying neuroscientific tools to examine information processing (Hessels & Hooge, 2019). More specifically, this study applies the eye tracking technology, which is suitable to immediately and accurately assess not only the simplest cognitive processes, such as attention, but also the processes associated to higher or complex cognitions (Popa et al., 2015). In addition, it is a predictive tool that relates to specific aspects, such as attitudes, consumer choice and memorization capacity (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). Moreover, this methodology has been applied scarcely in the tourism industry, and very few studies have examined social networks and inter-generational analysis (Savin et al., 2021).

To sum up, this research study analysed how different degrees of congruence in DMO- and tourist-generated messages affect information processing in terms of attention (Time to First Fixation - TTFF, Fixation Count - FC and Dwell Time – DT), affective preference towards messages (in terms of Facebook reactions *emojis*), examining how two different generations process the information delivered by DMOs and tourists in terms of attention (Time to First Fixation - TTFF, Fixation Count - FC and Dwell Time – DT) y response time (RT).

2.Method

A mixed experimental design was conducted using an intra-subject factor with two levels [(1) High Congruence (HC) and Low Congruence (LC)] (see figure 1), and an inter-groups factor analysing the processing between generational cohorts [(1) Generation Z and (2) Millennials]. A total of 64 (31 for Generation Z and 33 for Millennials) individuals participated to the study and the data were collected using EyeLink 1000 Plus with a 16 mm. lens and a 500 Hz sampling rate. The stimuli were previously pretested via a pilot study and after the experimental session to examine perceived congruency.

Figure 1. Experimental stimulus with areas of interest (AOIs)

Data analysis

The results obtained for visual attention show that the main effect of congruency is significant when the e-WOM comment is LC. Specifically, individuals dedicated more attention in terms of number of fixations and time spent when a LC was perceived (see table 1).

Table 1. ANOVA by eye tracking and AOI measure in congruence effect

Eye Tracking Measure	AOI	HC	LC	*p-value*
	1	5651.43	5481.04	0.272
Time to First Fixation (TFF)	2	10675.74	5652.90	0.000
	3	8838.45	7646.35	0.061
	1	4758.34	4161.48	0.065
Dwell Time (DT)	2	4651.26	3841.11	0.031
	3	3112.58	4242.47	0.000
	1	28.07	23.76	0.074
Fixation Count (FC)	2	16.99	23.25	0.000
	3	20.45	23.36	0.013

The results indicate that users evaluated HC messages with more intense and more positive emotions than the LC messages. On the other hand, the results obtained in regard with how different generations process the informative elements of the DMO- and tourist-generated contents were not significant for all the eye tracking measures (see table 2). Similarly, the reaction times were similar in both generations (MZ= 1935.88; MM= 1949.23).

3.Conclusions and implications

To sum up, this research provides further knowledge on how the congruence generated between the information coming from the DMO and the eWOM is processed, showing different eye patterns and affective evaluations depending on the degree of congruence. Similarly, the processing of the informative elements of the DMO and the eWOM was analysed, obtaining similar patterns and reactions between them. The findings obtained confirm the importance for DMOs to carefully plan their communication in social networks and to actively listen to the comments and opinions of their followers regarding their own messages. Moreover, the digital gap between Generation Z and Millennials is not significant in terms of differences when it comes to process information on social networks. Likewise, the results are of special interest in the case of gastronomic tourism, given the importance that gastronomy has for many destinations as a differentiating element that captures the attention of tourists and generates a desire to visit.

Acknowledgments: This work was supported by the Andalusian Program for R&D (grant number P20-01021) and the Spanish National Research Program for R&D (grant number ECO2017-88458-R).

References

Chan, N. L., & Guillet, B. D. (2011). Investigation of social media marketing: how does the hotel industry in Hong Kong perform in marketing on social media websites? Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 28(4), 345-368.

Dijkmans, C., Kerkhof, P., & Beukeboom, C. J. (2015). A stage to engage: Social media use and corporate reputation. Tourism Management, 47, 58-67.

Espigares-Jurado, F. M., Muñoz-Leiva, F., Correia, M., Sousa, C., Ramos, C., & Faísca, L. (20192020). Visual attention to the main image of a hotel website based on its position, type of navigation and belonging to Millennial generation: An eye tracking study. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 52(January), 101906.

Hessels, R. S., & Hooge, I. T. (2019). Eye tracking in developmental cognitive neuroscience–The good, the bad and the ugly. Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, 40, 100710.

Krishen, A. S., Berezan, O., Agarwal, S., & Kachroo, P. (2016). The generation of virtual needs: Recipes for satisfaction in social media networking. Journal of Business Research, 69(11), 5248-5254.

López-Guzmán, T., Lotero, C. P. U., Gálvez, J. C. P., & Rivera, I. R. (2017). Gastronomic festivals: Attitude, motivation and satisfaction of the tourist. British Food Journal.

Luo, Q. & Zhong, D. (2015). Using social network analysis to explain communication characteristics of travel-related electronic word-of-mouth on social networking sites. Tourism Management, 46, 274-282.

Monaco, S. (2018). Tourism and the new generations: emerging trends and social implications in Italy", Journal of Tourism Futures. Emerald Publishing Limited, 4(1), 7-15.

Phelan, K., Chen, H.T., & Haney, M. (2013). Like" and "Check-in": how hotels utilize Facebook as an effective marketing tool. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology, 4*(2), 134-154.

Pino, G., Peluso, A.M., Del Vecchio, P., Ndou, V., Passiante, G., & Guido, G. (2018). A methodological framework to assess social media strategies of event and destination management organizations. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 28*(2), 189-216.

Popa, L., Selejan, O., Scott, A., Muresanu, D. F., Balea, M., & Rafila, A. (2015). Reading beyond the glance: eye tracking in neurosciences. Neurological Sciences, 36, 683–685.

Savin, G.D., Fleșeriu, C., & Batrancea, L. (2021). Eye tracking and tourism research: A systematic literature review. Journal of Vacation Marketing, 1-18.

UWTO (2017). Second Global Report on Gastronomy Tourism.

Wedel, M., & Pieters, R. (2008). A Review of Eye-Tracking Research in Marketing, In Naresh K. Malhotra (ed.) Review of Marketing Research, vol. 4 (pp.123 – 147), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Armonk, NY (USA).

Are you Going to Share on Social Media? Examining Consumer Behaviour Intentions on Social Media Toward Brand Activism Campaigns

Caroline S.L. Tan

Graduate School of Business Sciences, University of Tsukuba, 3-29-1 Otsuka Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-00012 Japan; Email: caroline.tan.gf@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

Keywords: *brand activism, buycott, boycott, social media, hypocrisy, authenticity, involvement, eWOM, intention to share*

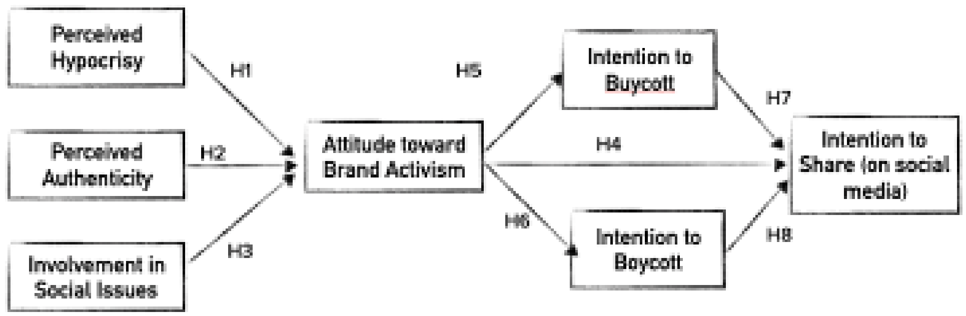
1.Introduction

According to a study conducted by Accenture, 63% of consumers reward purpose-driven brands and nearly half, at 47% would not hesitate to walk away from brands that cause them frustration owing to the position that the companies take on social issues (Accenture, 2018). In a separate study conducted by the Elderman Earned Brand Study (2018), 64% of consumers worldwide make purchase decisions based on a brand'social or political position. Ads have been found to influence purchase behaviours (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). This creates the need for brands to elicit favorable reactions from the consumers (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Lee, Byon, Ammon, & Park, 2016; Phelps & Hoy, 1996; Varnali, 2014). In today's world where brand activism have proliferated in various campaign messages, brands are faced with the challenge of conveying the correct tone and message in their ads.

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), insensitive and offensive gender role portrayals and greenwashing. 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). Thus, while some consumers call on others to boycott such brands, others might reward such behaviours through purchase as a show of support, known as buycott.

This study seeks to examine consumer behavioural intentions depicted specifically through three main intentions – the intention to buycott, the intention to boycott and the intention to share on social media about their perception and attitude toward the brand activism where the brand takes a stand on social and political issues. A conceptual model was developed as shown in Figure 1 below. The hypotheses of the direct relationships (H1 – 8) are also indicated in the model below. Apart from the direct relationships, two parallel mediating relationships are also tested where intention to buycott and intention to boycott are hypothesized to mediate the relationship between attitude toward brand activism and intention to share on social media.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



2.Methodology

Participants

The data was collected via a web panel. A total of 1,721 samples were deemed usable and valid from a total of 2,167 responses. The mean age was 38.78 with a standard deviation of 11.68, with a fairly equal distribution between males and females (50.8% females and 49.2% males).

Measures

The survey instrument consisted of scale items taken and adapted from various studies. Perceived hypocrisy was measured by four items (Wagner et al.,2009). As for perceived authenticity, five items were taken from Alhouti et al. (2009) and Kucharska et. al. (2020). Involvement in social issues was measured with nine scales (Pfau et. al., 2010) . Scales to measure attitude toward brand activism were from Chang (1998), Eagly and Chalken (1993) and Rodgers (2003). Three items were used to measure willingness to buycott and willingness to boycott (Chang, 1998; Martin et. al., 2004). Finally, intention to share on social media was measured with three items (Chua & Barnerjee, 2018; Lee & Ma, 2012).

3.Results

The findings are reflected in both Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Summary of SEM results

Path			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hyptothesis
AttActv	<---	PerHyp	-0.153	0.021	-7.252	***	*Supported*
AttActv	<---	PerAut	0.283	0.031	9.182	***	*Supported*
AttActv	<---	Involv	0.047	0.026	1.802	0.071	*Rejected*
BuyCt	<---	AttActv	0.37	0.037	10.057	***	*Supported*
BoyCt	<---	AttActv	0.077	0.036	2.125	**	*Supported*
ShaInt	<---	BoyCt	0.556	0.019	28.514	***	*Supported*
ShaInt	<---	BuyCt	0.447	0.019	23.642	***	*Supported*
ShaInt	<---	AttActv	0.034	0.024	1.426	0.154	*Rejected*

Note: ** Sig $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

GFI = 0.908, RMSEA = 0.062, NFI = 0.941, CFI = 0.948

Table 2. Summary of mediation

Mediation Results

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Hypothesis
TOTAL	.204	.033	.138	.269	
BUT	.174	.020	.136	.214	*supported*
BOT	.030	.023	-.013	.075	*rejected*

4.Discussion

The area brand activism is growing in importance and brands can no longer ignore incorporating such topics in their communications, as consumers demand that brands play a major role in demonstrating responsible and sustainable business practices. The findings show that buycott is a stronger outcome from consumer reaction toward brand activism. As consumers tend to share their actions – both buycott or boycott on social media, their actions will affect brands either positively (buycott) or negatively (boycott). Hence, this study demonstrates the need for brands to decide on issues that matter to them and issues that embody their DNA and brand values before they communicate their stand.

References

Aaker, D. A., D. M. Stayman, and M. R. Hagerty. 1986. "Warmth in advertising: Measurement, impact, and sequence effects." *Journal of Consumer Research* 12 (4): 365-381.

Ariely, D., and G. S. Berns. 2010. "Neuromarketing: the hope and hype of neuroimaging in business." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 11 (4): 284-292.

Damasio, A. 2008. "Descartes' error: Emotion, reason and the human brain." *Random House*.

Danzinger, P.N. (2019, March 3). Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2019/03/03/dolce-and-gabbana-gucci-burberry-caught-being-culturally-insensitive-diversity-isnt-the-fix/#4dc6a204125d

Hosie, R. (2017, March 15). Retrieved from https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/livi-rae-lingerie-brand-diverse-campaign-backlash-refuse-take-down-response-a7630801.html

Lee, Y. G., Byon, K. K., Ammon, R., & Park, S. B. R. (2016). Golf product advertising value, attitude toward advertising and brand, and purchase intention. Social Behaviour and Personality: an international journal, 44(5), 785-800

MacKenzie, S. B., & Lutz, R. J. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context. The Journal of Marketing, 53 (2), 48-65.

MacKenzie, S. B., Lutz, R. J., & Belch, G. E. (1986). The role of attitude toward the ad as a mediator of advertising effectiveness: A test of competing explanations. Journal of marketing research, 23 (2), 130-143.

Margan, M., & Lackey, B. (2018, October 9). Retrieved from https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6254945/Sofitel-Brisbane-advert-ISNT-sexist-Daily-Mail-Australia-poll-reveals.html

Mau, D. (2018, September 5). Retrieved from https://fashionista.com/2018/09/fall-2018-fashion-ad-campaigns-model-diversity

Miller, J.R. (2018, January 11). Retrieved from https://nypost.com/2018/01/11/mother-of-boy-in-hms-coolest-monkey-ad-says-get-over-it/

Mitchell, A. A., & Olson, J. C. (1981). Are product attribute beliefs the only mediator of advertising effects on brand attitude?, Journal of Marketing Research, 18(3), 318-332.

Pan, Y. (2017, April 25). Retrieved from https://jingdaily.com/dolce-gabbana-campaign-controversy/

Phelps, J. E., & Hoy, M. G. (1996). The aad-ab-PI relationship in children: The impact of brand familiarity and measurement timing. Psychology and Marketing, 13(1), 77-105.

Richards, K. (2019, February 16). Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gucci-blackface-dapper-dan_n_5c6825f4e4b01757c36c094e

Slawson, R. (2017, October 8). Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/08/dove-apologises-for-ad-showing-black-woman-turning-into-white-one

Smith, T. (2019, January 17). Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/2019/01/17/685976624/backlash-erupts-after-gillette-launches-a-new-metoo-inspired-ad-campaign

Sullivan, R (2018, October 8). Retrieved from https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/relationships/dating/hes-reading-afr-shes-reading-a-chanel-book-why-women-are-pissed-off-about-sofitel-hotel-ad/news-story/6629cbabae416ef71f525fc8040f5c0e

Toppings, A., Lyons, K., & Weaver, M. (2019, January 15). Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/15/gillette-metoo-ad-on-toxic-masculinity-cuts-deep-with-mens-rights-activists

Varnali, K. (2014). SMS advertising: How message relevance is linked to the attitude Toward the brand? Journal of Marketing Communications, 20(5), 339-351.

Zenith Optimedia. 2013. “Advertising Expenditure Forecasts September 2013”. Accesed Dicember 5. http://www.zenithoptimedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Adspend-forecasts-September-2013-executive-summary.pdf

How the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals Affects Customers' Perceptions and Loyalty Towards Organisations

Sergio Barta [a], Daniel Belanche [b]*, Marta Flavián [c] and Mari Cruz Terré [d]

[a] *Facultad de Economía y Empresa, Universidad de Zaragoza, Gran Vía 2, Zaragoza 50005 Spain; Email: sbarta@unizar.es*

[b] *Facultad de Economía y Empresa, Universidad de Zaragoza, Gran Vía 2, Zaragoza 50005 Spain; Email: belan@unizar.es*

[c] *Facultad de Economía y Empresa, Universidad de Zaragoza, Gran Vía 2, Zaragoza 50005 Spain; Email: mflavian@unizar.es*

[d] *Facultad de Economía y Empresa, Universidad de Zaragoza, Gran Vía 2, Zaragoza 50005 Spain; Email: maricruzterre@gmail.com*

Keywords: *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), education, reputation, trust, user-organisation identification, loyalty.*

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a significant step forward in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which organizations have been involved in for a variety of reasons. Unlike CSR, the SDGs (1) are a well-defined set of 17 concrete goals aimed at addressing the world's most pressing issues; (2) are a philanthropic effort to get businesses to accept their societal duties (Lu et al., 2021); (3) provide an opportunity for businesses to fulfil larger commitments and objectives with more precise timelines.

Previous research has looked into aspects of the SDGs' implementation, such as the characteristics of companies that have committed to them (Rosati and Faria, 2019), the degree of similarity of the SDGs to other sustainability standards (Mio et al., 2020), and the "SDG-washing" strategy adopted by some participating organizations (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2021). Beyond these advancements and theoretical ideas regarding the advantages that organizations may get from adopting the SDGs (Soonsiripanichkul and Ngamcharoenmongkol, 2019), the SDGs' potential beneficial impact remains unknown.

Focusing on the education sector, we propose the following framework based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model developed by Mehrabian and Rusell (1974) to see if implementing the SDGs has a positive impact on user-organisation connections in terms of perceptions and consequent behavioural intentions. We argue that implementing the SDGs (stimulus) increases users' intentions to remain loyal to the organisation (response), and that this process is mediated by three mechanisms: improving users' perceptions of the organisation's reputation, increasing users' trust in the firm, and enhancing user-firm identification.

Specifically, we propose that the user's perceptions of the organisation's compliance with the SDGs is the stimulus. We differentiate this SDG compliance according to three areas (environmental, social and economic). The user's perception of the compliance with these goals will affect the user's assessment of the organisation (organism). This user evaluation is composed of reputation, trust and user-organisation identification. Finally, user evaluation has an effect on user behaviour (response). In this research, we examine the effect on loyalty intention because of the relevance for educational organisations to attract and keep students in order to perform their educational activity.

Data to test the relationships proposed was collected in a private vocational training centre located in one large Spanish city. This institution provides training courses that lead to vocational certification. In conjunction with local enterprises that identify specific training needs, the courses build both generic skills and those closely linked to the local productive system. Various SDG-related initiatives were performed in 2021. First, in the area of the environment, emphasis was placed on the proper management of the centre’s trash disposal operations, with special awareness and participation initiatives, such as those regarding the disposal of plastic bottle tops. Food collecting drives, advocating the eradication of gender violence, and cooperation with organizations that help to the social and labour integration of the most disadvantaged groups were among the pro-social activities carried out. Finally, actions were carried out in the economic area to improve students' employability and boost their access to the labour market. In this sense, a job board was created because then students could see all of the employment openings that had been reported to the organization.

Two hundred and ten valid questionnaires were collected by surveys. Participants were given a short written overview of the SDGs before answering questions concerning the variables under investigation. The sample was predominantly young and gender-balanced, similar in terms of age and gender to the users of these types of organisations. The scales used were taken from previous literature and adapted to the context of analysis to ensure content validity.

After checking the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981) and the proper fit of the model (Hu and Bentler, 1998), the hypotheses were tested with structural equation modelling using the PLS statistical software. The findings revealed that different forms of SDG implementation (e.g., environmental, social, and economic) have different effects on consumers' perspectives. Users' perceptions of the organization's compliance with environmental, social, and economic aims increase the organization's reputation. Similarly, people' trust in an organization improves if users believe the organisation met environmental, social, and economic objectives. However, users' opinions of environmental SDG fulfilment has no substantial impact on user-organization identification. On the other hand, user-organization identification, improves when the user's perception of the organization's conformance with social and economic goals increases. Another interesting result is that users’ perceptions of the organisation affected loyalty differently. Organisational reputation does not significantly affect loyalty intention towards the entity. However, trust and user-organization identification have a significant positive impact on loyalty.

The results obtained lead to the conclusion that reputation, trust and user-organisation identification played a mediating role between implementing the SDGs and loyalty intention. Regardless of which SDG type the organization focuses on, trust in the organization is critical, and this trust grows when the organization performs actions relevant to any of the SDG categories. That is, users are readier to trust an organization if they believe it is committed to the long-term sustainability of the environmental, social, and economic setting in which it operates. Furthermore, user-organization identification is crucial for boosting loyalty. The findings revealed that a company's commitment to the SDGs for the environment is insufficient to establish user-organization identification.

Stakeholders, especially users, should be informed about the organization's commitment to the SDGs and its specific initiatives. Organisations should attempt to have a more direct impact on their operational environments, particularly in terms of social and economic factors, because this helps people trust them and identify with their goals, which leads to increased loyalty. To achieve student integration into the labour market, educational institutions should weave networks and build fluid partnerships with other social entities that provide help to the community, with institutions that support sustainable business entrepreneurship, and with employers.

Acknowledgments:

This research was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities under Grant PID2019-105468RB-I00 and FPU18/02037; and European Social Fund and the Government of Aragon ("METODO" Research Group S20_20R).

References

Fornell, C., and Larcker, D. F. 1981. "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error." *Journal of Marketing Research* 18(1): 39-50.

Heras-Saizarbitoria, I., Urbieta, L., and Boiral, O. 2021. "Organizations' engagement with sustainable development goals: From cherry-picking to SDG-washing?" *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*: 1-13.

Hu, L. T., and Bentler, P. M. 1998. "Fit indices in covariance structure modeling: Sensitivity to underparameterized model misspecification." *Psychological Methods* 3(4): 424-453.

Lu, J., Liang, M., Zhang, C., Rong, D., Guan, H., Mazeikaite, K., and Streimikis, J. 2021. "Assessment of corporate social responsibility by addressing sustainable development goals." *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* 28(2): 686-703.

Mehrabian, A., and Russell, J. A. 1974. "An approach to environmental psychology." *Cambridge: The MIT Press.*

Mio, C., Panfilo, S., and Blundo, B. 2020. "Sustainable development goals and the strategic role of business: A systematic literature review." *Business Strategy and the Environment* 29(8): 3220-3245

Rosati, F., and Faria, L. G. D. 2019. "Business contribution to the Sustainable Development Agenda: Organizational factors related to early adoption of SDG reporting." *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* 26(3): 588-597.

Soonsiripanichkul, B., and Ngamcharoenmongkol, P. 2019. "The influence of sustainable development goals (SDGs) on customer-based store equity (CBSE)." *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research* 13: 48-63.

A New Paradigm of Sensory Marketing for Those in Need: Exploring NGOs, New Technologies and Virality During and Post COVID-19 Crisis.

Aikaterini Avgeropoulou [a] and Yioula Melanthiou [b]

[a] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Av., Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: Avgeropoulou.A@live.unic.ac.cy;*

[b] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Av., Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: Melanthiou.y@unic.ac.cy;*

Keywords: *Viral Marketing; New Technologies; NGOs; Online Sensory Marketing; Consumer Behaviour; YouTube; Audio -Visual Appeal; Cinematography; Netnography.*

1.Introduction

The word viral holds a negative connotation for the majority of the population. Since the outburst of COVID-19 this notion has been amplified, as most people develop negative emotions, such as anxiety and panic, only by hearing the word viral (Reddy, Gupta, 2020; Oana, 2020; Wang, 2021; Crosta et.al, 2021). However, in the marketing world, viral carries a positive connotation and it is an extremely desirable outcome for marketing professionals', individuals' and for organizational marketing campaigns as well. The significance on accomplishing virality, stems from the fact that when something goes viral, it automatically becomes extremely popular, in a very short amount of time and to a very wide audience (Wilde, 2014, Arjona-Martín, Méndiz-Noguero & Victoria-Mas, 2020). One of the characteristics of virality is that it is directly linked with in-depth understanding and predicting consumer behaviour (Tellis et. al, 2019; Robles, Chica & Cordon, 2020). Also, virality is extremely desired in times of crisis, especially for Non-Governmental Organizations (hereinafter NGOs), as they have limited resources (Tellis et. al, 2019; Abbas, Ali, 2020; Reddy, Gupta, 2020). Hence, through virality NGOs can succeed something extremely valuable, and that is maximum exposure to a vast audience without having increased production costs (Rollins, Anitsal & Anitsal, 2014; Robles, Chica & Cordon, 2020). Literature reports, that there are no clear virality indicators identified yet. (Jankowski et al., 2018; Reichstein, Brusch, 2019; Lappas et al., 2020; Motoki et al., 2020; Avgeropoulou, Melanthiou, 2021). As a result, much remains to be understood regarding how viral videos or campaigns can be created (Lappas et al., 2020; Motoki et al., 2020; Avgeropoulou and Melanthiou, 2021). Moreover, the pandemic triggered significant societal, psychological and fiscal turbulences globally, so COVID-19 altered abruptly the current living-paradigm and as a result, consumer behaviour has been transformed significantly since COVID-19 first appeared (Lins, Aquino, 2020; Oana, 2020; Sheth, 2020; Vázquez-Martínez, Morales-Mediano & Leal-Rodríguez, 2021). As literature indicates, even after the end of the pandemic, consumer behaviour will not be as it used to be, as a result marketers need to adapt (Laato et al., 2020; Oana, 2020; Hamacher, Buchkremer, 2021; Islam et al., 2021). In order to adjust to the "new consumer behaviour" so as to be able to create viral campaigns, an innovative tool that appears to be very promising, if combined with insights from cinematography and with new technologies, is online sensory marketing which is a marketing approach that can affect or even alter consumer behaviour (Rathee, Rajain, 2017; Petit et al., 2019; Quesenberry, Coolsen, 2019; Bhatia et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021). It is important to identify how and if, online sensory marketing along with the aid of new technologies and cinematography, could be a valuable tool for achieving virality, as viral campaigns are directly related with understanding consumer senses, perception, attitudes, emotions and overall consumer psychology (Quesenberry, Coolsen, 2019; Reddy, Gupta, 2020). Thus, online sensory marketing appears to have a lot of potential for NGOs' if applied optimally, on the other hand, different aspects of online sensory marketing, as literature suggests, are yet not fully comprehended, therefore it is not applied with maximum efficiency (Wiklik, 2019; Petit et al., 2019; Bhatia et al., 2021; Avgeropoulou, Melanthiou, 2021; Chen, Wen & Silalahi, 2021). Hence, in a time of global crisis where virality is considered more valuable than ever and NGOs are now needed more than ever, so as to assist humanity, (Hall, Schmitz & Dedmon, 2020; Richvalsky, Machyniak & Gutan, 2020), it is necessary to gain more in-depth knowledge, in order to draw further insights regarding right choices from marketers on deliberately combining and triggering specific senses when creating a marketing campaign. Therefore, the aim of the present research lies on exploring factors to increase the level of efficiency of online sensory marketing for NGOs, by differentiating a sensory marketing model as to NGOs, thus making a new contribution to knowledge. This is very important as since the outbreak of the pandemic, as already mentioned, a global crisis has started and it is here to stay (Reddy, Gupta, 2020; Vázquez-Martínez, Morales-Mediano & Leal-Rodríguez, 2021; Crosta et.al, 2021). Therefore, humanity must deal with serious consequences due to COVID-19 and viral NGOs' campaigns could be an important tool for disseminating information to the public, for calling to action, and for influencing consumer' actions overall, so as to overcome this crisis with the best possible way. Based on the initial literature review the following research objectives have been set:

ROB1: To identify through critically reviewing already existing literature, the link between online sensory marketing, cinematography and virality on YouTube.

ROB2: To identify the degree that Cinematography should be integrated into sensory marketing.

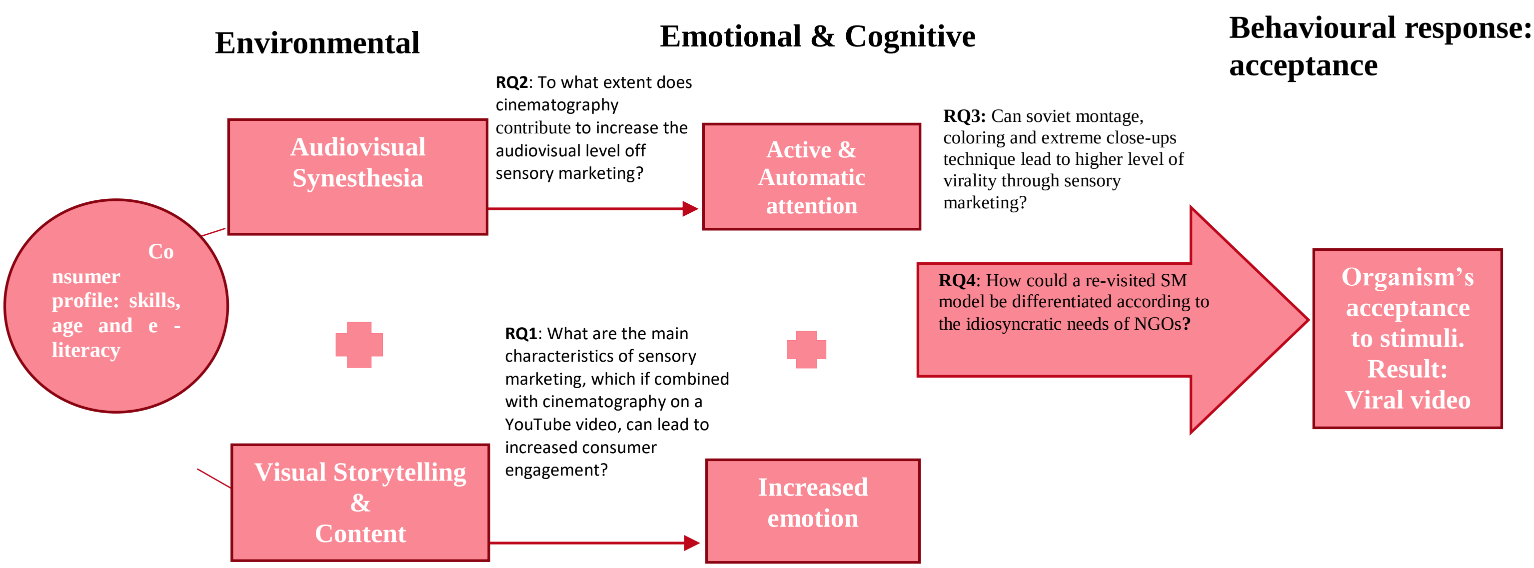
ROB3: To identify which are the specific cinematographic techniques to integrate into sensory marketing in order to create viral videos.

ROB4: To develop an evolved sensory marketing model in order to create viral video campaigns for NGOs.

1.1.Initial Conceptualization

From Stimulus Organism Response (hereinafter) SOR model the main aspects which will be further developed in present research are stimuli categorization and the importance of emotion on taking decisions after the exposure to specific stimuli. Regarding Online consumer behaviour model, the aspect which will be further expanded and incorporated in the new conceptual framework is the aspect of consumer character/ personality and the importance on identifying consumer-communities based on common character attributes, consumer skills (such as e-literacy) and consumer choices. Regarding the Limited Capacity Model of Motivated Mediated Processing (hereinafter) LC4MP model the focus is on consumer' internal processing and its importance on stimulating active attention and recall. It is important to stress in relation to LC4MP model that the present research fully adopts its suggestion to put more attention towards consumer internal processes, aiming on stimulating both automatic and active consumer attention. The initial conceptual framework is developed by synthesizing different and also compatible elements from the three models stated previously.

Figure 1: Online Sensory Marketing Conceptual Framework



The suggested framework stresses the importance of placing the consumer and her/his character as well as individual preferences at the centre of marketing efforts. After gaining these insights and ideally grouping online consumer' communities with common characteristics, with the aid of audio-visual synaesthesia and visual storytelling (adjusted to specific consumer profile), consumer' active and automatic attention will be triggered along with intense emotions, leading to viral videos on social networking sites. Consumer's internal stimuli processing, can be conscious and/or unconscious, that is why it is possible for both automatic and active attention to be triggered. The above framework if applied, aims to create a specific behavioural response and that is acceptance. As illustrated above, the stimulus which is received by the consumer may be rejected or accepted. When rejected, it means that the stimulus did not effectively influence the consumer. If accepted, then the stimulus is effectively influencing the individual. Thus, the above framework suggests that if applied, the state of acceptance will be achieved for the individual so as to receive a stimulation with impact which triggers both attention and memory. Then consumer will transition to the next process which is action or at the least a reaction to the stimulus and ideally virality (Mehrabian, Russell, 1974; Chang, Eckman & Yan, 2011).

2.Research Design & Methodology

The approach that best serves the purpose of the present research is deductive qualitative analysis enriched with an inductive element. The inductive element is that during data analysis researcher will investigate whether an innovative category or subcategory can be identified. The methods employed for the present research are qualitative case study and netnography. The main concept of the suggested framework stresses the importance of placing the consumer and her/his character as well as individual preferences at the centre of marketing efforts. Both secondary and primary research are employed. In terms of secondary research, both systematic literature review and narrative review were conducted, analysed, evaluated and then combined. In terms of primary research primary qualitative case study will be conducted through the application of specific steps of conducting Netnography, through in-depth interviews with semi-structured questionnaires and also through participant observation events (Saunders et al. 2007).

References

Ali Abdulhassan Abbas & Rajaa Hussein Abd Ali 2020, "Viral Marketing and How to Make a Viral Bomb in the Digital Space to Invest the Pandemic COVID-19", International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 323-336.

Arjona-Martín, J., Méndiz-Noguero, A. and Victoria-Mas, J., 2020. Virality as a paradigm of digital communication. Review of the concept and update of the theoretical framework. El profesional de la información.

Avgeropoulou, A. and Melanthiou, Y., 2021. Giving power to those having less power: NGOs, YouTube and virality. J. for Global Business Advancement, 14(4), p.520-540.

Bhatia, R., Garg, R., Chhikara, R., Kataria, A. & Talwar, V. 2021, "Sensory Marketing A Review and Research Agenda", Academy of Marketing Studies Journal.

Chang, H., Eckman, M. & Yan, R. 2011, "Application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response model to the retail environment: the role of hedonic motivation in impulse buying behaviour", The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 233-249.

Chen, W., Wen, H. & Silalahi, A.D.K. 2021, "Parasocial Interaction with YouTubers: Does Sensory Appeal in the YouTubers' Video Influences Purchase Intention?", 2021 IEEE International Conference on Social Sciences and Intelligent Management (SSIM), Social Sciences and Intelligent Management (SSIM), 2021 IEEE International Conference on, , pp. 1-8.

Crosta, A.D., Ceccato, I., Marchetti, D., Malva, P.L., Maiella, R., Cannito, L., Cipi, M., Mammarella, N., Palumbo, R., Verrocchio, M.C., Palumbo, R. & Domenico, A.D. 2021, "Psychological factors and consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic", PLOS ONE, vol. 16, no. 8.

Hall, N. (1), Schmitz, H. P. (2) & Michael Dedmon, J. (3) 2020, "Transnational advocacy and NGOs in the digital era: New forms of networked power theory note", International Studies Quarterly, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 159-167.

Hamacher, K. & Buchkremer, R. 2021, "Mediation of online sensory marketing through online collaboration software ", Iated, Online Conference, pp. 1387.

Han, Y., Lappas, T. and Sabnis, G., 2020. The Importance of Interactions between Content Characteristics and Creator Characteristics for Studying Virality in Social Media. Information Systems Research, 31(2), pp.576-588.

Islam, T., Pitafi, A.H., Arya, V., Wang, Y., Akhtar, N., Mubarik, S. & Xiaobei, L. 2021, "Panic buying in the COVID-19 pandemic: A multi-country examination", Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, vol. 59.

Jankowski, J., Zioło, M., Karczmarczyk, A. & Wątróbski, J. 2018, "Towards Sustainability in Viral Marketing with User Engaging Supporting Campaigns", Sustainability (2071-1050), vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 15.

Kim, M., Kim, J., Park, M. & Yoo, J. 2021, "The roles of sensory perceptions and mental imagery in consumer decision-making", Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, vol. 61, pp. 102517.

Koszembar-Wiklik, M. 2019, "Sensory Marketing – Sensory Communication and its Social Perception", Communication Today, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 146-157.

Lins, S. & Aquino, S. 2020, "Development and initial psychometric properties of a panic buying scale during COVID-19 pandemic", Heliyon, vol. 6, no. 9, pp. e04746.

Mehrabian, A. & Russell, J.A. 1974, "The Basic Emotional Impact of Environments", Perceptual and Motor Skills, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 283-301.

Motoki, K., Suzuki, S., Kawashima, R. and Sugiura, M., 2020. A Combination of Self-Reported Data and Social-Related Neural Measures Forecasts Viral Marketing Success on Social Media. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 52, pp.99-117.

Oana, D. 2020, "The Impact of the Current Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic on Consumer Behaviour", Studies in Business and Economics, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 85-99.

Petit, O., Velasco, C. & Spence, C. 2019, "Digital Sensory Marketing: Integrating New Technologies Into Multisensory Online Experience", Journal of Interactive Marketing, vol. 45, pp. 42-61.

Quesenberry, K.A. & Coolsen, M.K. 2019, "Drama Goes Viral: Effects of Story Development on Shares and Views of Online Advertising Videos", Journal of Interactive Marketing, vol. 48, pp. 1-16.

Rathee, R., 2017. Sensory Marketing-Investigating the Use of five Senses. International Journal of Research in Finance and Marketing (IJRFM), 7(5), pp.124-133.

Robles, J.F., Chica, M. & Cordon, O. 2020, "Evolutionary multiobjective optimization to target social network influentials in viral marketing", Expert Systems with Applications, vol. 147, pp. 113183.

Reddy, B.V. & Gupta, A. 2020, "Importance of effective communication during COVID-19 infodemic", Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, vol. 9, no. 8, pp. 3793-3796.

Reddy, B.V. & Gupta, A. 2020, "Importance of effective communication during COVID-19 infodemic", Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, vol. 9, no. 8, pp. 3793-3796.

Reichstein, T. & Brusch, I. 2019, "The decision-making process in viral marketing—A review and suggestions for further research", Psychology & Marketing, vol. 36, no. 11, pp. 1062-1081.

Richvalsky. L., Machyniak, J. & Gutan, D., 2020, "Political Influence of Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society", Ad Alta: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 172-176.

Robles, J.F., Chica, M. & Cordon, O. 2020, "Evolutionary multiobjective optimization to target social network influentials in viral marketing", Expert Systems with Applications, vol. 147, pp. 113183.

Rollins, B., Anitsal, I. & Anitsal, M.M. 2014, "Viral marketing: Techniques and implementation", Entrepreneurial Executive, vol. 19, pp. 1-17.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2007. Research methods for business students.

Sheth, J. 2020, "Impact of Covid-19 on consumer behaviour: Will the old habits return or die?", Journal of Business Research, vol. 117, pp. 280-283.

Tellis, G., Maclnnis, D., Tirunillai, S. and Zhang, Y. (2019). What Drives Virality (Sharing) of Online Digital Content? The Critical Role of Information, Emotion, and Brand Prominence. Journal of Marketing, 83(4), pp.1-20.

Vázquez-Martínez, U.J., Morales-Mediano, J. & Leal-Rodríguez, A.L. 2021, "The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on consumer purchasing motivation and behaviour", European Research on Management and Business Economics, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 100166.

Wilde, S. 2014, Viral Marketing within Social Networking Sites: The Creation of an Effective Viral Marketing Campaign, Diplomica Verlag, Hamburg Germany].

A New Approach for Understanding Brand Selfies as an Engagement Strategy on Instagram

Naziyet Uzunboylu [a], Yioula Melanthiou [b], Ioanna Papasolomou [c] and Demetris Vrontis [d]

[a] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Av., Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: nazli.uzunboylu@gmail.com*

[b] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Av., Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: Melanthiou.y@unic.ac.cy;*

[c] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Av., Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: papasolomou.i@unic.ac.cy;*

[d] *Department of Management, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Av., Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: vrontis.d@unic.ac.cy;*

***Keywords**: Consumer engagement, Brand-related user-generated content, Brand selfies, Social media, Systematic literature review.*

The lockdowns that have emerged with the Covid-19 pandemic made social media more relevant than ever and forced brands to adjust their offerings to help their customers engage with their brand and products from home (Naeem and Ozuem, 2021). Amidst this chaos and uncertainty, brands are naturally inclined to use their consumers' contents to effectively reach their audience, build trust for brand and business, improve brand awareness, enhance content strategy, add value for their audience and create stronger relationships. Of particular interest to marketers, therefore, are images that feature brands like brand selfies on Instagram. Brand selfies, consequently, could be seen as the new marketing strategy, which provide a good content of the brands, while consumers are the new marketers of brands (Barbro, 2019; Uzunboylu et al., 2020). This study, thus, focuses on the consumer-brand engagement process through brand selfies on Instagram with the aim of carrying out a netnographic research on Instagram to investigate the impact of brand selfies in consumer-brand relationship as a new form of engagement strategy and to develop a conceptual framework that would contribute to the consumer engagement strategy of brands.

In terms of methodology, a systematic review of relevant studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals was conducted in order to critically assess the social media marketing on marketing literature, devoting particular attention to the relationship between consumer engagement and brand-related UGC, as well as to identify the theoretical gap. A total of 49 articles, published between 2010 and 2021, were included to construct a robust understanding of this phenomenon, throwing light on the mechanisms underlying the appeal of brand-related UGC, particularly brand selfies, and their influential power in shaping consumer attitudes (Nanne et al., 2021) and engagement behaviour (Mohammad et al., 2020).

As opposed to marketer-generated contents, Br-UGC is considered more trustworthy (Hautz et al., 2014; Chari et al., 2016; Colicev et al., 2019), authentic (Ertimur and Gilly, 2012; Uzunboylu et al., 2020) and direct contact with potential consumers (Rossman et al., 2016). These effects might be even amplified for visual Br-UGCs since visual contents draw attention faster and is often remembered better than textual contents (Fox et al., 2018; Martensen et al., 2018; Nanne et al., 2021). Perhaps one of the latest and most effective types of visual Br-UGC is brand selfies (Presi et al., 2016; Uzunboylu et al., 2020). Moreover, both Cho, Huh, and Faber (2014) and Kim and Lee (2017) proposed that consumers' exposure to visual Br-UGC shared by people in their social circle positively influence attitudes towards the brand, which in turn influence preferences for a brand and positive associations, which subsequently lead to increased brand-related activity (i.e., reading and watching: consumption, commenting, sharing and 'liking': contribution and creating content). Therefore, in line with the concept of consumers' online brand-related activities, it is important to provide further insight into the brand selfie phenomenon as an engagement tool, not just as a new social trend. Furthermore, various research gaps on visual brand-related UGC (brand selfies) on the consumer decision journey was identified.

Based on the initial analysis, various research gaps on visual brand-related UGC (brand selfies) on the consumer decision journey were identified. Further, the need of an explorative method of research to expand the consumer-brand engagement literature was discovered and, correspondingly, a netnographic approach, based on Kozinets (2002), was emphasized appropriate so as to enable an examination of behavioural responses. Netnography, to date, has been adopted by few researchers in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature to investigate topics including developing trust (Ahuja & Alavi, 2018; Arif et al., 2020; Shaw, 2020), consumer attitudes (Rashid and Zeeshan, 2018; Sarnou, 2019; Ertimur and Gilly, 2012); and eWOM motivations (Rashid and Zeeshan, 2018; Uzunboylu et al., 2020; Brodie et al., 2013). It is therefore suggested that a netnographic research will further bring new insights to consumers' social media behaviours theory as it explores such behaviour from consumers' perspectives.

Notwithstanding its consistent growth in brand usage, Instagram has garnered relatively scant attention by researchers in the marketing field. Some of the previous researches focused on consumers' interaction in more traditional SNSs such as Twitter, Youtube and Facebook (Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020), but the relevance of Instagram appears to be greater as the amount of interactions with brands is much higher on Instagram (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Geurin, and Burch, 2017). Instagram is, therefore, an excellent online environment for studying brand selfies as Uzunboylu et al. (2020) suggests, because of its extensive user base (Nanne et al., 2021) and good opportunities for spreading content to many people (Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020). Moreover, its popularity is still growing day by day as brands tend to actively use this platform for their communication and advertising purposes (Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020).

The question of how Br-UGC's power to influence contributes to explaining the formation and development of consumer attitudes (e.g., Martensen et al., 2018; Sabermajidi et al., 2020; Nanne et al., 2021) and behaviours (Naeem and Ozuem, 2020) and has become a significant and inevitable topic for both practitioners and academics. In particular, although the broader field of consumers' engagement with Br-UGC has been reviewed by various scholars, a more grounded understanding of the 'brand selfie' (visual Br-UGC) concept in the marketing and consumer behaviour disciplines remain unclear. Consequently, the intention of the current study is to underline the relevance of further research in the areas of brand selfies and consumer-brand engagement.

References

Ahuja, V. and Alavi, S. (2018), "Using Facebook as a Digital Tool for Developing Trust amongst Consumers using Netnography and Social Media Analytics: A Study of Jet Airways", *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 171-187.

Arif, I., Aslam, W. and Siddiqui, H. (2020), "Influence of brand related user-generated content through Facebook on consumer behaviour: a stimulus-organism-response framework", *International Journal of Electronic Business*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 109-132.

Barbro, P.A. (2019), "The Influence of Selfies on Product and Image Evaluation", *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, Vol.23, No.4, pp. 1-15.

Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B. and Hollebeek, L. (2013), "Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 66, No. 1, pp. 105-114.

Chari, S., Christodoulides, G., Presi, C., Wenhold, J. and Casaletto, J. P. (2016), "Consumer Trust in User-Generated Brand Recommendations on Facebook", *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 33, No. 12, pp. 1071-1081.

Cho, S., Huh, J. and Faber, R. J. (2014), "The Influence of Sender Trust and Advertiser Trust on Multistage Effects of Viral Advertising", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 100-114.

Colicev, A., Kumar, A. and O'Conor, P. (2019), "Modeling the relationship between firm and user generated content and the stages of the marketing funnel", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 36, pp. 100-116.

Djafarova, E. & Rushworth, C. (2017), "Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users", *Computers in Human Behaviour*, Vol. 68, pp. 1-7.

Ertimur, B. and Gilly, M. C. (2012), "So Whaddya Think? Consumers Create Ads and Other Consumers Critique Them", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 26, pp. 115-130.

Fox, A. K., Bacile, T. J., Nakhata, C. and Weible, A. (2018), "Selfie-marketing: exploring narcissism and self-concept in visual user-generated content on social media", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 11-21.

Geurin, A. N. and Burch, L. M. (2017), "User-generated branding via social media: An examination of six running brands", *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 20, pp. 273–284.

Hautz, J., Füller, J., Hutter, K. and Thurridl, C. (2014), "Let Users Generate Your Video Ads? The Impact of Video Source and Quality on Consumers' Perceptions and Intended Behaviours", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 28, pp. 1-15.

Kim, M. and Lee, M. (2017), "Brand-related user-generated content on social media: the roles of source and sponsorship", *Internet Research*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 1085-1103.

Kozinets, R. V. (2002), “The Field Behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities”, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 39, pp. 61-72.

Martensen, A., Brockenhuus-Schack, S. and Zahid, A. L. (2018), “How citizen influencers persuade their followers”, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 335-353.

Mohammad, J., Quoquab, F., Thurasamy, R. and Alolayyan, M.N. (2020), “The effect of user-generated content quality on brand engagement: the mediating role of functional and emotional values”, *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 39-55.

Naeem, M. and Ozuem, W. (2021), “Developing UGC social brand engagement model: Insights from diverse consumers”, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 1-14.

Nanne, A.J., Antheunis, M.L. and van Noort, G. (2021), “The role of facial expression and tie strength in sender presence effects on consumers’ brand responses towards visual brand-related user generated content”, *Computers in Human Behaviour*, Vol. 117, pp. 1-11.

Oliveira, M. and Fernandes, T. (2020), “Luxury brands and social media: drivers and outcomes of consumer engagement on Instagram”, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*.

Presi, C., Maehle, N. & Kleppe, I. A. (2016), “Brand selfies: consumer experiences and marketplace conversations”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 50, No. 9/10, pp. 1814-1834.

Rashid, Y. and Zeeshan, M. (2018), “Customer Attitude towards Online Ads of Smartphone Brands: A Netnographic Analysis of User Generated Comments on YouTube”, *Journal of Management Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 40-64.

Rossman, A., Ranjan, K. R. and Sugathan, P. (2016), “Drivers of user engagement in eWoM communication”, *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 30, No. 5, pp. 541-553.

Sabermajidi, N., Valaei, N., Balaji, M.S. and Goh, S. K. (2020), “Measuring brand-related content in social media: a socialization theory perspective”, *Information Technology & People*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 1281-1302.

Sarnou, D. (2019), “On the Importance of Netnographic Research in Understanding Young People’s Virtual/Real Lives”, *Antae Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 35-50.

Shaw, A. (2020), “Netnography and a summative content analysis approach to market research”, *Journal of Emerging Trends in Marketing and Management*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 12-22.

Uzunboylu, N., Melanthiou, Y. and Papasolomou, I. (2020), “Hello Brand, let’s take a selfie”, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 109-121.

Digitalization and Car Sales During the Pandemic

Alessandro Augurio [a], Laura Castaldi [b]

[a] *Department of Economics, University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli", 81043, Capua, Italy. Email: alessandro.augurio@unicampania.it*

[b] *Department of Economics, University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli", 81043, Capua, Italy. Email: laura.castaldi@unicampania.it*

Keywords*: automotive, theory of planned behaviour, online purchase, pandemic*

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 gave the birth to one the worst economic crisis. The pandemic caused the disruption of global value chains, the stop of the manufacturing production and the downfall of sales.

The outbreak boosted the digitalization process which was already going on. It has been assuming the role of "accelerator" for the process of digital transformation of firms (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021). As a consequence, digitalization has been consistently changing firms' business models and it has been affecting the structure and characteristics of entire value chains, becoming a key element for many organizations (Schallmo and Williams, 2018; Chianias et al., 2019). Indeed, the adoption of digital technologies has even helped firms to go on with their business activities. As other disruptive events, the pandemic has affected consumer behaviour. In this perspective, digital technologies have allowed firm to meet the new needs and characteristics of consumers who have become more prone to the online shopping and to reduce the shopping trips in order to avoid face-to-face contact (Cruz-Cardenas et al., 2021; Baicu et al., 2020).

In such a context, the automotive industry has been hit severely by COVID-19, causing the disruption of the global value chains, the supply shortage and the stop of plants (Accenture, 2020). Worldwide car sales dropped dramatically from the 74.9 of 2019 to 63.8 of 2020 (Statista)[8]. Automakers also had to face changes from the demand side such as the reduction of consumers' purchase power due the economic crisis and the different interaction of consumers because of the threat of contagious (ITF, 2020). The necessity of contactless engagements by consumers has pushed automakers to undertake the direct selling of cars. Generally, cars are sold by car dealers within physical stores. The online distribution was implemented only by a limited number of automakers such as Tesla before the pandemic. However, the fear of contagious by consumers and the closure of many auto stores pushed many EV (electric vehicles) automakers in China to increase the use of digital technologies to implement online sales and to guarantee consumers contactless engagements. EV automakers that adopted the direct selling experimented an increase in sales of 142% in 2020 compared to those with traditional selling channel that registered a drop of 57% (Wen et al., 2021). However, very few works deal with this issue. The online purchase of cars allows consumers to collect more information and to compare prices

[8] https://www.statista.com/statistics/200002/international-car-sales-since-1990/

overcoming a potential lack of trust in salesmen. At the same time consumers lack the direct product experience and they cannot haggle with salesmen (Molesworth and Suortti, 2006).

This datum highlights the need to deepen consumers' car purchase intention by means of online channels after the outbreak of COVID-19 and explains the aim of the present work to conduct an exploratory analysis by using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). This model allows to identify the factors that are involved in the online purchase of a car.

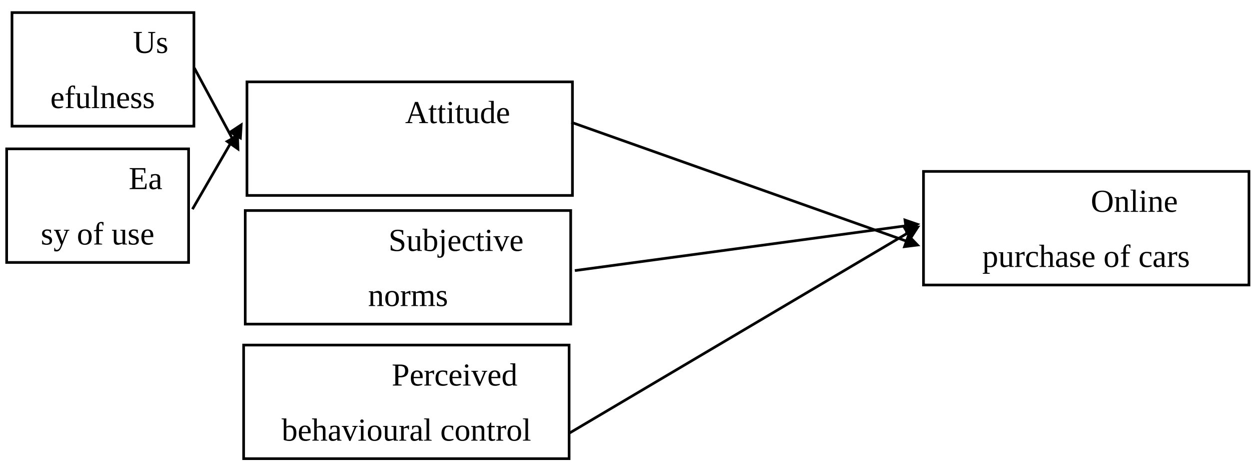
According to the TPB it is possible to predict people behaviour by means of behaviour intention, which is in turn explained by the following determinants (Ajzen, 1991):

- the individual perception of the social pressure of significant others to perform or not the considered behaviour (subjective norms);
- the individual perception about how the behaviour to perform is easy or difficult to perform (perceived behavioural control);
- the degree to which the behaviour is evaluated favourable or unfavourable (attitude).

As suggested by Moons and De Pelsmacker (2015), the antecedents of attitude are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by which the acceptance of a new technology is influenced by the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease of use of the innovation.

The framework used to perform the research is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework



At the moment we are working at the operationalization of the framework, selecting the items to be investigated per each dimension, to be included in a questionnaire that will be administered to a small (for validation purposes) and then to a representative sample of Italian customers. The items of each dimension will be selected by drawing from three different groups of studies. First, the studies that implement the TPB to investigate the car purchase intention (CheeSeng and Husin, 2015; Mohamed et al., 2016). The second group of works refers to those that use the TPB to study the online purchase intention of consumers in other industries (Lim et al., 2016; Gu and Wu, 2019). Finally, the third group consists of the works that adopt the TAM model to analyse the online purchase intention (Kian et al., 2018; Ying et al., 2021).

Following data collection, a factor analysis with the principal component extraction method will be performed to reduce the dimensions and a hierarchical multiple regression analysis will be adopted to identify the potential predictors of the online purchase of cars.

References

Accenture. 2020. Impact on the automotive industry. Navigating the human and business impact of COVID-19. https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-121/Accenture-COVID-19-Impact-Automotive-Industry.pdf

Ajzen, I. 1991.”The theory of planned behaviour.” *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Process* 50(2): 179–211.

Amankwah-Amoah, J., Z. Khan, G. Wood and G. Knight. 2021. “COVID-19 and digitalization: The great acceleration.” *Journal of Business research* 136: 602-611.

Baicu, C.G., I. P. Gardan, D. A. Gardan and G. Epuran. “The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour in retail banking. Evidence from Romania”. *Management & Marketing* 15(1): 534-556.

Chanias, S., M. D. Myers and T. Hess. 2019. “Digital transformation strategy making in pre-digital organizations: The case of a financial services provider”. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems* 28(1): 17-33.

CheeSeng, L. and Z. Husin. 2015. “Product and price influence on cars purchase intention in Malaysia”. *International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation* 2(4).

Cruz-Càrdenas, J., E. Zabelina, J. Guadalupe-Lanas, A. Palacio-Fierro and C. Ramos-Galarza. 2021. “COVID-19, consumer behaviour, technology, and society: A literature review and bibliometric analysis”. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 173.

Gu S. and Wu Y. 2019. “Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to explain customers’online purchase intention”. World Scientific research Journal 5(9).

ITF. 2020. “COVID-19 transport brief. Electric mobility: Taking the pulse in time of coronavirus.” International Transport Forum.

Kian, T.P., Loong A.C.W. and S.W.L. Fong. 2018. “Customer purchase intention on online grocery shopping”. *International journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Science* 8(12): 1579-1595.

Lim, Y.J., A. Osman, S.N. Salahuddin, A.R. Romle and S. Abdullah. 2016. “Factors influencing online shopping behaviour: the mediating role of purchase intention”. 7th International Economics & Business Management Conference, 5th & 6th October 2015. *Procedia Economics and Finance* 35: 401-410.

Mohamed M, C. Higgins, M. Ferguson and P. Kanaroglou. 2016. “Identifying and characterizing potential electric vehicle adopters in Canada: A two-stage modelling approach”. *Transport Policy* 52: 110-112.

Molesworth, M. and J.P. Suortti. (2006). “Buying cars online: The adoption of the Web for high-involvement, high-cost purchases.” *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 2(2): 155–168.

Moons, I. and P. De Pelsmacker. 2015. “An extended decomposed theory of planned behaviour to predict the usage intention of the electric car: A multi-group comparison.” *Sustainability* 7: 6212-6245.

Qi, X. and A. Ploeger. 2021. “Explaining Chinese consumers’green food purchase intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic: An extended theory of planned behaviour”. *Foods* 10: 1200.

Schallmo, D.R. and Williams, C.A. (2018), Digital Transformation Now!: Guiding the Successful Digitalization of Your Business Model. Springer.

Wen, W, S. Yang, P. Zhou and S.Z. Gao. 2021. “Impacts of COVID-19 on the electric vehicle industry: Evidence from China.” *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 144.

Ying, Z., Z. Jianqiu, U. Akram, H. Rasool. 2021. “TAM model evidence for online social commerce purchase intention”. *Information Resources Management Journal* 34.

Changing Consumer Behaviour Towards Sustainability (Generation Z)

Emmanouela Kokkinopoulou [a], Ioanna Papasolomou [b], Dimitris Vrontis [c] and Lucia Porcu [d]

[a] *School of Business, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, Nicosia CY-2417 Cyprus; Email: kokkinopoulou.e1@live.unic.ac.cy*

[b] *School of Business, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, Nicosia CY-2417 Cyprus; Email: papasolomou.i@unic.ac.cy*

[c] *School of Business, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, Nicosia CY-2417 Cyprus; Email: vrontis.d@unic.ac.cy*

[d] *Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales, University of Granada, Campus de Cartuja s/n, Granada 18071 Spain; Email: luciapor@ugr.es*

Keywords: *Sustainability, Generation Z, social media, Marketing Communications, Co- creation Process*

Sustainability has become a major issue among societies and economies and all International Organizations highlight the need to change consumers' behaviour towards a more eco- friendly profile. In March 2020, the European Commission announced under the European Green Deal, the new circular economy action plan which emphasizes among other issues the importance of empowering consumers to play a more active role in these efforts (Europa, Priorities 2019-2024).

Generation Z consumers could actively and effectively contribute through a process of co-creation in the efforts to cultivate a culture of sustainability within this consumer market. Co-creation in 21st century refers to a personalized experience through interactive models of marketing (Miroslawa, 2019). Social media has become a strong communication channel and brought a revolution on the relationship between consumers and businesses, including eco-friendly products, and allowed individuals to have a more interactive purchase experience (Pop et al, 2020).

According to the existent literature in the specific field, it seems that businesses can take advantage of some intrinsic characteristics of consumers, and factors that affect their inner desire to engage. Empowerment (Nam, 2020), emotional connection between consumer and goods (McNeill et al., 2020) and key psychosocial factors (He et al, 2019) such as their own positive attitude, feelings of being in control and being influential, seem to be essential intrinsic factors that influence young consumers towards sustainability. Young generations' "desire for popularity" on social networks, personal factors like social & economic class, morals/choices, lifecycle stage, age-maturity, and culture/subculture lead in spending more of their time online (Yadav and Rai, 2017). Norms/personality/individuality can easily affect and be affected by their demonstrated online behaviour, and need to be examined (Yadav and Rai, 2017). Focusing on generation's Z engagement with Social Media, it is still unclear how their personal values/ personal strengths and psychological characteristics affect generations' Z engagement in Social Media and specifically, how personal values and strengths affect generations' Z level of e-WoM, the degree of engagement and their intention to co-create content and how psychological characteristics play a significant role on the degree that generation Z uses e-WoM, on the degree of engagement and their intention to co-create content.

As Lin and Lin (2015) mentioned, consumers with green product attributes are searching for terminal values including “Fun and Enjoyment of Life, Sense of Security, Sense of Accomplishment, Self-Realization and Sense of Belonging”. According to Tezer et al. (2019), consumers also perceive a growth in their social value when using green products and feel warm glow, which then improves the pleasure of the supplementary consumption experiences. Lee and Kim (2018), examined customer benefits and the participation in value co-creation activities and they found that cognitive, social integrative, and hedonic well- being benefits significantly impacted customer intentions to incessantly participate in value co-creation (Lee and Kim, 2018), but the relationship between benefit and intention to participate, upon the type of co-creation activities (e.g. ideation, design, testing, support, and marketing) and industry characteristics. Cuesta- Valino et al (2020), mentioned that there are two kinds of factors that encourage consumer’s response: interior incentives—the utilitarian value and the hedonic value, and external incentives through social media advertising value. Van der Linden, (2018), in his research, found that the expected feel-good affect from helping the environment directly predicts a wide range of self-reported pro- environmental behaviours.

It would be interesting to explore if and how hedonic and eudemonic well-being factors, warm glow effect and feelings such as self-accomplishment, self-realization, sense of belonging maybe can shift generation Z in more environmentally friendly purchases and increase their willingness to participate in co-creating value. Can marketing communications, driving from literature, take advantage of generation’s Z personal characteristics, create inner motivation and “push” them to be more active and participate in Social Media platforms in order to engage them in a process of co-creation towards sustainability?

References

Cuesta-Valiño, P., Rodríguez, P.G. & Núñez-Barriopedro, E. 2020, "Perception of Advertisements for Healthy Food on Social Media: Effect of Attitude on Consumers' Response", International journal of environmental research and public health, vol. 17, no. 18.

Degenstein, L.M., McQueen, R.H., McNeill, L.S., Hamlin, R.P., Wakes, S.J. & Dunn, L.A. 2020, "Impact of physical condition on disposal and end-of-life extension of clothing", International Journal of Consumer Studies, vol. 44, no. 6, pp. 586-596.

He, Q., Duan, Y., Wang, R. & Fu, Z. 2019, "Factors affecting consumers' purchase intention of eco-friendly food in China: The evidence from respondents in Beijing", International Journal of Consumer Studies, vol. 43, no. 5, pp. 457-470.

Lee, A.R. & Kim, K.K. 2018, "Customer benefits and value co-creation activities in corporate social networking services", Behaviour & Information Technology, vol. 37, no. 7, pp. 675-692.

Lin, Y.L., Lin, H.W. 2015, The Benefits and Values of Green Lifestyle Consumers, International Journal of Marketing Studies

Mirosława Pluta-Olearnik 2019, "New generations of students from the perspective of co-creating values at the university", Marketing of Scientific and Research Organisations, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 1-20.

Nam, S. 2020, "Moderating effects of consumer empowerment on the relationship between involvement in eco-friendly food and eco-friendly food behaviour", International Journal of Consumer Studies, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 297-305.

Nicolae Al. Pop, Steluța Todea, Cristina-Veronica Partenie & Ott, C. 2020, "Stakeholders' Perception Regarding Sustainable Universities", Amfiteatru Economic, vol. 22, no. 54, pp. 330-345.

Pelkmans, J. 2019, The single market remains the decisive power of the EU. CEPS Policy Priorities for 2019-2024, 18 October 2019.

Prakash Yadav, G. & Rai, J. 2017, "The Generation Z and their Social Media Usage: A Review and a Research Outline", Global Journal of Enterprise Information System, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 110-116.

Van der Linden. 2018, Warm glow is associated with low- but not high-cost sustainable behaviour, Nature Sustainability

Saima & Khan, M.A. 2021, "Effect of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Intention and the Mediating Role of Credibility", Journal of Promotion Management, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 503-523.

Tezer, A. & Bodur, H.O. 2020, "The Greenconsumption Effect: How Using Green Products Improves Consumption Experience", Journal of Consumer Research, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 25-39.

Vilkaite-Vaitone Neringa & Ilona, S. 2019, "Green marketing orientation: evolution, conceptualization and potential benefits", Open Economics, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 53-62.

Having Fun on Tiktok: A New Trend for Influencer Marketing

Sergio Barta [a], Daniel Belanche [b], Ana Fernández [c], and Marta Flavián [d]

[a] *Sergio Barta, Universidad de Zaragoza, Faculty of Economy and Business, Gran Vía 2, 50.005, Zaragoza, Spain. Email: sbarta@unizar.es*

[b] *Daniel Belanche, Universidad de Zaragoza, Faculty of Economy and Business, Gran Vía 2, 50.005, Zaragoza, Spain. Email: belan@unizar.es*

[c] *Ana Fernández, Universidad de Zaragoza, Faculty of Economy and Business, Gran Vía 2, 50.005, Zaragoza, Spain. Email: anafernandezizq@gmail.com*

[d] *Marta Flavián, Universidad de Zaragoza, Faculty of Economy and Business, Gran Vía 2, 50.005, Zaragoza, Spain. Email: mflavian@unizar.es.*

Keywords: *TikTok, influencer marketing, perceived originality, humour, hedonic experience, opinion leadership, intention to follow the account, intention to follow the advice.*

TikTok is the post-pandemic era's fastest growing social network. It was the most downloaded application globally in 2020 and 2021, with 1,506 million downloads, far higher than Instagram's 1,048 million downloads during these years (Koetsier 2021). Despite the popularity of TikTok, however, little academic research has been conducted in this sector Influencer marketing has been examined on platforms such as Instagram or YouTube (Casaló et al. 2020). However, the responses of followers to TikTok influencer marketers (TikTokers) remain unanalyzed. These responses may differ from those made on other social media platforms; TikTok is unique in terms of publication format, content, and target audience.

TikTok is a dynamic audiovisual format for sharing short editable videos (Haenlein et al. 2020). These videos are highly interactive, easily skippable, and interspersed with similar content provided by friends (Belanche et al. 2019), which helps users engage with the site (Wiley 2022). TikTok is a more organic and spontaneous medium than YouTube, with its longer videos, or Instagram, with its more rigid formats and carefully curated look (e.g., high-quality, filtered photographs of restaurants). TikTokers typically appear performing regular tasks, or parodies of them, in natural settings (e.g., in videos shot in their own homes), which fosters more intimate and informal relationships with followers.

TikTok content is characterized by its ludic nature (Wang 2020), that is, its emphasis on enjoyment and fun, distinguishes it. Thus, TikTok is more oriented around amusement and passing the time than Twitter and Facebook, which are more focused on information, news, and connecting with friends and family (Haenlein et al. 2020). TikTokers can showcase products/services in an interesting and amusing manner because to TikTok's visual, fun focus.

This research intends to analyse and comprehend the factors that contribute to the success of influencer marketing on TikTok, as well as to provide practical guidance to influencers and businesses interested in capitalizing on this potential.

This research is based on two major psychological ideas. To begin, the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model (Mehrabian and Russell 1974) denotes three successive steps by which stimuli (S) influence the organism (O) to elicit responses (R). Second, the Elaboration Likelihood model (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) argues that information is processed by two distinct paths of persuasion: a central route and a peripheral route. Prior to making a decision on the central route, the individual carefully considers any arguments given (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). The peripheral route requires less cognitive work, and communication is more effective when it is pleasant, humorous, or contains other simple cues that aid in decision-making. In light of these two theories and prior literature, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H1: The perceived originality of influencers' posts has a positive effect on users' intentions to follow their accounts (H1a) and advice (H1b)

H2: The perceived originality of an influencer's posts has a positive effect on followers' hedonic experience (H2a) and perceived opinion leadership (H2b).

H3: The perceived quality of an influencer's posts has a positive effect on followers' hedonic experience (H3a) and perceived opinion leadership (H3b).

H4: Perceived quantity of posts has a positive effect on followers' hedonic experience (H4a) and perceived opinion leadership (H4b).

H5: The perceived humour of publications has a positive effect on followers' hedonic experience (H5a) and perceived opinion leadership (H5b).

H6: The follower's hedonic experience has a positive effect on his/her intention to follow an account (H6a), intention to follow the influencer's advice (H6b) and perceived opinion leadership (H6c).

H7: Perceived opinion leadership has a positive effect on users' intention to follow an account (H7a) and intention to follow its advice (H7b).

The questionnaire was completed by more than a couple of hundred TikTok followers of a popular young Spanish influencer. This TikToker creates entertaining films about topics that are popular with young audiences (fashion jokes, how to flirt, etc.). The account has over one hundred and twenty thousand followers and its videos have accumulated over four million views and one million "likes." The questionnaire was distributed via TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp to this TikToker's followers. After receiving the questionnaires, a verification process established that the respondents were truly followers of this TikToker and that they had read and understood the questions.

To test the research hypotheses in the main experiment, we adapted 7-point Likert scales previously validated in the literature originality (Moldovan et al. 2011), quality (Sanchez-Franco and Roldán 2010), quantity (Casaló et al. 2020), humour (Zhang 1996), hedonic experience (Nambisan and Baron 2007), opinion leadership (Casaló et al. 2020), intention to follow the account (Casaló et al. 2017) and intention to follow the advice (Belanche et al. 2021).

For testing the model's hypotheses, we used Smart PLS, and bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples (Chin et al. 2003). The results showed the following. Originality has a direct effect on intention to follow the account and on intention to follow its advice in support of H1a and H1b. Originality has a considerable favourable impact on hedonic experience and opinion leadership, hence supporting H2a and H2b. Quality has a positive, significant effect on hedonic experience but has no effect on opinion leadership, implying that H3a is supported but H3b is rejected. Surprisingly, and in contrast to H4a's prediction, quantity has a considerable negative effect on hedonic experience; it also has no effect on opinion leadership. As a result, H4a and H4b are incompatible. Finally, when it comes to the account's qualities, perceived humour has a favourable and significant effect on hedonic experience, thereby supporting H5a, but has no significant effect on perceived opinion leadership, thereby rejecting H5b.

Hedonic experience had a strong favourable effect on both intention to follow the account and opinion leadership, supporting H6a and H6c. It does not, however, impact the intention to follow the advice, rejecting H6b. Finally, opinion leadership has no effect on an individual's intention to follow the account and reject H7a; however, it does have an effect on an individual's desire to follow the advice and favour H7b.

In terms of managerial implications, businesses must be aware of TikTok's characteristics (i.e., short, entertaining videos targeted at people under the age of 20) in order to successfully execute influencer marketing campaigns. Thus, TikTok influencers present a genuine chance for businesses to communicate fluidly with a sector that has abandoned more traditional media and social networks. As a result, businesses should consider the type of material that influencers publish (De Veirman et al. 2017) before involving them in TikTok communication initiatives.

Acknowledgments*:* This research was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities under Grant PID2019-105468RB-I00 and FPU 18/02037; European Social Fund and the Government of Aragon ("METODO" Research Group S20_20R, and pre-doctoral grant 2020-2024 BOA CUS/581/2020).

References

Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. 2021. "Building influencers' credibility on Instagram: Effects on followers' attitudes and behavioural responses toward the influencer". *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61: 102585.

Belanche, D., Cenjor, I., and Pérez-Rueda, A. 2019. "Instagram Stories versus Facebook Wall: an advertising effectiveness analysis". *Spanish Journal of Marketing-ESIC*, *23*(1): 69-94.

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. 2020. "Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership". *Journal of Business Research, 117:* 510-519.

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. 2020. "Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership". *Journal of Business Research, 117:* 510-519.

Casaló, L., Flavián, C., and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. 2017. "Understanding consumer interaction on instagram: The role of satisfaction, hedonism, and content characteristics". *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking*, 369-375.

Chin, W., Marcolin, B., and Newsted, P. 2003. "A partial least squares latent variable modeling approach for measuring interaction effects: Results from a Monte Carlo simulation study and an electronic-mail emotion/adoption study”. *Information Systems Research, 14*(2): 189-217.

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., and Hudders, L. 2017. “Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude”. *International Journal of Advertising, 36*(5): 798-828.

Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., and Welte, D. 2020. “Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to be Successful on Instagram, TikTok and Co”. *California Management Review, 63*(1): 5-25.

Koetsier, J. 2021. “*Top 10 Most Downloaded Apps and Games Of 2021: TikTok, Telegram Big Winners”*. Forbes. Retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkoetsier/2021/12/27/top-10-most-downloaded-apps-and-games-of-2021-tiktok-telegram-big-winners/?sh=3ea3bb133a1f

Mehrabian, A., and Russel, J. 1974. “An approach to environmental psychology”. the MIT Press.

Moldovan, S., Goldenberg, J., and Chattopadhyay, A. 2011. “The different roles of product originality and usefulness in generating word-of-mouth”. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 28*(2): 109-119.

Nambisan, S., and Baron, R. 2007. “Interactions in virtual customer environments: Implications for product”. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 42-62.

Petty, R., and Cacioppo, J. 1986. “The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion”. Springer, New York, NY: Communication and Persuasion, Springer Series in Social Psychology.

Sanchez-Franco, M., and Roldán, J. 2010. “Expressive esthetics to ease perceived community support: Exploring personal innovativeness and routinised behaviour as moderators in Tuenti”. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 1445-1457.

Wang, Y. 2020. “Humor and camera view on mobile short-form video apps influence user experience and technology-adoption intent, an example of Tiktok (DouYin)”. *Computers in Human Behaviour, 110*: 106373.

Wiley D. 2022. “*6 Red-Hot Influencer Marketing Predictions For 2022”*. Forbes. Retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2022/01/11/6-red-hot-influencer-marketing-predictions-for-2022/?sh=2880d86c1f28

Zhang, Y. 1996. “The effect of humor in advertising: An individual-difference perspective”. *Psychology and Marketing*, 13(6): 531-545.

Anthropomorphism in Marketing During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Critical Review of the Literature

Eleni Trichina [a], Demetris Vrontis [b] and Michael Christofi [c]

[a] *University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, CY-2417, Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: trichina.e@unic.ac.cy*

[b] *University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, CY-2417, Nicosia, Cyprus; Email: vrontis.d@unic.ac.cy*

[c] *Cyprus University of Technology, CY-3036, Limassol, Cyprus; Email: michael.christofi@cut.ac.cy*

Keywords: *anthropomorphism, COVID-19, marketing, consumer behaviour*

The aim of this paper is to understand the ways in which anthropomorphism and anthropomorphic technologies in marketing domain during COVID-19 have been researched and analysed in the existing literature. To identify the relevant and highest quality research in relation to anthropomorphism topic in marketing during the recent pandemic, a literature review was carried out. Over the last three years, the rapid and sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an unparallel crisis on a global level which the world is struggling with (Prentice *et al*., 2021). Along with its threats to human health, COVID-19 pandemic has affected essential components of the businesses as well as how these are operating due to various mandatory measures imbedded to them and consumers' behaviours (Paramita *et al.*, 2022; Wan *et al.*, 2022; Mishra *et al*., 2021; Prentice *et al*., 2021). Within this context, research in marketing domain has started focusing on the use of anthropomorphism and anthropomorphic technologies during the pandemic and discussing its impact on customers and enterprises (Paramita *et al.*, 2022; Wan *et al.*, 2022; Mishra *et al*., 2021). Literature portrays that during difficult times such as the pandemic of COVID-19 anthropomorphism can prevent a business shutdown, by enhancing entrepreneurs' willingness to sustain and thrive a business (Paramita *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, anthropomorphism can affect consumers' behaviours and experiences, by alleviating their concerns about social distancing and touchless experiences (Mishra *et al*., 2021; Ali *et al.*, 2021). Through the literature it is argued that this could be accomplished with the use of humanlike virtual assistants and conversational agents in the private context, e-commerce and enterprise settings as they create a feeling of social presence (Marikyan *et al.*, 2022; Tsiotsou and Boukis, 2022; Mishra *et al*., 2021). This is consistent with the findings of past research on anthropomorphism suggesting that anthropomorphism can satisfy the fundamental need of belonginess and presence of other human beings (Chen *et al.*, 2017; Waytz *et al.*, 2014). Besides social presence, AI humanlike contactless services can affect customer phycological safety and service quality during the COVID-19 pandemic (Li *et al.*, 2021). Overall, researchers highlight that associating anthropomorphism with interaction and acceptance of virtual assistants and conversational agents, has become more real and prominent than before due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing use of such devices daily and in various contexts (Tsiotsou and Boukis, 2022; Marikyan *et al.*, 2022; Chiang *et al.*, 2022; Pelau *et al.*, 2021). We derive a set of theoretical frameworks developed for explaining this concept and we analyse the various ways that anthropomorphism is employed during COVID-19 and relevant outcomes on customer behaviour and marketing strategies as these are proposed through the literature. We consequently identify existing research gaps and prescribe effective avenues for future works in this research stream.

References

Ali, F., Dogan, S., Amin, M., Hussain, K. and Ryu, K. (2021), "Brand anthropomorphism, love and defense: does attitude towards social distancing matter?" *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 41 No. 1-2, pp. 58-83.

Chen, R.P., Wan, E.W. and Levy, E. (2017), "The effect of social exclusion on consumer preference for anthropomorphized brands", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 23-34.

Chiang, A.H., Trimi, S. and Lo, Y.J. (2022), "Emotion and service quality of anthropomorphic robots", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 177, p.121550. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.121550

Li, M., Yin, D., Qiu, H. and Bai, B. (2022), "Examining the effects of AI contactless services on customer psychological safety, perceived value, and hospitality service quality during the COVID-19 pandemic", *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 24-48.

Marikyan, D., Papagiannidis, S., Rana, O.F., Ranjan, R. and Morgan, G. (2022), ""Alexa, let's talk about my productivity": The impact of digital assistants on work productivity", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 142, pp. 572-584.

Mishra, A., Shukla, A. and Sharma, S.K. (2021), "Psychological determinants of users' adoption and word-of-mouth recommendations of smart voice assistants", *International Journal of Information Management*, p.102413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2021.102413

Paramita, W., Virgosita, R., Rostiani, R., Wibowo, A., Almahendra, R. and Junarsin, E. (2022), "I will not let you die": The effect of anthropomorphism on entrepreneurs' resilience during economic downturn", *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, Vol. 17, p. e00300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2021.e00300

Pelau, C., Dabija, D.C. and Ene, I. (2021), "What makes an AI device human-like? The role of interaction quality, empathy and perceived psychological anthropomorphic characteristics in the acceptance of artificial intelligence in the service industry", *Computers in Human Behaviour*, Vol. 122, p. 106855. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106855

Prentice, C., Altinay, L. and Woodside, A.G. (2021), "Transformative service research and COVID-19", *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 41 No 1-2, pp.1-8.

Tsiotsou, R.H. and Boukis, A. (2022), "In-home service consumption: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 145, pp. 49-64.

Wan, J., Kulow, K. and Cowan, K. (2022), “It’s Alive! Increasing protective action against the coronavirus through anthropomorphism and construal”, *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 81-88.

Waytz, A., Heafner, J. and Epley, N. (2014), “The mind in the machine: Anthropomorphism increases trust in an autonomous vehicle”, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 52, pp. 113-117.