

A brand-new world: brand-endorsers-users fit on social media

El nuevo mundo de las marcas: La relación entre las celebridades-usuarios-marcas en las redes sociales

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Abstract

Purpose – The digital relationship between brand and users, and brand and endorsers has been analyzed from different angles. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how these three elements co-create online the brand personality of the firm, through user-generated content.

Design/methodology/approach – This study gathered data from the hotels' websites, Facebook, Twitter and TripAdvisor accounts, examining the content posted by the hotel, by tourists and by the celebrity endorsing some of the hotels. To pursue the aims, the brand personality dimensions communicated online were assessed through content analysis for the global presence and for each social network by user typology to establish the alignment of brand personality traits communicated.

Findings – Digital communication was found to vary significantly between the hotels and tourists in different social networks. The amount of content created by tourists is significantly higher than the ones produced by the hotel. The sincerity dimension of brand personality was confirmed in both communications. However, tourists' brand image impacts brand personality differently than the hotels themselves. Furthermore, an analysis of the influence of customers on social networks indicates that celebrity personality traits seem to impact on the image of a hotel brand.

Originality/value – This research can be used to help brand managers to understand better the digital co-branding with clients and celebrity, as well as to identify gaps in their brand personality strategy. It could also assist future researchers focusing on digital celebrity endorsement since few researchers have analyzed digital communication in different social networks.

Keywords Celebrity endorsement, Social media, Tourism, Hotels, Brand personality, Digital branding co-creation

Paper type Research paper



Resumen

Objetivo – O relacionamento das marcas com os consumidores e das marcas com os endorser tem sido analisado por diversos prismas. O objectivo deste trabalho é analisar como estes três elementos se relacionam e co-criam a personalidade de marca da empresa, através dos conteúdos digitais criados por estes.

Diseño/Metodologia/aproximación – Neste trabalho foram recolhidos os conteúdos e comentários com origem na empresa, nos clientes e nos endorser existentes nas páginas web oficiais dos hotéis, bem como no Facebook, Twitter e TripAdvisor. Através da análise de conteúdo foram determinadas as dimensões da personalidade de marca existentes em cada uma das redes e para cada tipo de utilizador, com vista a determinar a consistência e o alinhamento da comunicação de marca existente.

Resultados – Os resultados desta investigação apontam para a existência de diferenças significativas entre a comunicação com origem nos hotéis e a originada pelos turistas, nas redes sociais: os turistas criam mais conteúdos que os hotéis; e as dimensões da personalidade de marca comunicadas não são coincidentes, embora a dimensão sinceridade tenha sido encontrada nos conteúdos de ambos. As evidências sugerem que os traços de personalidade do endorser tendem a influenciar a personalidade da marca.

Originalidad/valor – Este trabalho ajuda os gestores a se consciencializarem da importância da co-criação da imagem de marca que ocorre no domínio digital, bem como permite que identifiquem as lacunas existentes na comunicação da personalidade de marca das suas empresas. Este trabalho pode ser útil também para os investigadores que queiram analisar o papel das celebridades na comunicação digital.

Palabras clave Respaldo de celebridades, Redes sociales, Turismo, Hoteles, Personalidad de marca, Co-creación de marcas,

Tipo de papel Trabajo de investigación

1. Introduction

An examination of the web evolution reveals that both firms and customers have undergone behavioral changes due to technology immersion (Tiago and Verissimo, 2014). Users are empowered, expressing their feelings directly (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008; Rafailidis *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, users are connected virtually through multiple devices that give seamless access to a wider spectrum of information and a broader selection of data sources (Liu and Park, 2015; Tiago and Verissimo, 2014). This reality is cross-sector and somehow more evident in tourism.

Tourism and hospitality firms are challenged to ride this path. Social media allow firms to easily follow tourists' social media comments and evaluations and tourists to share their experiences with peers (Mistilis and Gretzel, 2014; Litvin *et al.*, 2018). The experience perception of tourists is unique and is affected by their personality traits (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). These tourists' contribution can be assessed as brand co-creation, since they contribute to the co-creation of brand personality and image.

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the convergence of the brand personality communicated by firms, enhance by celebrity endorsement with that conveyed through customers' communication. For this purpose, a medium-size international hotel group was chosen, since some of its hotels are endorsed by a celebrity. Data were collected from the official's websites Facebook, Twitter and TripAdvisor regarding the content shared by the hotels and clients, using different traffic-analysis tools available online. The primary data collected for this study represent a unique effort of combining analysis of the communication conducted from different sources in distinctive social media networks. The brand personality model (Aaker, 1997) was used to establish the brand personality alignment between digital sources.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1 Brand image co-creation

Branding in the age of social media is a key issue for marketers. As noticed by Holt (2016), a decade ago firms were immersing into the digital universe, hoping to take advantage of the rise of social media to leveraged customer engagement and enhance their direct relationships with brands. However, from the initial success of social sites to the explosion of user-generated content, consumer has undergone a behavior change in what concerns their interactions over the internet (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2016). The growing occurrence of

personalization blurred the lines between user and marketing content, disrupting with the traditional branding practice (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2013).

These platforms are unique user-to-user ecosystem where users can share, co-create, comment and adjust user-generated content (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011), co-creating brand value (Zwass, 2010).

The co-creation definition evolved over the years, encompassing new forms of collaboration between customers and firms, defined as the participation of consumers along with producers in the creation of value in the marketplace (Zwass, 2010). With web 2.0, the co-creation paradigm act as a catalyst for branding co-creation (Kamboj *et al.*, 2018; Nyangwe and Buhalis, 2018), the process of branding with customers in an online environment, enhancing traditional branding process.

The relevance of co-creation for branding and management needs to be looked from different angles (Ind and Coates, 2013) that have not been fully researched (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016), regardless the latest years increasing attention (see, Figure 1). According to Web of Science records, in the last four years, 358 articles were published, totalizing 527 articles on brand co-creation.

Constantly connected to all channel's types, individuals can contribute directly and continuously through co-creation of brand building, transferring their mindset to the brand. Therefore, co-creation can be found under a framework of brand knowledge creation, linking co-creation to several branding elements: awareness, image, personality, feelings and attitudes (Zwass, 2010; Nyangwe and Buhalis, 2018; Keller, 2012).

Lately, the differences between products and services branding have been highlighted, especially regarding the co-creation of brand, implying the need to reassess the brand co-creation processes (Iglesias *et al.*, 2017).

2.2 User-generated content in social media networks

Blichfeldt (2018) notes that web advances allowed firms and clients to adopt an interactive communication model; and that this model grounds on the central assumption that interactive communication integrates not only information exchange flows, but also the co-creation of new meanings and understandings. And in this sense, the author referred that “communication hereby becomes a symbiotic process through which messages and meanings are co-created, constructed, re-constructed, de-constructed” (p. 36). A similar approach was described in the early days of social media by Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004). These authors considered that social media were “a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues” (Blackshaw and

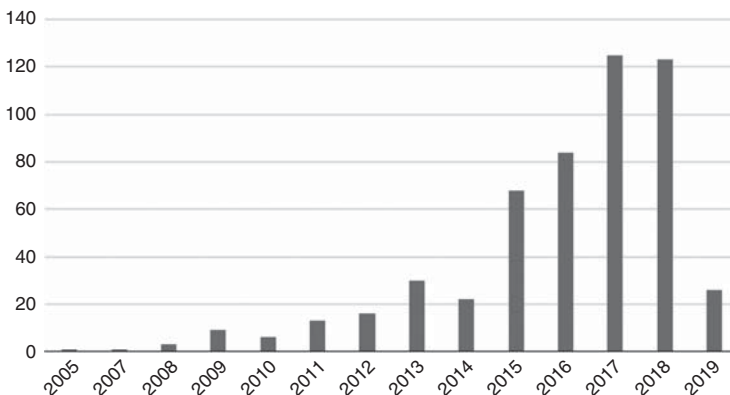


Figure 1.
Number of articles
published between
2000 and 2019

Nazzaro, 2004, p. 2). These endless flows of content and meaning creation are found to impact consumer journey in different forms.

In tourism and hospitality, it is not easy to find a traveler that has not used internet in any phase of its traveling journey (pre, during or post traveling). Jalilvand *et al.* (2012) considered that online user-generated reviews have become determinant sources of information for travelers, influencing their purchasing decision processes since the pre-traveling stage (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011).

To Litvin *et al.* (2018), “eWOM has fulfilled its promise to become a major influence on the hospitality and tourism industry.” As highlighted by Del Chiappa *et al.* (2018), electronic word of mouth (eWoM) relevance in tourism and hospitality derives from the service-nature and high-involvement of tourists in the tourism experience.

The eWoM produced with the format of a consumer review is “a mixture of fact and opinion, impression and sentiment, found and unfound tidbits, experiences, and even rumor” (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004). That, according to Gretzel and Yoo (2008), is perceived by travelers has been more updated, trustful and enjoyable than all other types of official information sources available. For these reasons, online reviews and recommendations became part of the travelers routine (Del Chiappa *et al.*, 2018). Nonetheless, not all tourists value comments and reviews in the same way (Jalilvand *et al.*, 2012), and not all tourists are active content contributors online (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). Yoo and Gretzel (2011) found evidence that tourists’ personality traits influence their willingness to create and share online content, as well as the content type and meanings.

Varkaris and Neuhofer (2017) argue that tourists rely on user-generated content found on social networks to decide where and when to stay. Therefore, co-creation affects not only the communication process, but also hotels’ branding reputation (Kim and Ko, 2012; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016), performance and digital image and identity (Ingenhoff *et al.*, 2018).

In this sense, tourists that actively interact with a brand assume the role of “endorsers.” In addition to consumers, celebrities are commonly pointed out as being endorsers of brands (Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta, 2010).

Celebrity endorsement is frequently used in promotion to enhance the effectiveness of persuasive communications, since elements such as content and celebrity credibility and appeal can influence brand perception (Esmailpour and Aram, 2016).

In spite of the interest of celebrity endorsement, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) noted, after an extensive literature review, that research in celebrity endorsements has made relatively little progress over the years in what concerns to the role of fit between the celebrity and the brand values or image. In their review, only few studies mentioned considered digital communication.

Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010) suggested that in endorsement, celebrity’s personality traits can be transferred to the brand. This is linked with the findings of MacInnis and Folkes (2017) that after an extended literature review about how consumers humanize brands found three different streams of works, one pointing to consumers’ tendency to “perceive brands as having human-like forms, minds, and personality characteristics.”

The literature that emphasizes the importance of social endorsement in the tourism and hospitality sector is still less explored (Van Der Veen and Song, 2010) and focuses mostly on destination branding (Glover, 2009). Nonetheless, it is known that consumers tend to choose brands with whom they share emotional bonds (De Moya and Jain, 2013; Escalas and Bettman, 2009). The celebrity endorsement can be used to humanize the brand (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017) and facilitate this bonding, since brands are abstracts constructs (Fleck *et al.*, 2014). Escalas and Bettman (2009) found evidence that consumers tend to bond or distance themselves from endorsed brands, based on the endorser aptitude to fulfill their self-related emotional needs (Escalas and Bettman, 2003; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017).

To Stern (1991), the congruence between celebrity and brand should reflect three baseline considerations, being the most salient the personality traits of the celebrity. This notion is

reinforced in the work of Escalas and Bettman (2009), underlying the need to establish an alignment between the endorser and brand personality traits.

2.3 Brand personality

In brand management, brand personality is often presented as a key component of an effective brand, since it provides a connection between the emotional and self-expressive benefits of the brand and it also helps to establish customer–brand relationships. Previous sections pointed that perceptions of brand personality traits can have more than one origin and outcome.

Su and Reynolds (2017) defend that brand perceptions can have their origin in brand communication, either directly through advertising, endorsement, employees and current clients, or indirectly, through the entire marketing mix of the brand. Thus, understanding brand personality may be critical, since nowadays brand personality is a multi-faceted function which is omnipresent in the firm–consumer relationship, as well as within-organization communication. Leading to question if brands are becoming humanized or human-like (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017), integrating endorser's personality traits with other factors impacting brand personality impressions.

Within the tourism and hospitality field, most recent studies that used brand personality scale (BPS) recognized that social media are shaping consumers' perception of brand personality (Zhang, 2017; Opoku *et al.*, 2006; De Moya and Jain, 2013) and that brands can differentiate themselves from competitors based on their brand personality traits (Aaker, 1997, 2012; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000; Chan-Olmsted, 2002).

Aaker (1997) proposed a model with five dimensions reflecting a set of human traits that can be associated with brands, each of which is divided into a set of facets, namely, sincerity (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful); excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative and up-to-date); competence (reliable, intelligent and successful); sophistication (upper class and charming); and ruggedness (outdoorsy and tough). Despite some criticism regarding the scales adopted, as well as semantic problems and the close relation to the American culture, the brand personality model of Aaker has been widely used. The BPS has been commonly applied to assess firms' brand image and its effect on consumer behavior, and more lately this assessment has been applied to the tourism and hospitality sector (De Moya and Jain, 2013; Zhang, 2017; Opoku *et al.*, 2006). The earlier applications of the BPS tend to focus on brands that presented a predominance of one dimension, whereas more recent studies present several dimensions (Opoku *et al.*, 2006).

Su and Reynolds (2017) argue that Aaker's model in tourism can be understood from one of the following four viewpoints: the anthropomorphism view considers that individuals tend to familiarize themselves with a brand by treating it as a person; the brand–consumer relationship view suggests that individuals use interpersonal relationships norms as guiding principles to connect with brands; the self-concept view implies that customer–brand relationship relies on the self or the ideal self that consumers have; and the naïve psychology point of view or the folk psychology view considers that individuals attribute personality characteristics to other people in social settings in order to evaluate the others and develop interpersonal relationships.

Most studies applying Aaker's scale in tourism are related to destination branding. Some researched how brand personality traits influence travelers' intentions to recommend a destination (De Moya and Jain, 2013; Ekinci and Hosany, 2006), others explore how destination communicate their brand personalities online (Kumar and Nayak, 2018; Lalicic *et al.*, 2018; Ekinci and Hosany, 2006) and others examined the relationship between destination brand image and brand personality (Rojas-Mendez and Hine, 2017; Vinyals-Mirabent, 2018; Hosany *et al.*, 2006).

As more hotels are incorporating social media in their branding and communication strategy, a closer look at digital communication and its implication on co-branding is needed. However, studies tend to focus only on one of the sides of the digital conversation: hotel social

media communication (Philander and Zhong, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2015; Aureli and Supino, 2017); user-generated social media communication (Philander and Zhong, 2016; Yang *et al.*, 2017; Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017; Sanchez and Fernandez, 2017; Yu *et al.*, 2017); and hotel- and user-generated social media communication (Levy *et al.*, 2013). As pointed by Su and Reynolds (2017), there are a considerable number of unanswered questions from a hotel's point of view that need to be answered in order to optimize co-creation experience spaces.

In this work we will focus on two of these questions, trying to contribute to a better understanding of how branding is influenced by hotels' communication, celebrity endorsement and consumer-generated content (Viglia *et al.*, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2015; Aureli and Supino, 2017):

RQ1. To what extent tourists shared content projected similar brand personality traits to the one communicated by hotels?

RQ2. Can hotel's digital brand personality be influenced by endorsers' personality traits?

3. Methodology

Relying on Aaker's (1997) dimensions of brand personality and using big data available on social media networks – Facebook, Twitter and TripAdvisor, this study attempts to add to the understanding of digital co-branding, by comparing the digital brand communication of a hotel group with contents communicated online by tourists and an endorser.

This research adopts the latter point of view of Su and Reynolds (2017), assuming that brand personality can be exploited by portraying a brand through images, memories and narrative stories – which correspond to the types of content commonly used in digital and social media communication.

The choice was drawn from the hotels of the Portuguese medium-sized Pestana Group, due to their international exposure and evident efforts to use social media as a platform to interact with the different publics (for instance they adopted an app SOMEMO Manager – Social MEdia MObile Manager to enhance customer experience). The Pestana Group has more than 88 hotels, with over 10,000 bedrooms in 14 countries, located in three different continents (Europe, South America and Africa), with more than 7,000 employees (Pestana, 2017). In this investigation only six hotels were chosen. Trying to guarantee a wider representativeness of clients and brand offers, the selection of these proceeded as follows: two 4-star hotels; two 5-star hotels and two CR7 hotels, located in different areas (different countries, cities and islands).

In addition, considering the gap found in the literature for celebrities' endorsement role, two hotels of the group under study endorsed by a football celebrity are also analyzed; Cristiano Ronaldo (CR7) social media activities were previously studied by Tiago *et al.* (2016), showing a wide influence online.

The data were gathered directly from the six hotels' official website and social-networking sites (Facebook, Twitter and TripAdvisor), using three traffic-analysis tools available online. Following the approach used by Opoku *et al.* (2006), information displayed on hotel websites was used to represent data on brand image. All textual information from each page of the hotel website was retrieving, using as main language the English. To establish if there was any kind of dynamic branding underlying the hotel websites, data were gathered after using different location proxies. Data gathered on social media, during 2017, comprehend all the comments available at Facebook and Twitter, and the newest 50 reviews available at TripAdvisor. The data collected for hotel communications had 14,644 words, whereas the tourist-generated content had 44,686 words (Table I).

4. Main results

A hybrid approach, combining qualitative analysis with quantitative analysis, was chosen for this study. A content analysis was conducted using the QDA Miner software and the

Table I.
List of hotel analyzed

Hotel	Location	Category	Brand
Pestana Bahia Praia ★★★★	Azores	Nature and Beach Resort	
Pestana Bahia Tropico ★★★★	Cape Verde	Ocean and City Resort	
Pestana Palace Lisboa ★★★★★	Lisbon	Hotel and National Monument	
Pestana Vila Sol ★★★★★	Algarve	Premium Golf and SPA Resort	
Pestana CR7 Lisboa ★★★★	Lisbon	Lifestyle Hotels	
Pestana CR7 Funchal ★★★★	Madeira	Lifestyle Hotels	

WordStat software to assess the brand personality traits available at the text. The original brand personality dictionary instrument created by Opoku *et al.* (2006), compiled a set of synonyms to Aaker's (1997) five basic dimensions as well as 42 personality trait norms as set out in her paper, containing 833 words, split into the five BPS categories, namely, competence, excitement; ruggedness; sincerity; and sophistication.

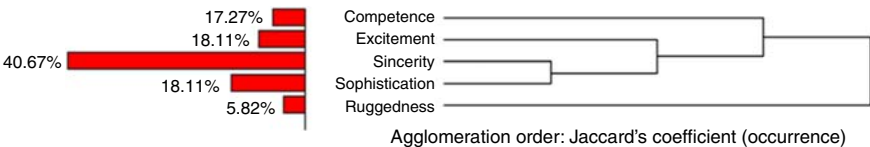
Analyzing all the content gathered, the results highlight the value of sincerity in the brand communication. Figure 2 shows the dendrogram of brand personality, where the closest nodes are sincerity and sophistication, with a Jaccard's coefficient of 0.188, which implies that even the closest nodes almost do not have shared contributors. According to WordStat, both these nodes co-occur 114 times in the data collected for this analysis.

From all the contents retrieved, only 1,517 mentions are linked to BPS dimensions in the websites sample, representing around 2 percent of the total words collected. The remaining 98 percent were found in the social networks, where user-generated content represented 75.3 percent of words reflecting brand personality traits. Looking separately at each of the SNS contents, brand personality suffers innumerable transformations (Figure 3).

A χ^2 test was performed, and a relationship was found between brand personality dimension communicated and channel used, $\chi^2(4, n = 1,845) = 32.73, p < 0.001$. At this point we can infer that brand personality traits are highly influenced by user-generated content in SMNs.

A partial match was found between the hotel brand personality dimensions communicated via the official websites, and tourists' comments posted on the different social media platforms. Site communication emphasizes the sincerity and competence dimensions, with sophistication in third place. The comments gathered from TripAdvisor show a "good" evaluation of the service provided by the Pestana hotels, with almost 76 percent of them transmitting the idea that Pestana hotels have a sincere and sophisticated brand. The second most-valued dimension in the hotel chain communication – competence – does not match the comments made by tourists on TripAdvisor. Facebook content posted by tourists present a different image: competence and excitement are personality traits that are absent in the communication flows. In turn, ruggedness

Figure 2.
Brand personality
dendrogram



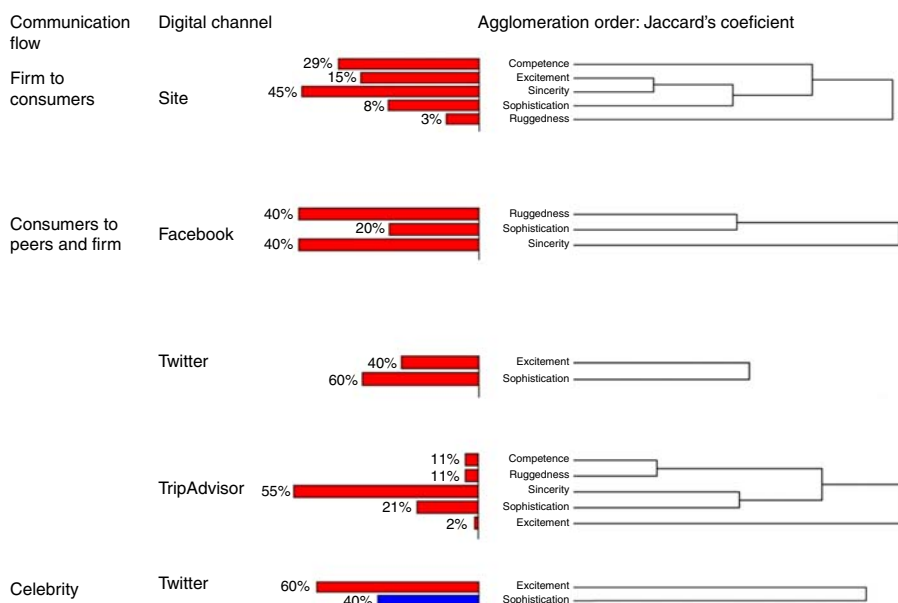


Figure 3.
Brand personality
dendrogram by
communication
channel

(40 percent) and sincerity (40 percent) are the main BPS dimensions communicated via Facebook by tourists. Looking at overall communication on Facebook, the differences between the hotel and tourists are quite evident. When the communicational process starts in the hotel, sincerity and competence are the dimensions mostly widely used; while when the communication is generated by tourists, the emphasis of the posts is on sincerity and ruggedness.

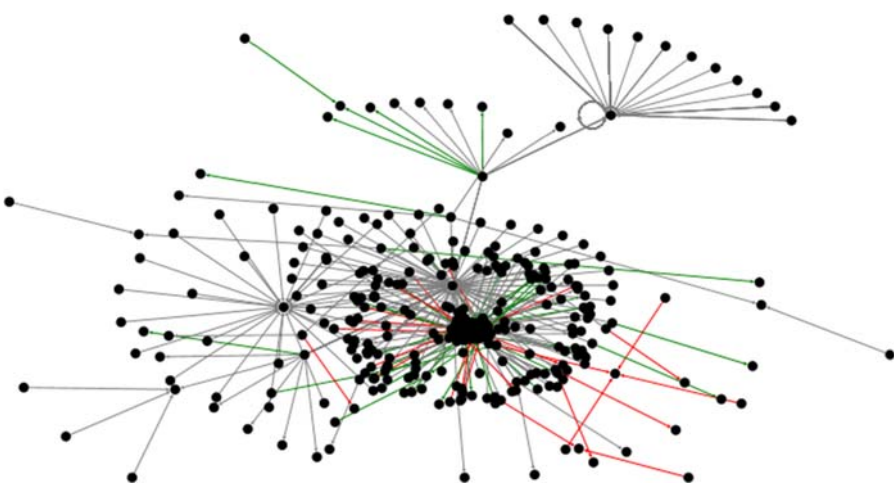
Looking at Twitter content, only two dimensions emerge: excitement and sophistication. This turnaround could be linked to the fact that some hotels have a brand alliance between the Pestana Group and Cristiano Ronaldo, the famous football player. When considering the two hotels endorsed by Cristiano Ronaldo (Pestana CR7 Lisbon and Pestana CR7 Funchal), the first set of a deep network structure analysis was carried out, aiming to establish the degree of the influence role of the player within the network.

In Figure 4, the red lines represent users located in Europe, while the green lines represent users located all over America. The HK fast multi-scale layout algorithm shows the presence of two pseudo-random networks with four clusters. The two top-side clusters are smaller and represent tours operator or travel agencies. The right-hand side cluster, that presents individuals with a more active inter-cluster and without geographical boundaries, is mid-pointed at Cristiano Ronaldo. The left-hand side cluster represents communication processes started by the hotel group. The content analysis of posts on Twitter for the cluster linked to Cristiano Ronaldo produces the bottom dendrogram in Figure 3. Similar to the non-CR7 hotels, the brand personality dimensions existence in the communication started by tourists focus on the sophistication (40 percent) and excitement (60 percent) dimensions. However, the predominant dimension is excitement in this case.

Acknowledging the differences found between BPS communicated on the distinctive channels, it is now relevant to analyze the results found for each hotel brand in different digital channels.

Table II presents how brand personality dimensions are associated with a particular hotel in the specific channel, considering that the cell counts reflect the number of times a

Figure 4.
Network graphs
obtained using the
Harel–Koren (HK) fast
multi-scale layout



Created with NodeXL (<http://nodexl.codeplex.com>)

Table II.
BPS dimensions
word references by
hotel brand

BPS dimensions/communication channel	Competence	Excitement	Ruggedness	Sincerity	Sophistication	Sig.
<i>Pestana</i>						
Websites	90	94	30	211	94	0.016
TripAdvisor	109	287	82	588	260	
Facebook	74	72	22	160	68	
Twitter	2	202	–	–	190	
<i>Pestana CR7</i>						
Websites	75	194	30	194	104	0.989
TripAdvisor	51	17	51	220	659	
Facebook	10	154	21	34	182	
Twitter	–	168	–	–	252	

particular brand personality dimension showed on the content analyzed. A pair sample correlation analysis reveals significant differences between the personality brand dimensions communicated on the website and TripAdvisor for the Pestana brand, but no significant differences were found related to CR7 Pestana brand.

Following a similar procedure to Opoku *et al.* (2006), outputs information on the relative distribution of words for the two biggest hotel brand present in the sample and digital channel file across the five brand personality dimensions were used to conduct a correspondence analysis. This procedure reinforces the associations between a firm and customer communication and the brand personality dimension, illustrated on a perceptual map (See, Figure 5) generated by the correspondence analysis procedure.

The map reveals the underlying structure and positioning of the hotel brands in relation to the brand personality dimensions. To determine the dimensionality of a solution, the eigenvalues and the cumulative proportion explained were used and a two dimension solution was chosen (Bendixen, 1995).

It can be observed in the map that the hotel brands near to the brand personality dimension mostly communicate online. For instance, the brand Pestana hotels and resorts are closely linked to the competence, showing an alignment with sincerity while CR7 brand

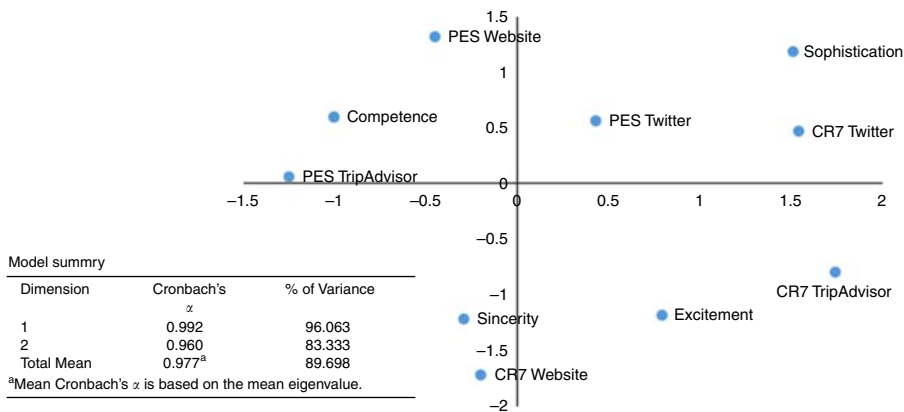


Figure 5.
Correspondence
analysis map

positioning results reinforce the idea that the brand is mostly considered as sophisticated and exciting by customers. However, hotel communication over the website focuses on different personality traits: sincerity and excitement.

5. Conclusions and implications

Social networks allow not only marketers to manage their own brand, creating a unique and salient brand personality, but also users to transmit their brand perception through user-generated contents. Thus, both firms and clients are co-creating online the brand image and personality (Zwass, 2010; Nyangwe and Buhalis, 2018; Keller, 2012) in a relatively new process, that is fast growing. Initially, the brand co-creation research has focused on products, shifting lately to the services. This research attempts to add knowledge regarding co-creation of brand personality in services, even though it is just of an exploratory nature, by focusing on the tourism industry. Within tourism, brand co-creation has been mostly analyzed from a destination branding perspective. A less explored domain is the hotel branding, that was the field of analysis of this work.

Tourists do not always have or may not even want complete information about a service, experience or destination from providers (hotels, restaurants, DMOs, etc.) (Rafailidis *et al.*, 2014; Standing *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, they search online for complementary information, from multiple or a single source of information (Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017). Social network sites are becoming live-stream repositories of information and whiteboards, where tourists can post and search for information concerning tourist experiences (Liu and Park, 2015; Cheung and Lee, 2012), co-creating a brand image and personality (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016; Opoku *et al.*, 2006; Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017) while endorsers shape brand image as brand spokesman' (Fleck *et al.*, 2014; Tiago *et al.*, 2016).

One of the puzzling pieces of brand co-creation relies on identifying co-creation experience spaces and aligning the brand personality traits communicated by all involved: tourism and hospitality firms, tourists and endorsers.

Based on Aaker's (1997) dimensions of brand personality, content shared by a medium-size hotel chain and tourists was analyzed through content analysis. The results found evidence of five hotel brand personality traits (competence, excitement, sincerity, sophistication and ruggedness) been communicated by the different users. These results are similar to those found by Zhang (2017) and Opoku *et al.* (2006) in what concerns the existence of the five personality traits in brand digital communication.

Considering that perceived brand personality traits can be formed during by any direct or indirect contact that the tourists make with the hotel brand, brand personality must be consistent with the brand's positioning and brand image. The results show that the same brand can be communicated differently, depending on the source of the communication. When looking to global communication flows, the most important dimension of brand personality emerging in this study is sincerity (40.7 percent). The overall communication of the hotel group transmits sincerity and competence. However, when looking at content generated by tourists on Facebook, Twitter and TripAdvisor, different personality traits come to the fore.

The amount of content created and shared by tourist online, regarding their unique perception of the brand personality traits, is quite bigger than the one produced by the hotels, attesting that tourists can have an active contribution to the branding process. As a result, marketers should pay attention to out-in communication flows since, as referred by Nyangwe and Buhalis (2018), social media have modified the communication flows and new brand proposition can emerge from the hotel-tourist digital conversation or simply through the mind sharing of the brand co-created by tourists.

More, as hotels websites and SNS communication are important tools in an effective digital branding, it is important that hotels are aware of the distinctive brand personalities being communicated via the different SNS. Furthermore, for the present case – Pestana Group – at consumers' eyes the group detains two different brands – Pestana and CR7 Pestana, however the group landing page has all the brands together.

The findings also reinforce the notion that celebrity endorsement can influence brand perception (Esmaeilpour and Aram, 2016), since the dimension excitement emerged from content generated in a network structure that has a link to Cristiano Ronaldo. As mentioned by Escalas and Bettman (2009), the celebrity endorsement seems to have a positive effect on branding when there is a match between the celebrity's image and the brand's image.

We believe that due to the importance, uniqueness and rapid growth of social media, hotels and researchers should pay special attention to branding co-creation in social media. Furthermore, they should acknowledge that consistency of brand personality depends on the integration of co-creation values. Brand management has become a task shared by tourists and hospitality firms. This study requires further research to examine the phenomenon in more depth. First, research can be replicated in other hotels, sectors and countries, testing the robustness of brand personality dimensions. Another line for future research could look at how firms react to consumers who modify their brand personality over time.

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