Antecedents and consequences of strategic online-reputation management:

moderating effect of online tools

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Antecedents and consequences of strategic online-reputation management: Moderating effect of online tools

Abstract

Purpose – This study examines the antecedents and consequences of strategic online-reputation management among tourism firms. It is proposed that a) customer relationship management (CRM) is an antecedent of strategic online-reputation management, b) brand equity is a consequence of strategic online-reputation management, and c) the use of online tools moderates the effect of strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative empirical study is conducted among online marketing managers of chain hotels. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to verify the proposed relationships.

Findings – The results show that CRM is an antecedent of strategic online-reputation management and that strategic online-reputation management and CRM exert a positive effect on brand equity among firms that frequently use a range of online tools. No such effect is found in cases of limited usage of online tools.

Practical implications – Tourism firms seeking to achieve greater brand equity by means of strategic online-reputation management should implement CRM and make extensive use of online tools.

Originality – The main contributions of this study are that it: (i) analyses the antecedents and consequences of strategic online-reputation management *jointly* and *empirically*; (ii) studies the moderating role of the use of online tools in the effect of online strategies—such as online-reputation management and CRM—on brand equity and; (iii) studies the consequences of CRM in online media.

Keywords Online reputation, CRM, Brand equity, Online tools, Moderating effect, Strategic online-reputation management

1. Introduction

Due to the proliferation of internet use and social media, tourism firms must identify the best way to manage their online reputations to ensure they remain positive, as this is considered a competitive advantage (Alrawadieh and Dincer, 2019; Pérez-Aranda *et al.*, 2019). However, to date, most studies dealing with online-reputation management have focused on tactical or operational aspects (Niu and Fan, 2018), while its strategic role remains under-studied (Pérez-Aranda *et al.*, 2019). The present research therefore seeks to address this lacuna by adopting a strategic perspective on online-reputation management to better understand its antecedents and its possible effects on the performance of the tourism firm.

Studying the antecedents of strategic online-reputation management involves examining the different strategic processes available to generate customer information, on which online reputation depends (Levy *et al.*, 2013). Customer relationship management (CRM) is one such process (Castello-Martinez, 2011). In this regard, empirical research is required to verify whether CRM is, indeed, an antecedent of strategic online-reputation management.

It is also important to determine the effects of strategic online-reputation management (De Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2018) and of the strategic processes associated with it, such as the use of CRM (Garrido-Moreno *et al.*, 2018), on business performance. When assessing business performance, there is a general consensus in the literature that brand equity is a variable that measures the market performance of a firm's marketing strategies (Keller, 2009). In this sense, one issue of particular interest for further study is that of the effects of online strategy on market performance, from the point of view of the firm (Pérez-Aranda *et al.*, 2019), and, even more specifically, the effects of strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity. Taking the business's perspective can help provide the firm and its managers with greater knowledge about the formation of brand equity based on the online strategies they adopt, which is useful for their decision-making (Zavattaro *et al.*, 2015).

Finally, when evaluating the effects of strategic online-reputation management and the use of CRM on brand equity, it is interesting to consider whether there are mechanisms internal to the firm that influence these effects. In this regard, the literature shows the role played by the firm's level of use of online tools in achieving its strategic objectives

(Theodosiou and Katsikea, 2012). This study therefore responds to the need for a means to assess the moderating effect that the extent of use of online tools can exercise on the proposed effect of strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity.

The overall aim of this study is to better understand the antecedents and consequences of the firm's strategic online-reputation management. More specifically, it proposes and validates a model that seeks to demonstrate that: (a) CRM is an antecedent of strategic online-reputation management; (b) Strategic online-reputation management has a positive effect on brand equity; (c) CRM has a positive effect on brand equity; and (d) The use of online tools plays a moderating role in the effect of strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity.

2. Literature review

2.1. Strategic online-reputation management

Corporate reputation is based on the opinions that individuals hold about the firm and share with others (Baka, 2016). Its importance lies in the fact that it is a primary parameter in the consumer selection process and can create barriers to entry for competitors, as it drives customer loyalty and retention and protects the firm in times of crisis (Dijkmans *et al*., 2015).

In the tourism sector, Web 2.0 applications based on social media, such as social networks, review websites, blogs, photo- and video-sharing platforms, and so on, are a major source of information for travelers (Pérez-Aranda *et al*., 2019). Collectively, such sources build what is known as *online reputation* (Espino-Rodríguez y Rodríguez-Díaz, 2021), which is the sum of the sentiment of the content that consumers autonomously generate about a company or brand in online media (Cillo *et al*., 2021). With the aim of showing the importance of online-reputation management, Table I summarizes the main studies on this matter, classified into four categories according to their approach (from the tactical to the strategic) towards online-reputation management.

[Table I near here]

In the context of the extant literature, Niu and Fan (2018) note the need for a future line of research to identify the antecedents and consequences of strategic online-reputation management. Responding to this call, this paper proposes that the use of CRM is an

antecedent to strategic online-reputation management and that brand equity is an effect of both the use of CRM and strategic online-reputation management by the firm.

2.2. CRM as an antecedent for strategic online-reputation management

Sin *et al.* (2005) defined CRM as "a comprehensive strategy and process that enables an organization to identify, acquire, retain, and nurture profitable customers by building and maintaining long-term relationships with them" (p. 1,266). Therefore, CRM increases customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty (Rahimi *et al.*, 2017).

With the emergence and subsequent development of online media, CRM entered a new era in which it was defined as the integration of customer-facing activities—including processes, systems, and technologies—with online media, to engage customers in collaborative conversations and thus enhance the firm's relationship with them (Trainor *et al.*, 2012). Online media provide important resources for CRM among companies that favor the analysis of consumer data, interaction in real time and through different channels, personalization, segmentation, and so on (Mastorakis *et al.*, 2015).

Understood against this backdrop, the implementation of CRM offers important resources and tools for the management of online reputation (Castello-Martínez, 2011). Among other functions, CRM, helps channel the enormous volumes of customer information that online media generate (Sota *et al.*, 2020). This information may be used by the firm to its advantage, to identify the best actions and responses to the market and to develop individualized marketing activities that contribute to efficient online-reputation management (Li *et al.*, 2021).

At the theoretical level, some scholars have proposed that CRM helps improve the online reputation of firms in the tourism field (Tian and Wang, 2017) and contributes to better management of their online reputation (Castello-Martínez, 2011). However, to date, there has been no empirical evidence with which to prove the antecedent effect of CRM on strategic online-reputation management. Thus, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H1: CRM has a positive and significant effect on strategic online-reputation management.

2.3. Effects of strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity

The specialist literature dealing with firms' adoption of different strategies notes the importance of measuring the effects of these strategies on business performance (Castellanos-Ordoñez and Solano-Arboleda, 2017) and, in particular, on variables such as the firm's economic and financial results and market outcomes (Kirca *et al*., 2005). Measuring the market outcomes from the point of view of the firm will enable business managers to better understand how results are generated and, in turn, help the firm to become more effective in its marketing decision-making (Zavattaro *et al*., 2015). In addressing this measurement, the literature has examined variables such as quality, satisfaction, perceived value, and loyalty (Polo-Peña *et al*., 2015). Some of these variables are considered by the literature to be dimensions of brand equity, which is defined as "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to marketing activity" (Keller, 2003: 60).

Previous studies have found that brand equity is a key variable in business competitiveness (Liu and Chou, 2016). However, only a few works (e.g., Cornwell *et al*., 2001; Henseler *et al*., 2011) have considered the effect of the firm's strategy (in all these cases, sports sponsorship) in terms of improved brand equity from the point of view of the firm.

2.3.1. The effect of strategic online-reputation management on brand equity

The strategic management of online reputation can be a powerful tool for improving brand valuation (Xie *et al.*, 2016). Various researchers have demonstrated the influence of different elements of online reputation in the tourism field, such as (a) the effect of online customer reviews on consumer behavior (Casaló *et al.,* 2015), which affect booking or visit intentions (Aureliano-Silva *et al.,* 2021), customer confidence (Sparks and Browning, 2011), online sales (Ye *et al.*, 2011), perceived quality (Wen *et al.*, 2021), guest satisfaction (Lee *et al.,* 2020) and brand equity (Stojanovic *et al.*, 2022) and (b) the effect of a firm's responses to consumer reviews on its performance (e.g. Kim *et al.*, 2015; Xie *et al.*, 2016) and, more specifically, on the brand, via variables such as brand trust (Jakic *et al.*, 2017) or brand perceptions (Kwok and Xie, 2016).

However, no study to date has directly addressed the effect that online-reputation management may have on brand equity, from a strategic perspective. The only study that could be identified that resembles the present research in some respects is that of Pérez-

Aranda *et al*. (2019), which examines online-reputation management from a strategic perspective and analyzes its effect on the benefits perceived by the firm.

Considering all of the above literature, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Strategic online-reputation management has a positive and significant effect on brand equity.

2.3.2. The effect of CRM on brand equity

CRM helps improve the quality of the firm's relationship with consumers and their brand loyalty, which generates emotional commitment to the brand and transforms customers into brand ambassadors (Law *et al.*, 2018). Previous studies show how the use of CRM is reflected in the assessment made by customers of variables such as loyalty (Munandar *et al*., 2022) and brand equity (Shriedeh and Ghani, 2017). Moreover, from the firm's perspective, several scholars have linked the use of CRM on online media to business performance in different sectors including tourism (Bilgihan *et al*., 2015; Garrido-Moreno *et al*., 2018).

However, despite the importance of market outcomes in the current competitive context, to date, there have been no studies providing empirical evidence from the firm's perspective about the effects that the use of CRM exerts on brand equity. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H3: CRM has a positive and significant effect on brand equity.

2.3.3. The moderating role of the use of online tools in the effect of strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity

When evaluating the effects of strategic online-reputation management and the use of CRM on brand equity, it is necessary to consider whether there are mechanisms that may contribute to reinforcing these effects. On this point, online tools can be considered a catalyst for the implementation of CRM (Rahimi *et al*., 2017), as they provide the medium that enables the creation, integration, development, and enhancement of relations with customers (Yunis *et al*., 2018). Furthermore, studies have shown that online tools offer a means by which customer demands can be met, which is a positive factor for firms' online reputation (Melián-González and Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016).

The literature also shows that enhanced use of online tools may be reflected in the firm's market outcomes, in the form of variables such as satisfaction (Theodosiou and Katsikea, 2012), or in different dimensions of brand equity, such as brand image, quality, or loyalty (Šerić *et al*., 2016). In the hotel context, Šerić *et al*. (2014) demonstrate that, from the customer point of view, the effect of the firm's strategy (in this case, integrated marketing communication) on the dimensions of brand equity (image, perceived quality, and loyalty) is stronger among hotels whose use of online tools is more extensive.

Consequently, it may be that, beyond a certain extent of use of online tools, the effect of the firm's performance is enhanced, thus improving its outcomes (Polo Peña *et al*., 2011). On this basis, it is therefore expected that firms that make frequent use of various online tools will be able to more adequately implement the strategies pertinent to the online context (Melián-Alzola *et al*., 2020)—such as online-reputation management and the use of CRM—and enhance their impact on business outcomes. By contrast, firms that use online tools only to a limited extent may not be able to fully implement the strategies appropriate to the online context, and may thus fall short of achieving enhanced market outcomes. Based on this premise, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: The use of online tools moderates the effect of strategic online-reputation management on brand equity, such that:

H4a: Among firms that frequently use online tools, strategic online-reputation management has a significant and positive effect on brand equity.

H4b: Among firms that use online tools only to a limited extent, strategic online-reputation management has no significant effect on brand equity.

H5: The use of online tools moderates the effect of CRM on brand equity, such that:

H5a: Among firms that frequently use online tools, CRM has a significant and positive effect on brand equity.

H5b: Among firms that use online tools only to a limited extent, CRM has no significant effect on brand equity.

Figure 1 shows the proposed theoretical model.

[Figure 1 near here]

3. Methodology

3.1. Population and sample

The chosen study population comprised hotels belonging to hotel chains that operate in Spain. A total of 330 hotel chains were identified. Since the total population size was relatively small, it was deemed appropriate to study it in its entirety (Hair *et al*., 2018). The data-collection was conducted between June and September 2018 by administering a questionnaire to managers with responsibility for online marketing in these hotels, through contact via email and telephone. In total, 137 responses were gathered from hotels pertaining to different brands of chains; this represents 33% of the population of hotel chains with a presence in Spain.

3.2. Measurement scales

Seven-point Likert scales adapted from various studies to the online context were used (Appendix A). First, to measure strategic online-reputation management, a scale based on the studies of De Pelsmacker *et al*. (2018) and Marchioria *et al*. (2013), both of which were conducted in the tourism context, was used. For CRM, a scale based on Sin *et al*. (2005) was used, this having been applied in studies dealing with the hotel industry (e.g., Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014). For brand equity, an overall scale based on the work of Yoo and Donthu (2001) was applied that has previously been applied in other studies in the tourism realm (e.g., Frías-Jamilena *et al*., 2017).

Finally, the extent of use of online tools was measured as a directly-observable variable (e.g., Narangajavana *et al*., 2017; Polo-Peña *et al*., 2011). This captured the online tools used by firms in their implementation of online marketing strategies and the extent (frequency) of use of these tools. To identify the online tools used, the studies of Fernández-Cavia *et al*. (2017) and Celemín-Pedroche *et al*. (2015) were consulted; and the frequency with which they were used was then measured. With this information, an index was created to record the extent of use of the online tools, divided into two categories (frequent vs. limited use). Those hotels (68) classified as using online tools frequently were those that registered scores above the median, while those classified as making only limited use of such tools (69) registered scores below the median.

4. Results

The procedure required the adequacy of the measurement scales used for the different variables to be confirmed by means of a Generalized Structured Components Analysis (GSCA), using *R* programming, version 4.0.3 with GESCA. Subsequently, the proposed relationships between the variables had to be tested, also via GSCA.

Thus, the psychometric properties of the proposed model were evaluated first of all. Regarding the global fit of the model, the GFI and the SRMR values were adequate (0.99 and 0.07 respectively) (Hair *et al*., 2018). Thus, the model fit can be said to be acceptable.

Next, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure that the chosen scales measured each of the latent variables correctly (Table II). Regarding the internal consistency check for each of the scales, both the composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) presented values above the reference threshold (0.70 in the case of composite reliability and 0.50 in the case of AVE) (Hair *et al*., 2018).

[Table II near here]

Finally, the discriminant validity between the different variables included in the research model was assessed. It was concluded that there was discriminant validity since the values of the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio are lower than 0.90 (Henseler *et al*., 2015) and the correlations between the variables are lower than the value of the square root of AVE (Fornell and Larker, 1981) (Table III).

[Table III near here]

Returning to the proposed hypotheses (Figure 1), the relationships between CRM, strategic online-reputation management, and brand equity were analyzed:

First, H1 proposed that CRM has a positive effect on strategic online-reputation management. The results (Figure 2) show a statistically-significant relationship between CRM and strategic online-reputation management (p-value<0.05). Furthermore, the direct effect is 0.56, with a confidence interval from 0.37 to 0.74. Thus, there is empirical support for this hypothesis.

H2 proposed that strategic online-reputation management has a positive effect on brand equity. The results show a statistically non-significant relationship between strategic online-reputation management and brand equity (p-value>0.05), with a coefficient of 0.23

and a confidence interval from -0.01 to 0.46 (Figure 2). This hypothesis therefore finds no empirical support.

H3 proposes that CRM exerts a positive effect on brand equity. The results show a statistically significant relationship between CRM and brand equity (p-value<0.05), with a coefficient of 0.31 and a confidence interval from 0.08 to 0.50 (Figure 2). This hypothesis therefore finds empirical support.

[Figure 2 near here]

Finally, to determine whether the use of online tools plays a moderating role in the effect of strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity, a multi-group analysis (with factorial invariance) was performed, distinguishing between two groups of hotels, according to the extent of their use of online tools (frequent vs. limited). Based on the results, the following aspects can be highlighted (Figure 3):

H4 proposed that the extent of use of online tools moderates the effect of strategic online-reputation management on brand equity. The results show that, among hotels that use online tools frequently, strategic online-reputation management has a significant and positive effect on brand equity of 0.39 (confidence interval from 0.07 to 0.61; p-value<0.05). By contrast, among those that make only limited use of online tools, strategic online-reputation management exerts no significant effect on brand equity (coefficient: 0.19; confidence interval from -0.23 to 0.57; p-value>0.05). H4a and H4b therefore receive empirical support.

H5 proposed that the extent of use of online tools moderates the effect of CRM on brand equity. In this case, it was found that, among hotels that use online tools frequently, CRM exerts a significant and positive effect on brand equity of 0.44 (confidence interval from 0.29 to 0.66; p-value< 0.05). Among those that make only limited use of online tools, CRM has no significant effect on brand equity (standardized coefficient: 0.17; confidence interval from -0.30 to 0.54; p-value>0.05). Thus, H5a and H5b also receive empirical support.

[Figure 3 near here]

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Conclusions

The current operating environment in tourism is characterized by the dominant role of tourists' online opinions. The strategic management of tourist opinions disseminated online—which, taken together, equates to online reputation—is therefore a critical success factor (Alrawadieh and Dincer, 2019). The present research seeks to understand what leads tourism firms to manage their online reputation strategically, and what effects this has on their market performance.

The results of this investigation demonstrate, first, that CRM is an antecedent of strategic online-reputation management. This finding is aligned with various studies that have argued, theoretically, that CRM may have a positive effect on the online reputation of the firm (e.g., Tian and Wan, 2017), and that have proposed on the theoretical level that CRM helps to manage online reputation strategically (Castello Martínez, 2011).

Second, the study proposed that strategic online-reputation management and CRM both exert positive and significant effects on perceived brand equity. In contrast to the findings of Pérez-Aranda *et al*. (2019), which verify the effect of strategic online-reputation management in terms of the achievement of benefits, in the present research, the relationship between strategic online-reputation management and brand equity does not receive empirical support. However, it does demonstrate that CRM has a positive and significant effect on brand equity. This result is in line with various studies that have demonstrated the effect of CRM on brand equity from the customer's point of view (e.g., Shriedeh and Ghani, 2017) and with those that, from the firm's perspective, have identified the effect of CRM on hotel performance (e.g. Bilgihan *et al*., 2015; Garrido-Moreno *et al*., 2018). To better understand these results, the moderating effect of the extent of use of online tools on these relationships was therefore analyzed.

Third, the effect of the *extent* of the firm's use of online tools (on the relationships between strategic online-reputation management and CRM on brand equity, respectively) was verified. The results show that the extent of use of online tools moderates both relationships: it is only among those firms that *frequently* use a range of online tools that strategic online-reputation management and CRM both exert a positive and significant effect on brand equity. In the case of firms only using online tools to a limited extent, strategic online-reputation management and CRM have no significant effect on brand

equity. These results are consistent with research that theoretically holds that frequent use of online tools helps firms manage their customer relationships effectively (Yunis *et al*., 2018) and manage their online reputations strategically (González *et al*., 2019).

5.2. Theoretical implications

The present research makes several contributions to the literature:

1) It adopts a strategic perspective of online-reputation management, unlike the vast majority of studies, which adopt a tactical vision of it. This represents an advance in the literature that responds to the need identified by authors such as Pérez-Aranda *et al*. (2019).

2) This research considers both antecedents and consequences of strategic online-reputation management—again responding to a need identified by other authors, such as De Pelsmacker *et al*. (2018). The study demonstrates an antecedent (CRM) and a consequence (improved brand equity), with this consequence only occurring when the firm makes *frequent* use of online tools.

3) The study offers a novel perspective, demonstrating the moderating effect of the use of online tools on the relationship between strategic online-reputation management and brand equity and the relationship between CRM and brand equity, responding to the need to investigate how online tools can contribute to business performance (Yunis *et al*., 2018).

4) The present work provides insights into the consequences of CRM in the online environment, as proposed by Li *et al*. (2021). Specifically, it contributes to the literature by testing the effect of CRM on brand equity, from the firm's perspective.

5) Finally, while not the principal aim of the study, it makes a contribution—as a response to the scholarly interest (Soler and Gémar, 2017)—to the specialized literature on brand equity by offering an explanatory model of how brand equity is formed in the online environment.

5.3. Practical implications

This study provides insights into certain mechanisms that can help tourism-related firms achieve a competitive advantage—specifically, by building brand equity by managing

online reputation strategically and implementing CRM. The study shows that firms must make *frequent* use of online tools to achieve leverage via their online strategies, to deliver the best possible results in terms of brand equity.

Tourism managers must understand that adopting a strategic perspective on the management of the firm's online reputation can help achieve greater brand equity. This approach involves strategically analyzing whether the experiences shared by customers across online media are desirable to potential customers, encouraging customers to comment on the firm, giving personalized answers, and analyzing the ratings the firm is achieving on specialized websites and acting accordingly.

In addition, the use of CRM—which focuses on managing customer relationships by reviewing and responding to their needs individually and personalizing the firm's interactions with them, all of which constitute basic elements of CRM (Sin *et al.*, 2005)— will lead firms to manage their online-reputations strategically. This is because implementing CRM enables long-term relationships with customers to be established through online media and helps channel the information obtained from these relationships effectively. However, it is necessary to take into account that, to make proper use of online CRM, firms must have suitably trained staff because this strategic approach can be difficult to understand and implement.

Moreover, strategic online-reputation management and CRM, by themselves, are not capable of achieving greater brand equity. In this regard, tourism firms that intelligently combine and coordinate online tools specific to the sector, such as those included in the present study—corporate website, social media accounts, mobile apps, corporate blog, OTAs, review websites or meta-search engines, web positioning via SEO and SEM, online advertising, personalized emails and newsletters, and other websites—will be more likely to implement their strategic online-reputation management and CRM effectively. And these approaches will, in turn, be more likely to contribute to achieving brand equity for such firms.

5.4. Limitations and future research

Like all research, the present study has limitations that may point to future potential lines of research. For example, the research centered on a population comprising hotels pertaining to hotel chains with a presence in Spain. Hence, the generalization of the results to other business types must be approached with caution. One valuable line of research

for the future would be to replicate the study in other types of tourism firms and in other geographical areas.

Finally, another theme currently being considered is to include in the research model other possible antecedents of strategic online-reputation management, such as market- or customer-orientation, in addition to considering other types of business result, in place of brand equity.

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Table I. Classification of studies dealing with online-reputation management in the tourism sphere

Category	Description	Examples of studies
A. Studies with a tactical approach to strategic online-reputation management	These account for the majority of studies in this research area. They aim to determine whether tourism firms respond to the reviews or comments posted by users online, how they respond to such feedback, and what effect the firms' responses have on the consumer or on business performance.	Alrawadieh and Dincer (2019); Jakic *et al* (2017), Kim *et al*. (2015); Kwok and Xie (2016); Xie *et al*. (2016)
B. Studies that begin to highlight the strategic role played by active management of online reputation	These scholars begin to ask whether the active management of online reputation might play a strategic role, and note that it calls for professionalization and a recognized place within the organization.	Cillo *et al*. (2019); Soler and Gémar (2017)
C. Studies that propose strategic approaches to the management of online reputation	These studies explain what an online-reputation management strategy should look like, and propose specific plans for managing online reputation over the long term.	Baka (2016); De Pelsmacker *et al*. (2018); Levy *et al*. (2013); Niu and Fan (2018)
D. Studies dealing with the consequences of strategic online-reputation management	There is only one study that links strategic online-reputation management to its consequences (in this case, business benefits).	Pérez-Aranda *et al*. (2019)

Source: The authors

Table II. Convergent validity and internal consistency indicators for the scales

Latent variable	Items	Standardized loadings and confidence interval	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Strategic online-reputation management	REP1	0.72 (0.56; 0.84)	0.84	0.57
	REP2	0.69 (0.50; 0.81)		
	REP3	0.81 (0.70; 0.90)		
	REP4	0.80 (0.69; 0.89)		
CRM	CRM1	0.83 (0.74; 0.90)	0.90	0.75
	CRM2	0.86 (0.74; 0.91)		
	CRM3	0.91 (0.83; 0.95)		
Brand equity	BE1	0.97 (0.95; 0.98)	0.98	0.94
	BE2	0.97 (0.94; 0.99)		
	BE3	0.97 (0.95; 0.98)		

Table III. Discriminant validity. Fornell-Larcker criterion (below the main diagonal) and HTMT (above the main diagonal)

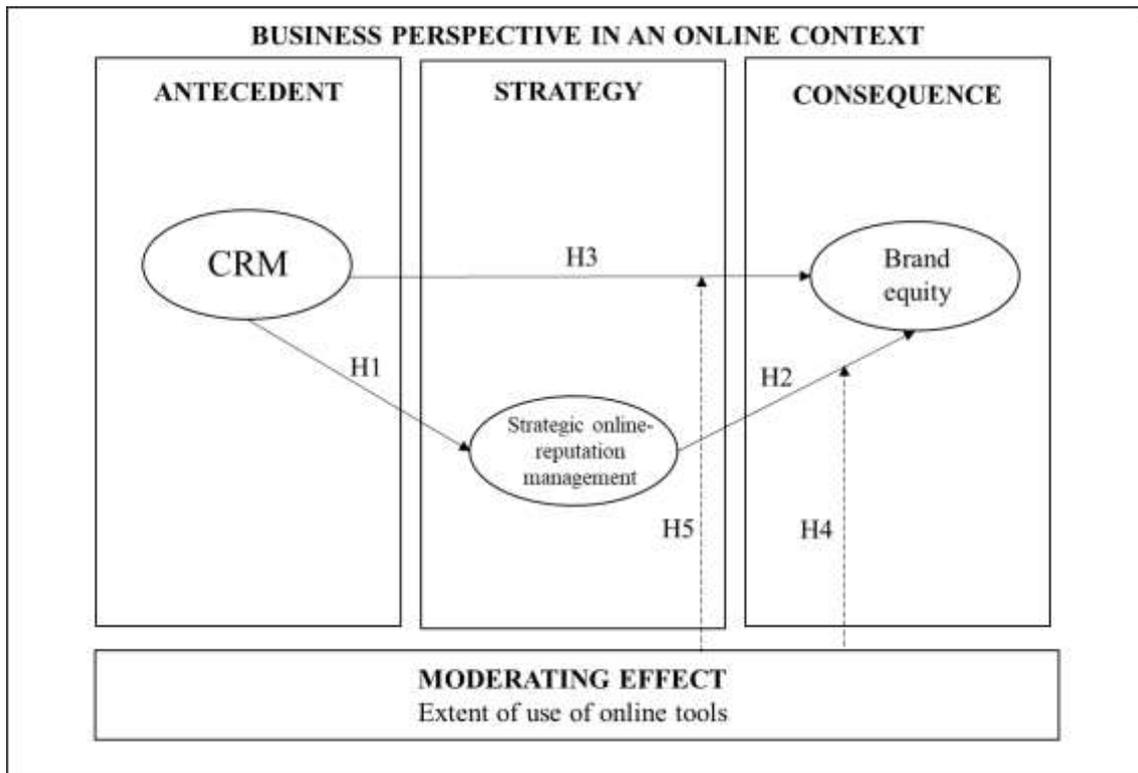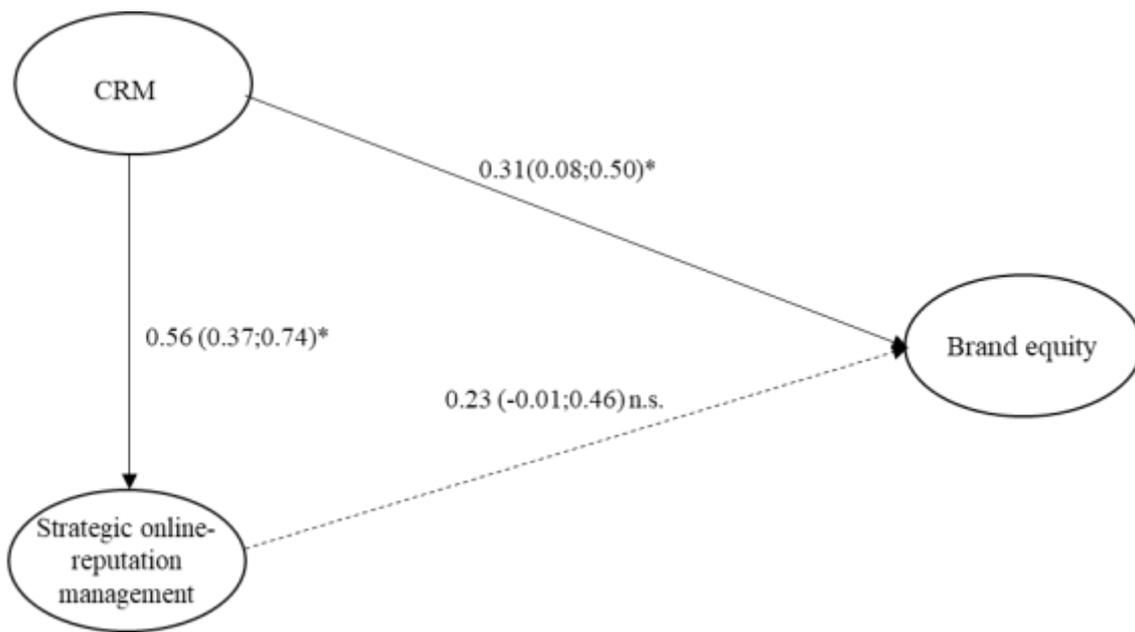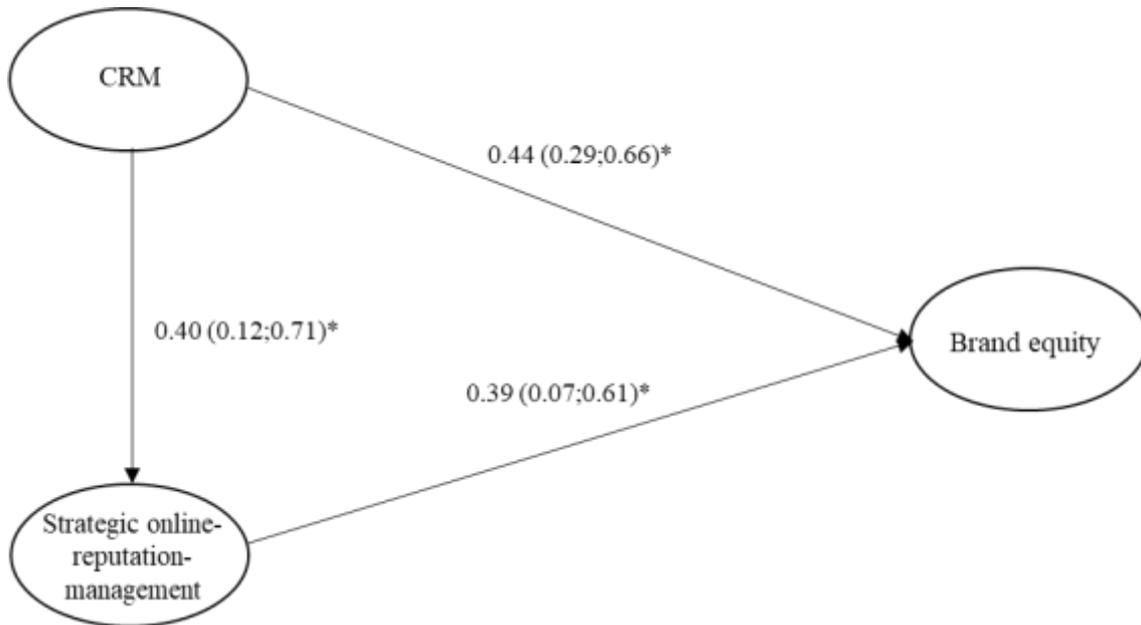|	Strategic online-reputation management	CRM	Brand equity
Strategic online-reputation management	**0.75**	0.71	0.47
CRM	0.56	**0.87**	0.48
Brand equity	0.40	0.44	**0.97**

Figure 1. Proposed research model
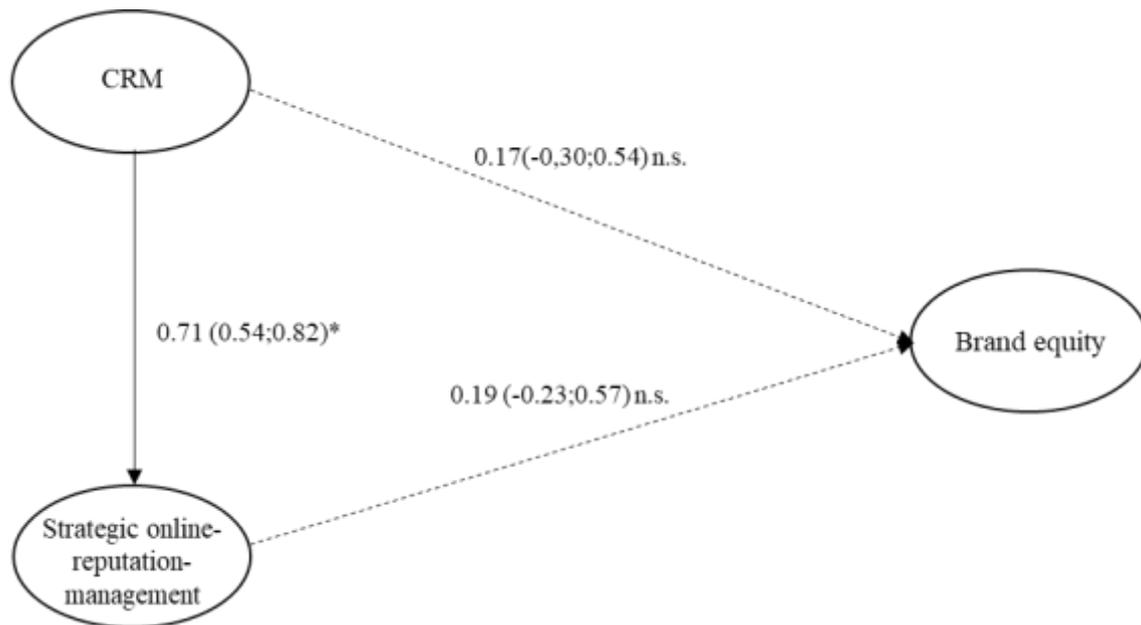
Figure 2. Results of hypotheses H1, H2 and H3

Coefficient (confidence interval); *=p-value<0.05; n.s.= not significant

Figure 3. Results of hypotheses H4 and H5

Group 1: Hotels that frequently use online tools

CRM

0.44 (0.29;0.66)*

0.40 (0.12;0.71)*

Brand equity

0.39 (0.07;0.61)*

Strategic online-
reputation-
management

Group 2: Hotels that only use online tools to a limited extent

CRM

0.17(-0,30;0.54)n.s.

0.71 (0.54;0.82)*

Brand equity

0.19 (-0.23;0.57)n.s.

Strategic online-
reputation-
management

*Coefficient (confidence interval); *=p-value<0.05; n.s.= not significant*

Appendix A. Measurement scales for the variables

Construct/Item
Strategic online-reputation management (REP) (based on De Pelsmacker *et al*. 2018 and Marchioria *et al*., 2013)
REP1. We analyze whether the experiences that hotel clients share online are desirable to potential clients.
REP2. We give personalized answers to the comments that clients make about the hotel on online media.
REP3. We encourage clients to post their comments about the hotel on online media.
REP4. We analyze the ratings the hotel receives on specialist websites.
CRM (based on Sin *et al*. 2005)
Using online media …
CRM1. We manage our client relationships.
CRM2. We monitor and respond to client needs on an individual basis.
CRM3. We personalize our interactions with clients.
Brand equity (BE) (based on Yoo and Donthu, 2001)
The online marketing strategy followed by the hotel has contributed to …
BE1. The fact that it makes sense for clients to choose this hotel, rather than a different one from the same category.
BE2. The fact that clients prefer this hotel, even if there is another one with the same characteristics.
BE3. The fact that, if there is another hotel, no different to this one, clients still find it more intelligent to choose this one.
Use of online tools (based on Fernández-Cavia *et al*., 2017 and Celemín-Pedroche *et*
Please indicate the total approximate number of hours spent by staff every week on actively using each of the following online tools:
Corporate website
Hotel's social media accounts
Hotel's mobile apps
Corporate blog
OTAs, review websites or meta-search engines
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
Search Engine Marketing (SEM)
Online advertising
Personalized emails and newsletters
Websites other than that of the hotel/hotel group (tourism bodies, local council...)