# THE IMPACT OF DESTINATION-BRAND SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT ON CONSUMER ONLINE BRAND-RELATED ACTIVITIES (COBRAs)

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## ABSTRACT

On social media, the social cues accompanying a destination-brand-related post (likes, comments, shares), the relevance of its content, and the content-source are all determining factors that impact on consumers' engagement with that brand on social media. The study identifies consumers' engagement via their levels of participation in consuming, sharing, and creating content (COBRAs) about a destination. A 2x2x2 experiment is performed on a panel-based sample of 632 users who are exposed to different Instagram stimuli about a fictitious tourist attraction. The results provide empirical support for the hypothesis that all factors exert positive effects on tourists' engagement with destination-brand-related content. Social cues and the content-source are found to function as moderators of content relevance. The importance of these findings lies in identifying differences in tourist engagement generated by the relevance of the content, depending on who posts it and the social endorsement it receives. Theoretical and practical implications are provided.

**Keywords**: USER-GENERATED CONTENT, FIRM-GENERATED CONTENT, SOCIAL CUES, BRAND-RELATED CONTENT ENGAGEMENT, DESTINATION-BRAND CONTENT, COBRAs.

**Funding**

## 1. Introduction

Recent studies in the tourism and hospitality field have demonstrated that the emergence of social networks has generated major opportunities to bring tourism managers and consumers closer together to form optimal relationships (Jamshidi *et al.*, 2023). These networks offer a means to establish a dialogue and generate public reactions toward a specific brand and encourage audiences to unite around it, interact in relation to it, or otherwise engage with it via the different online platforms (Valentini, 2015). Social networks facilitate the creation, sharing, and active enrichment of brand-related content (Park & Jiang, 2021). Indeed, the effectiveness of today's destination marketing largely depends on this content generated online (Leung *et al.,* 2017), mainly because it is such an important determinant of engagement (Cheung *et al.*, 2021).

The online content generated about a tourist attraction can either be the product of the communications of the destination-brand or of the users themselves communicating via social media (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Today's tourist must therefore be considered an opinion-maker to whom new technologies have granted the role of co-creator of brands (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). In this role, users help to form the organic image of the destination via their representations and perceptions of the place, based on real experiences and also on the images that they choose to share on social networks (Lei *et al.*, 2023). By sharing such content, they help motivate other users to become fellow consumers (Davcik *et al.,* 2022). Given this advancement in the participation of tourists in content-generation, it is unsurprising that firms and destinations have begun to ramp-up their efforts to develop content on social media, with the aim of increasing interactions with potential tourists (Kumar *et al.*, 2016).

The persuasiveness of content related to a tourist destination depends on its relevance to consumers, the format of the message, and its appropriateness for the destination in question. These three elements influence the degree to which tourists engage with that destination on social media (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Content that contains emotional values and elements unique to the place in question, for example, has been found to generate more user reactions and interactivity (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016). However, thanks to the interaction possibilities offered by social media (likes, shares, or comments), the content that users post may be affected by the reactions of others, which express the presence or absence of social approval (Walther *et al.*, 2022). For instance, a piece of content that attracts very few "likes" and poor interaction from users may quickly be perceived as of little relevance; and, over time, even the source of that content may also come to be perceived as uninteresting if it consistently receives scant social support for its posts. The social cues that accompany the content in the form of likes and comments therefore reflect the popularity of a brand's posts and the impact it has on that brand community (De Vries *et al.,* 2012).

Currently, there is little evidence regarding which features of destination-related content on social media influence user engagement with that content. Previous studies have confirmed the positive results of destination-related content on destination image, satisfaction, destination-brand loyalty, and word-of-mouth (WOM) (Xu *et al.*, 2023; Jamshidi *et al.*, 2023), but none has investigated which aspects are most effective at achieving greater engagement with an online post. The interactive and co-creative capabilities offered by new technologies have resulted in an exponential increase in the quantity and level of participation, as well as opportunities to co-create brand value and meaning (De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Swani *et al.,* 2017). The volume of reactions that a social-media post generates is an indicator of user engagement and, as such, can help us to better understand users' involvement with that content.

The aim of the present study, then, is to determine the factors that influence engagement with destination-brand social media content. The research is concerned with who publishes the content, what they publish, how they influence the online behavior of other users through that content, and how that behavior may be of value to the destination. More specifically, an experiment is designed in which three factors related to content are manipulated: 1) its source, distinguishing between user-generated content (UGC) and firm-generated content (FGC); 2) the relevance of the destination-brand-related content, from the user's perspective; and 3) the social cues that the content receives from users. The work seeks to better understand how these three factors influence the degree of user engagement with the content posted on social media about a tourist destination.

## 2. Literature review and proposed hypotheses

"Engagement" is a term applied to the use of social media by brands to determine the latter's online effectiveness. Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) define brand engagement as the level of the consumer's "cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment" in their interactions with a given brand. The consumer engagement process comprises a range of sub-processes that reflect the interactive experience of consumers within online communities, as well as the co-creation of value among community participants, extending beyond exchange situations (Brodie *et al.*, 2013).

According to Valentini *et al.* (2015), digital engagement involves some form of active online behavior, characterized by high personal involvement with the content, organization, brand, or cause presented online. In the context of social media, Giakoumaki and Krepapa (2020) define engagement as the manifestation of users' behaviors in response to a publication, enabled by the platform's functionalities (likes, comments, shares, etc.). But, these behaviors differ in the cognitive effort they involve. The act of "liking" an online post tends to involve simple psychological processes (Khan, 2017), whereas generating a comment requires additional actions that demand greater involvement or cognitive effort (Kim & Yang, 2017). Sharing a publication is the result of an even deeper elaboration process and a superior level of commitment on the part of the user because it requires them to feel a sense of conviction about the message. In this sense, perceived message relevance is positively related to user participation (Borges-Tiago, 2019).

In the most recent literature, scholars adopt different approaches to studying user engagement with content generated on social media. From a behavioral point of view, Park and Jiang (2021) reduce engagement down to two dimensions: consuming the content (simply viewing and reading it) and contributing to it (interacting and creating content). That is, users can choose to remain passive by simply consuming content or they can play an active role by participating and interacting with it (Khan, 2017).

Another approach orders the different types of social networking activities according to the amount of time and effort that consumers devote to them. From this perspective, contributing and creating are two activities that require more time and effort than content-consumption, and therefore represent higher levels of participation (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). In this regard, De Vries *et al.* (2017) reduce engagement with brand-related content down to "contributing" and "creating". According to this understanding, in performing "contribution" activities, users collaborate with each other in the content-generation process and share responsibility for doing so, which requires a moderate level of effort. Meanwhile, "creation" activities—those in which users

produce and disseminate their own content—place a heavier responsibility on the poster and require the greatest level of engagement.

A third framework goes a step further by categorizing users' graded level of participation in communication as a measure of brand engagement on social media. Based on the work of Shao *et al.* (2009) and Muntinga *et al.* (2011), the concept of Consumer Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRAs) offers a behavioral construct that provides a unifying framework for thinking about consumer activity related to brand content on social networks (Schivinski *et al.*, 2016).

The COBRAs concept distinguishes between three scenarios of engagement, which correspond to minimal, moderate, and high levels of interaction with online content (Cheung *et al.*, 2021). The different brand-related activities vary in the degree to which the user interacts when consuming, contributing to, or creating content on these platforms (Schivinski *et al.*, 2016). Hence, consumption, which is associated with actions such as reading a post or watching a video, represents the lowest level of participation. Contribution is the moderate level of interaction and refers to actions such as liking, commenting on, and sharing brand-related content. Finally, the highest level of online engagement, under the COBRAs model, is creation, whereby the user actively produces and posts original content (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Piehler *et al.*, 2019).

To date, most of the studies dealing with COBRAs have analyzed brand-related antecedents (Mizukoshi, 2023; Schivinski *et al.*, 2020) or the personal characteristics of the consumer (Buzeta *et al.*, 2020; Piehler *et al.*, 2019). However, little is known about the effect of specific aspects of brand content, such as its relevance, the social endorsement it receives, or the source of the content in question. A better understanding of these issues is therefore called for.


2.1 Effect of content relevance on COBRAs

In the recent literature on social network content, message effectiveness has been identified as one of the determining factors in predicting positive behaviors toward the content that firms post on online platforms (Xiao *et al.,* 2022). In their experimental study, Hayes *et al.* (2020) found strong positive relationships between perceived message relevance on social media and attitudes toward the ad and toward the brand, purchase intention, and intention to share the message.

Relevance also plays an important role in generating a positive impact on the effectiveness of communication in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral realms. People are more likely to show a positive attitude toward communication regarding a tourist destination when the content is presented with emotional characteristics (which affect emotional perceptions) and/or with factual characteristics (conveying information that influences the recipient's impression of the destination as being relevant to them). These characteristics are positively associated with the development of destination image and satisfaction (Xu *et al.*, 2023), which can lead to more favorable responses, such as electronic WOM (eWOM) (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2016).With regard to the nature of the message, it has been found that the brand-related emotional content generated by marketers exerts a positive influence on the sentiment of users' digital engagement during experiential brand-related interaction events, while informative content has a positive impact on that sentiment only when the outcomes of those interaction events are unfavorable (Meire *et al.*, 2019). The emotional and informative appeal of advertising content on social media affects user attitudes toward empathic

expression vis-à-vis that content, which they express through "one-click social plugins" in the form of a positive evaluation (such as giving "likes" or "sharing") (Lee & Hong, 2016). Likewise, greater vividness of the message generated by the brand, based on more interactive/audiovisual content combined with a socio-emotional orientation, leads to greater participation on the three levels of engagement: cognitive (comments), affective (shares), and conative (likes) (Yousaf *et al.,* 2021).

But the relevance of brand-related content is not only about the communication it conveys. Mohammad *et al.* (2020) found that, when the quality of the UGC is simple to understand, easy to use, novel, popular, and relevant to the interests of users, it will stimulate and improve their functional and emotional values, and, ultimately, they will be inclined to devote more time to engaging and connecting cognitively and emotionally with the brand. When users perceive brand-related UGC as entertaining, exciting, and fun, they are motivated to engage in behaviors such as reading posts, watching brand videos uploaded by fans, liking, commenting, and also uploading their own relevant images and posts (Davcik *et al.*, 2022).

On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1. Highly relevant social media content about a tourist destination produces higher levels of engagement with content related to that destination's brand (COBRAs) than less relevant content.**

2.2 Effect of content-source on COBRAs

One of the primary factors affecting engagement with social media content is its creator. In their study, Giakoumaki and Krepapa (2020) argue that the source of the content moderates the effect of individuals' inclination to incorporate brands as part of their self-concept on the generation of engagement with brand-related publications. Depending on who publishes the post in question, those users prone to identifying with brands will gravitate more or less toward the brand-related content to which they are exposed on social media. Yesiloglu *et al.* (2021) arrived at a similar conclusion, validating the positive effects of brand-related social network communications on the level of online engagement, depending on the source of the brand-related content that is created (UGC or FGC).

It has also been found that affective content generated by the firm on social media such as Facebook has a strong effect on user interactions (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Clicking on "like" and commenting on content that includes functional appeal and philanthropic and entertaining content were also positively related to the marketing strategies implemented by firms (Chwialkowska, 2019). Regarding the anticipated eWOM, the impact of FGC varies depending on the social network in question. Content posted on Instagram, for example, was found to exert a greater impact on users in terms of eWOM-generation than content published on Facebook (Poulis *et al.,* 2019).

However, when considering the direct effects of brand-related social media communications, UGC has effects on different dimensions of brand attitude that are not found in content created by the firm (Kumar *et al.*, 2016; Mohammad *et al.*, 2020). And, in a study on the effect of the content-source in a social responsibility campaign, Kim and Xu (2019) found that a post published by a

Facebook friend generated better consumer responses in terms of attitudes toward the message than one posted by the firm. Because consumers find UGC on social media to be more credible and objective than FGC, they interpret it as "external validation" of brand appeal or desirability (Bruhn, 2012). Users' social media pages devoted to brands are unregulated communities where consumers will inevitably engage in free-flowing conversation and be more candid and open when talking to others than when interacting with the firm itself (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). In addition to the credibility and trust that builds between consumers in these unregulated online spaces, the pragmatism and usefulness associated with brand-related UGC motivate users to read (consumption) and "like" (contribution) that content (Davcik et al., 2022).

Although there is no full consensus across findings, the literature generally suggests that consumers perceive UGC to be more reliable than the content produced by tourist destinations (Bruhn, 2012), as well as being more practical and functional (Davcik et al., 2022). In line with this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2. The social media content about a tourist destination that is posted by users generates higher levels of engagement with content related to that destination's brand (COBRAs) than that posted by the destination itself.**

2.3 Effect of the social support for the content on COBRAs,

In the context of news consumption on social networks, it has been argued that social support for a message (such as recommendations from other users) works as a heuristic signal or cue that alters how people consume and share news on the Internet. Consumers use this social endorsement when selecting content, regardless of whether they have a prior predisposition toward the medium in question (Messing & Westwood, 2014). According to this understanding, consumers look to the choices made by others as cues to inform their own online choices because these elements are likely to resonate with like-minded peers (Bronner & de Hoog, 2010). A similar scenario arises when subjects are exposed to an online media article that is biased but has received "likes", these can function as representatives of public opinion. Therefore, these likes can contribute to a perception that the opinion being expressed is acceptable and convincing, leading users to be more likely to adapt their opinion to align it with the bias that is conveyed than when they are exposed to biased media content that receives minimal likes (Porten-Cheé & Eilders, 2020). These social cues can influence user engagement with the post even when the information presented on the social network is of low quality (Avram et al., 2020)

The literature also notes that social cues act as a mechanism by which people feel social pressure to conform to the behaviors of others. It has been shown that users exposed to a social media ad that they find many people have liked, as a way of expressing empathy, are likely to click the "like" button too, simply to "follow the herd" and reduce the uncertainty associated with the use of social media (Lee & Hong, 2016). From this perspective, De Vries et al. (2012) argue that the followers of a brand on social media are influenced by each other. A higher proportion of positive comments toward a brand post improves its appeal, which seems to spark general interest in the post and, in turn, can lead to an increasing number of likes and comments.

Referring to the positive influence of favorable social cues online, some authors argue that corporate social responsibility messages with a large number of "likes" and "shares" on Facebook

generate more favorable responses from consumers than those messages without these cues, whether the content comes from the firm or from a regular user (Kim & Xu, 2019). Recent findings have also shown that, when a promotional post attracts a high volume of social cues, indicating its popularity, consumers perceive the ad as more persuasive and report less displeasure toward it (Li *et al.,* 2020). Such cues therefore positively affect attitudes toward the ad and intention to generate content about it (Liu, 2014).

Furthermore, the number of likes, comments, and shares generated by a post is considered to be a metric that not only indicates the popularity of the message but can also affect viewers' perceptions and emotions. These evaluation metrics serve as cues to influence consumer psychology (Li *et al.,* 2020; Piehler *et al.*, 2019). On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H3. The social media content about a tourist destination that is accompanied by a high volume of social cues generates a higher level of engagement with content related to that destination's brand (COBRAs) than that with a low volume of social cues.**

2.4 Interaction between the characteristics of brand-related content

Looking more closely at the possible relationships between the content characteristics studied to date (message relevance, source, and social cues), several authors have argued that the popularity of brand content has a positive influence on associated behaviors such as consumer purchase intention, primarily when the messages are practical, interesting, and interactive (Kim & Yang, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2017; Molina *et al.*, 2020). Considered as marketing activities in social networks such as Instagram, those posts that feature appealing content that stimulates interaction among followers make a positive impact on users' emotional connection with the brand in question (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023).

In the same vein, in their experiment on the effectiveness of social media, Jin *et al.* (2015) found a significant interaction effect between the level of popularity of a Facebook page (large number of friends, "likes", "talking about this", "shares", and "comments") and content style (testimonial versus informational). Similarly, Chang *et al.* (2015) found that persuasive messages achieve higher levels of popularity among social media posts. The quality of the argument conveyed by the message and the popularity of the post (the social support it attracts) both significantly affect the perceived utility of the post, while popularity and appeal affect preference. In turn, utility and preference significantly affect intention to "like" and intention to share the post.

Actions such as "liking" and "sharing" a post act as positive indicators to other users about the quality, value, and importance of that post, enabling them to decide if the content is worthwhile or not. If deemed to be of value (Alhabash *et al.*, 2013), this can lead to more positive brand attitudes (Swani *et al.*, 2017).

In light of these relationships, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4a. Social cues moderate the relationship between content relevance and COBRAs, such that, when the relevance of the brand-related content is low, posts with high social cues generate more engagement with that content than posts with low social cues. Conversely, when content relevance is high, social cues will not influence the degree of engagement.**

Second, the content-source and the popularity of the brand-related content posted on social media exert a mutual influence on one another. Some studies indicate that the "likes" attracted by the brand's posts on its Facebook fan page are indicators of loyalty toward it and produce credible WOM, which leads to positive financial and brand results (Kumar *et al.*, 2016; Swani *et al.*, 2017). In addition to these "likes", users demonstrate engagement by commenting on the brand's posts, further increasing the popularity of the content (Swani *et al.*, 2017). According to De Vries (2012), the proportion of positive comments on a brand post is positively related to the number of "likes" the post has received.

In parallel, the degree of consumer engagement on social media with a UGC post can be easily interpreted from the number of "comments", "retweets" (share), and "likes" it has garnered, meaning that the higher the value of these indicators, the more consumers are engaged with the publication. Understood in this way, the most popular and influential UGC will attract more consumers to participate in social media about a tourist destination by posting their own content about it (Chang, 2015). Hence, the social network posts that are accompanied by a social presence (that is, a perception of the presence of peers) and interactivity—understood as friendly, participatory communications—facilitate the formation of perceived hedonic value. And this, in turn, significantly influences re-post intention or the desire to share the message with friends (Wang *et al.*, 2019).

Comparing both types of content-source, the literature shows that corporate social responsibility content that is posted by a friend on Facebook and attracts a high number of "likes" and "shares" generate a favorable attitude toward the campaign and more eWOM intention. That attitude is more positive than that generated by content posted also by a friend but without social support, and more positive than the firm's own content in sponsored ad format, even when this attracts a large number of social cues (Kim & Xu, 2019). In light of these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4b. The content-source (UGC vs. FGC) moderates the relationship between social cues and COBRAs, such that, when the brand-related content has low social cues, UCG will lead to greater engagement with that content than FGC. Conversely, when the content has high social cues, there will be no differences in the degree of engagement with UGC vs. FGC.**

Finally, the literature also provides support for the relationship between the relevance of brand-related content and the source of that content. On the one hand, message relevance is based on the idea that, in the process of deciding whether to act on a piece of online communication, recipients determine whether the source is similar to them and whether they can identify with it. The similarity between people works as a determinant of message relevance, thus increasing the possibility of generating eWOM (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2016). On the other hand, Hayes *et al.* (2020) argues that the strength of the consumer's relationship with a brand moderates the relationship between perceived message relevance and the intention to share that message with other online users. The perceived relevance of a brand's ad on social media can generate greater attention toward the ad and reduce users' avoidance of it (Jung, 2017). In the case of retweeting behavior, perceived message relevance, the person's level of interest in the content of the post, their similarity to the source, and their perception of how a tweet will affect their followers are all user characteristics that will affect retweet intention. Regarding the characteristics of the source, its

perceived credibility and likeability also exert a positive influence on retweet intention (Boehmer & Tandoc, 2015).

In view of these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4c. The content-source (UGC vs. FGC) moderates the relationship between the relevance of the brand-related content and COBRAs, such that, when the relevance is high, UGC will lead to greater engagement with that content than FGC. Conversely, when content relevance is low, no differences in the degree of engagement are expected between UGC vs. FGC.**

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Sample and procedures

The methodology used in this study to test the proposed hypotheses was based on a full factorial experiment where three factors were manipulated, each one with two levels, giving rise to eight treatments (2 x 2 x 2). The controlled factors were: *content-source* (UGC vs. FGC), *content relevance* (high vs. low), and the *social cues* associated with the content (high vs. low). Data-collection was based on a sample from a high-quality user panel (Ipsos: —https://www.ipsos.com) and was carry carried out in the second half of the first semester of the 2021–22 academic year. According to ESOMAR, Ipsos panels are characterized by sample stability, rigorous sampling processes, response quality and reliability (Kelly, 2021). Panels facilitate fieldwork by providing direct access to a representative sample of the population under study, ensuring the appropriate profile of the respondents. To be part of the sample, users had to meet four requirements: to be of legal age (18), to reside in Spain, to be frequent users of Instagram, and to have traveled frequently for tourism purposes in the year preceding the research. Using panel-based probability sampling, the total sample comprised 632 participants, of which 51.6% were women and 48.4% men. The mean age of the interviewee was equal to 38.84 years. In general, the sample profile coincided with the profile of the tourist and social network user in Spain described in the statistics provided by providers of international data and consumption statistics (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of the sample profile analyzed and the population under study

| | Sample | | Population[a] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Categories | % | Categories | % |
| Age | – | – | 13–17 | 4.1% |
| | 18–24 | 10.4% | 18–24 | 21.6% |
| | 25–34 | 30.1% | 25–34 | 30.4% |
| | 35–44 | 28.8% | 35–44 | 21.2% |
| | 45–54 | 18.4% | 45–54 | 13.8% |
| | 55+ | 12.4% | 55+ | 8.9% |
| Gender | Women | 51.6 % | | 54.6% |
| | Men | 48.4% | | 45.4% |
| Annual income | <15.000€ | 12.5% | In 2020, approximately 73% of internet users coming from households with a monthly income of €2,500 or more made use of some type of social network | |
| | €15,000 – €29,999 | 34% | | |
| | €30,000 – €39,999 | 23.7% | | |
| | €40,000 – €49,999 | 10.4% | | |
| | €50,000 – €80,000 | 11.1% | | |
| | >€80,000 | 4.1% | | |
| | No response | 4.1% | | |
| Occupation | Student | 8.9% | Other, not in active work | 17.1% |
| | In active work | 72.7% | In active work | 62.5% |
| | Unemployed/retired | 18.4% | Unemployed/retired | 20.4% |

[a] Percentage of tourists according to Eurostat (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat) & Statista (https://es.statista.com).

The users in the sample were invited to participate by means of an email containing a link that directed them to the study. The experiment was hosted on the QUALTRICS platform, which included a series of questions and stimuli that simulated different Instagram posts about a tourist attraction. The study was rolled-out in three sequential phases. First, information was collected about the participants' knowledge and use of the Instagram social network. Next, each participant was told they would be shown an Instagram post. The system itself randomly assigned each individual to one of the available treatments. After exposure to the stimulus, the user was directed to the second part of the questionnaire where the rest of the questions corresponding to the manipulation checks, the dependent variables, and the sociodemographic variables were hosted.

3.2 Stimulus

Each of the eight stimuli designed for the experiment simulated an Instagram post about a monumental complex at a fictional destination. The users were exposed to the stimulus for a minimum of 40 seconds, reaching an average of 82.2 seconds—sufficient time to be able to interact with the post. Instagram was selected for the study due to the relevance it has acquired in recent years as a self-promotion marketing tool for tourist destinations (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015).

Meanwhile, the use of fictitious elements such as those used in this experiment to simulate Instagram posts is a common practice that ensures the experimental subjects do not already have

a pre-established opinion that biases or steers the attitudes that are generated by exposure to the stimulus (Petty *et al.,* 1983). For this purpose, a fictitious brand called "LOS ARCOS" was created, as part of a monumental complex (the category of historical tourist attractions that is most abundant in Spain). The name chosen was coherent with the monumental complex shown, lending credibility to the story.

### 3.2.1 *UGC vs. FGC*

Two sets of Instagram posts were professionally designed, in which the image and content were manipulated to differentiate between the two content-sources (see Appendix). On the one hand, a fictitious corporate social network account was created, with a name and a fictitious profile image, together with the post itself (comprising an image/photograph accompanied by text written in corporate language). On the other hand, a fictitious Instagram-user account was created, again featuring a fictitious name and profile image. This time, the image in the post and the content were manipulated to reflect the typical style used by a regular user. To avoid bias, the content posted under each profile had the same number of sentences, the same kind of information, the same hashtag (#), and the same place reference. Four experimental scenarios were created for each of the two content-sources: (i) a relevant post with few social cues; (ii) a relevant post with several social cues; (iii) a post with low relevance and few social cues; and (iv) a post with low relevance and several social cues. In total, then, eight scenarios were analyzed.

### 3.2.2 *Content relevance*

To represent the conditions of high and low content relevance, two images from an image bank were used. In the case of high relevance, the same photo was used for both accounts, with the difference being that, for the non-corporate account, the image of the user was added. In the case of low relevance, an image was used that revealed nothing of the destination itself and, instead, simply showed a person's feet in walking shoes (conveying a sense of travel). These types of images alluding indirectly to travel are also very common on social media such as Instagram.

For the written content, the basic content was standardized for each account-type and the same hashtags were used. In all situations, the same location description was also used, to indicate that each post came from the same place, albeit with a different meaning (Liu, 2014). In the case of high relevance, both the post and the hashtags were clearly referring to the place, its beauty, and its history. In the case of low relevance, all the written elements referred simply to a subjective perception of the experiences that a tourist could have in the destination.

### 3.2.3 *Social cues*

This factor was created by manipulating the number of likes and comments, thus differentiating the stimulus of high vs. low social cues. To prepare this, an exhaustive review of studies was carried out in which the number of likes and comments in a social media publication had been manipulated. However, very few papers were found to provide guidance as to the appropriate number for brand-related content. To resolve this question, works such as that of De Vries (2012) were used as a reference. These propose that the proportion of likes and positive comments attracted by a brand publication is positively related to the popularity of the brand's social media

page. On this premise, a piece of work was conducted to record all the active Instagram accounts of the monumental complexes in Spain similar to the one featured in the study (30 in total), from which the average highest and lowest number of likes and comments was extracted from the posts pertaining to the first four months of 2020. Using a ratio of 1:4 to the total number of followers, both the number of likes and the number of comments used in this study were obtained. Thus, for high social cues, 234 likes and 24 comments were designated; and, in the case of low social cues, 44 likes and 5 comments. As the number of social cues generated by a regular user's post probably depends on the size of the individual's social network (Kim & Xu, 2019), the same number of likes and comments was used in all experimental conditions to avoid any type of bias.

Regarding the proportion of comments per like, it was assumed that the comment requires a higher level of engagement than the like (Kim & Yang, 2017; Schivinski et al., 2016). Therefore, the ratio between the two was 1:9. The credibility of online comments will be deemed to be higher when they receive a high number of "likes" than when they attract a low number (Hong & Cameron, 2018).

3.3 Measures

The dependent variable was taken to be the level of engagement in COBRAs (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016). This variable was measured using a scale comprising 17 items adapted to behaviors on social media. This was a 7-point semantic differential scale, similar to those used in other relevant works (Castañeda et al., 2020) (see Appendix). The internal consistency of the scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha$) and composite reliability ($p$) (Hair et al., 2010). It was found that, in both cases, the values were above those recommended by the literature ($\alpha = 0.97$; $p = 0.98$), hence a new variable was calculated by averaging the items for each case.

Content relevance was measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale with the following adjectives: not at all/very interesting; not at all/very useful; not at all/very informative (Hayes et al., 2020), as well as not at all/very relevant and not at all /very indicative of the value of this monumental complex (Gürhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000). As the reliability of this scale was very high ($\alpha = 0.971$; $p = 0.97$), once again it was decided to create a new variable averaging the score obtained in all the items.

For the social cues, the participants were asked to respond to a series of issues related to both the number of likes and the comments. Again using a 7-point Likert scale, they were asked to rate their degree of agreement with the following statements: "The number of likes shows that this post has generated interest among users"; "The number of comments shows that this post has generated interest among users"; "In general, this post has aroused interest among Instagram users" (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002). Because the reliability of the scale was above that recommended by the literature ($\alpha = 0.97$ $p = 0.91$), a new variable was created by averaging its items.

Finally, before exposure to the stimuli, user attitude toward Instagram was measured using four items (Bad/Good; I do not like/Like; Negative/Positive; and Unfavorable/Favorable) ($\alpha = 0.96$ $p = 0.96$), along with knowledge about Instagram, using three items ("I have the necessary knowledge to use Instagram"; "I consider myself an experienced Instagram user"; "When I use Instagram, I have everything under control") ($\alpha = 0.85$ $p = 0.85$). In both cases, these were 7-point

scales. Considering the reliability indicators, two new variables were calculated by averaging the items.

To determine convergent and discriminant validity, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for the five aforementioned variables, measured by their respective items. As this was not a multivariate normal sample ($b_{1p}$=174.49, $p$<0.01; $b_{2p}$ =1555.28, $p$<0.01; $omnibus$ = 6960.74, $p$<0.01), robust maximum likelihood (RML) estimation was used. The results showed that, despite the fact that the Chi-square statistic was significant ($\chi^2$ =1662.78, $p$<0.01), the other global fit indicators were within the parameters recommended by the literature (*CFI* = 0.93, *TLI* = 0.92, *RMSEA* = 0.07, *SRMR* = 0.04).

Convergent validity was assessed using standardized coefficients and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while for discriminant validity the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was used, comparing the AVE with the squared correlation between each pair of latent variables. All of the standardized coefficients presented values greater than 0.707, meaning that their individual reliability was greater than 0.5. In every case, the AVE exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.5 and, with regard to discriminant validity, it also exceeded the squared correlation between each pair of latent variables (see Table 2).

Taken together, these results show that the measurement instruments presented reliability and convergent validity. In addition, each of the latent variables was shown to have a different meaning from the others.

Table 2. Convergent and discriminant scale validity

| Constructs | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude toward Instagram (1) | **0.86** | | | | |
| Knowledge about Instagram (2) | 0.15 | **0.67** | | | |
| Content relevance (3) | 0.09 | 0.04 | **0.87** | | |
| Social cues (4) | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.31 | **0.78** | |
| COBRAs (5) | 0.05 | 0.06 | 0.51 | 0.38 | **0.72** |

Note: AVE on the diagonal; square correlations between constructs below the diagonal

## 4. Results

4.1 Experimental manipulation check

As recommended by Perdue and Summers (1986), an experimental manipulation check was carried out before and during the main experiment. For the former, in the case of content relevance, a pre-test involving 171 users randomly assigned to the different posts was carried out. By performing a t-test of independent samples, it was ensured that the means were not equal. More specifically, for the case of high content relevance, an average of 4.61 was obtained, while, in the case of low relevance, the average was equal to 2.66, the difference between the two being significant (t = 8.12; p<0.05).

For the social cues associated with the stimuli, a pre-test was carried out among 365 respondents. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference in means for high vs. low social cues was statistically significant (High Cues = 4.45 vs. Low Cues = 3.92; t = 3.80; p<0.05).

The results obtained in the pre-tests were corroborated in the main study. Thus, the comparison of means between posts presenting high vs. low relevance was significant (High relevance = 5.66 vs. Low relevance = 4.21; p<0.01). This was also the case for social cues (Low cues = 4.35 vs. High cues = 5.04; p<0.01).

Finally, to check the content-source (UGC vs. FGC), a prompted recall measure relating to the author of the content of the post was used, in which two options were shown: the official account of LOS ARCOS or an Instagram user. An $X^2$ association test between the experimentally manipulated factor and the check showed a strongly significant relationship ($X^2$=197.160, df=1, p<0.05).

All of the above results indicate that the factors were manipulated correctly.

4.2 Confounding checks

Although most empirical studies do not discriminate between the users of a social network, in reality, there are considerable inequalities in the adoption, use, and creation of content, depending on whether or not they are active users with certain e-literacy skills (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Therefore, the questionnaire included two questions to measure knowledge and attitude toward a social network such as Instagram. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that none of the three manipulated factors was significant when using Instagram knowledge as the dependent variable (Content-source: F=1.688, p>0.05; Social cues: F=0.503, p>0.05; Relevance: F=0.026, p>0.05). Similarly, in no instance was the effect of the manipulated factors on attitude toward Instagram significant after controlling for Instagram knowledge (Content-source: F=2.755, p>0.05; Social cues: F=2.286, p>0.05; Relevance: F=0.245, p>0.05). In sum, the random assignment of the individuals to each of the experimental conditions seems to have worked correctly, which means that each of them can be considered an exogenous predictor of the model.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

An ANOVA was also used to test the hypotheses. On this occasion, the dependent variable was COBRAs, while the independent variables were formed by the factors that were experimentally manipulated, as well as their interactions (see Table 3).

H1 suggests that the relevance of the social media content about a tourist destination influences users' engagement with content related to that destination's brand. The results revealed that the relevance of the content was significant (F = 36.50; p<0.01) (Table 3). The comparison of means showed that relevant brand-related content led to higher brand engagement compared to situations where the content was less relevant (Low relevance = 4.14 vs. High relevance = 4.76; p<0.01). Consequently, H1 receives empirical support.

The second hypothesis holds that the type of social media account that posts the content relating to a tourist destination influences users' engagement with content related to the destination brand. The results showed the content-source to exert a significant main effect (F = 6.72; p<0.05) (Table 3). As expected, the degree of engagement with brand-related content was higher for UGC

compared to FGC (UGC = 4.60 vs. FGC = 4. 33; p<0.05), meaning that H2 also receives empirical support.

H3 determines that the *social cues* that accompany the content about a tourist destination on social media influence users' engagement with content related to that destination's brand. Again, the results showed a significant main effect for this factor (F = 17.45; p<0.01) (Table 3). In line with the premise of H3, the degree of engagement with the destination-brand content was higher when that content was accompanied by multiple social cues, compared to when it was accompanied by few social cues (Low cues = 4.25 vs. High cues = 4.67). Therefore, H3 also receives empirical support.

Table 3. ANOVA for engagement with brand-related content

**Effect of treatments on COBRAs**

|  | SC | df | MS | *F* | *P* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 12521.672 | 1 | 12521.672 | 7588.361 | 0.000 |
| Instagram content-source (CS) | 11.083 | 1 | 11.083 | 6.717 | 0.010 |
| Social cues (SC) | 28.802 | 1 | 28.802 | 17.454 | 0.000 |
| Content relevance (CR) | 60.229 | 1 | 60.229 | 36.500 | 0.000 |
| CS x SC | 1.809 | 1 | 1.809 | 1.097 | 0.295 |
| CS x CR | 6.816 | 1 | 6.816 | 4.131 | 0.043 |
| SC x CR | 10.219 | 1 | 10.219 | 6.193 | 0.013 |
| CS x SC x CR | 0.019 | 1 | 0.019 | 0.012 | 0.914 |
| Error | 1029.672 | 624 | 1.650 |  |  |
| Total | 13727.173 | 632 |  |  |  |
| Corrected total | 1147.936 | 631 |  |  |  |

a. R-squared = 0.103

According to H4a, when the brand-related content is relevant, social cues are not expected to influence users' level of engagement with it. Conversely, when relevance is low, posts with a high number of social cues are expected to generate a higher level of engagement than related posts that have low social cues. The results show that the interaction between factors is significant (F=6.19; p<0.05). The means for each experimental condition are shown in Figure 1. It can be seen that, as hypothesized in H4a, the means obtained for high and low social cues are similar when the content relevance is high (High cues = 4.85 vs. Low cues = 4.49). However, when the relevance is low, content with a high volume of social cues generates a higher level of engagement than content with low social cues (High cues = 4.68 vs. Low cues = 3.80). Consequently, H4a receives empirical support.

Fig. 1. Effect of social cues and content relevance on COBRAs
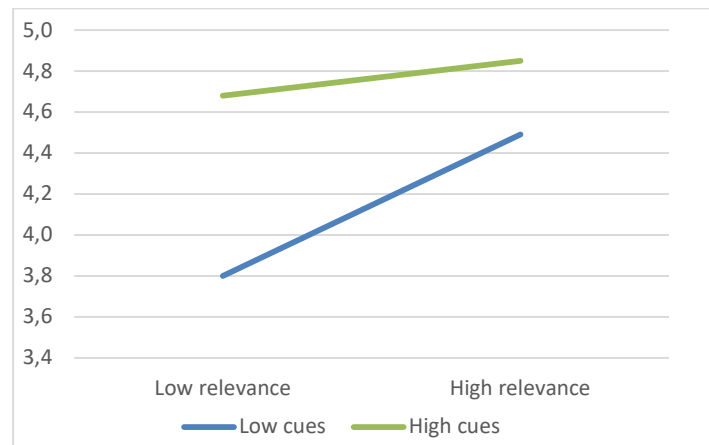


Regarding H4b, the F test was not significant. However, more and more authors (Hsu, 1996; Howell, 2007) are recommending that multiple comparisons be made if there is already a previously established hypothesis, as in this case. These authors hold that it is a mistake to examine multiple comparisons only when the F test is significant and instead recommend conducting this analysis post-hoc, as the two tests are based on different procedures and different assumptions, with different power levels. The F test actually distributes the differences between the groups through the number of degrees of freedom. This statistic is diluted in a scenario in which the means of several groups are equal to each other but different from some other mean. Multiple comparisons of means enable one to examine which means are different and to estimate the degree of that difference (Field, 2000; Glantz, 2002; Howell, 2007).

Following this approach, the comparison of means using conservative tests such as Tukey or Bonferroni showed that, when social cues are low, the level of engagement is higher when the content has been generated by a user compared to when it has been generated by the firm (Mdiff = 0.38; p = 0.04) (Figure 2). In contrast, when the social cues are high, there are no differences in the level of engagement when comparing UGC and FGC (Mdiff = 0.16; p>0.10). In conclusion, the results obtained provide empirical support for H4b.

Fig. 2. Effect of UGC vs. FGC and social cues on COBRAs
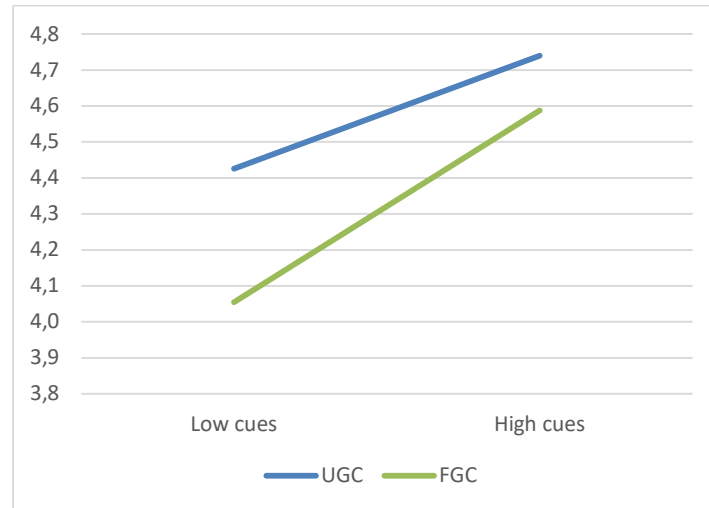


Finally, H4c maintains that, when the content posted on social media is not very relevant, the source of that content will not influence users' engagement with it; but, when the content *is* relevant, it will have a greater impact if it is UGC than if it is FGC. Figure 3 shows that the interaction between relevance and content-source was significant (F=4.13; p<0.05). Comparison of mean values revealed that, as expected, when the relevance of the content is low, the means for content-source are similar (UGC = 4.17 vs. FGC = 4.12). In contrast, if the relevance of the content is high, UGC will produce more engagement than FGC (UGC = 5.00 vs. FGC = 4.53). These results provide empirical support for H4b.

Fig. 3. Effect of UGC vs. FGC and content relevance on COBRAs
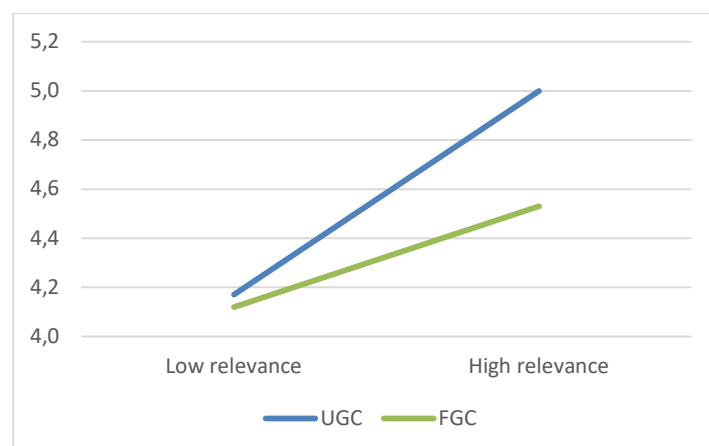
## 5. Conclusions

The results outlined here made it possible to fulfill the aim of the study, providing empirical support for the theoretical premises of the work regarding *who is more effective at generating COBRAs, the firm or a regular user, and under what circumstances.* The findings also indicate *the extent to which, and under what conditions, content relevance is effective in influencing engagement with brand-related content,* and show *how support for content from other users (social cues) influences COBRAs.* This empirical evidence is extremely relevant for the literature dealing with social media and tourist destinations, as well as for tourism managers, as it underlines the importance of the characteristics of a tourist-destination´s social network content in shaping user engagement with that destination.

Taking Instagram posts about a tourist destination as a reference, as in other studies, we found that one particular characteristic—content relevance—has a significant impact on engagement with the posts in question (Kim & Yang, 2017; Lin *et al.,* 2017; Molina *et al.*, 2020). Higher content relevance produces higher levels of engagement with the destination's social media activities, but this level varies depending on the source of the post. When the post is relevant, more engagement will be generated with the content when the poster is a regular user rather than the brand itself. The greater effectiveness of the user in this regard is due, among other things, to their impartiality and similarity to other users (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2019). By contrast, less relevant content produces no significant differences in terms of the engagement it generates when the source is a regular user vs. the destination itself.

We also found that destination-related UGC has a greater influence than FGC on the intention to consume, share, and create content related to a tourist attraction. This finding updates the results of previous studies, which argued that message source had no effect on the intention to participate in eWOM communication about that message (Kim & Xu, 2019).

Another result to highlight is the importance of the social cues that brand-related content attracts. The findings go a step further than previous research, which argued that social cues had no statistically significant effect on behavioral intention, such as eWOM, toward the brand (Kim & Xu, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2020; Piehler, 2019). Our results show that a high volume of social cues increases the level of COBRAs, be it UGC or FGC, and especially when the content of the post is not relevant to users (H4a). That is, when the post about the destination is not very relevant, it will need the support of social cues to produce higher levels of engagement with the content. This finding stands in contrast to the conclusions of other studies, which find that social cues are not so effective in this regard (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Finally, the content generated by regular users that attracts a high number of likes or comments does not differ from that produced by the firm, in terms of its impact on COBRAs. However, when there is a low number of social cues in response to a piece of content, the differences between UGC and FGC are greater, which is in line with H4b—thus contradicting the findings of authors such as Kim and Xu (2019). Their work found no statistically significant interaction between content-source and the presence/absence of social cues in terms of their influence on attitudes toward the firm, the communications campaign, or intention to participate in eWOM on that campaign.

## 5.1 Theoretical implications

In light of the role that social networks play in the management of tourist destinations, as identified in recent research, the present findings constitute an important contribution to this area of knowledge. Most of the previous research related to COBRAs has analyzed the internal motivations of the recipient of the message or the brand-consumer as antecedents (Buzeta *et al*., 2020; Piehler *et al*., 2019; Schivinski *et al*., 2020), but, to date, the characteristics of the destination-brand-related content on social networks have not been considered. This study broadens our understanding of the COBRAs framework and confirms the importance of the interrelationship between these content characteristics and the mediating effect of social cues and content source on tourist behavior in social networks. This study is also the first to use COBRAs in the context of a tourist destination brand. The work contributes to the growing number of tourism studies on in the context of social (Jamshidi *et al*., 2023) by introducing a new scale that measures online engagement with a destination brand. A new measure of the concept of social cues is also operationalized here, adding a new categorization of construct value (high and low), which had previously been restricted to the categories of absence or presence of these cues (Kim & Xu, 2019; Liu, 2014).

## 5.2 Practical implications

The present results offer insights invaluable to tourism professionals and destination marketing organizations (DMOs). First, the findings identify the intrinsic importance of tourists' *online* engagement with destination-brand-related content on social networks and enable us to operationalize it. Until now, tourism management has centered on generic conceptions of brand engagement and has designed marketing strategies accordingly. Clarifying this distinction, the study reveals the need for destinations to implement strategic plans specifically to maximize this online engagement as part of their social-networking marketing plans, as a necessary step toward achieving stronger ties with their followers. As shown here, online engagement also functions as a tool for (re)generating social cues and greater brand-related content, both of which are necessary for attracting new interactions.

The study also provides a practical tool for measuring social-network engagement. The COBRAs scale can be used in any consumer survey conducted by a destination to assess the degree of online brand engagement among its followers. This knowledge is crucial to successful social media marketing strategies.

In their management of online engagement, it is imperative for DMOs to consider the inherent characteristics of the source of the content, its relevance, and social cues when developing social-network content strategies. The present results show that destinations must channel efforts into the search for relevant content by "humanizing" the brand, focusing on topics that chime with the interests of tourists. By adopting a less formal, more colloquial tone in their social-network content, more attuned to tourists' natural narrative style, destinations could come closer to attaining the level of relevance achieved by UGC, which, as this work demonstrates, encourages higher COBRAs values.

In parallel, it has been shown here that, even when tourists' online posts receive low social cues, they still prompt greater online engagement. Hence, from the destination's perspective, it is important that tourists generate and share as much brand-related content as possible, regardless of

whether it garners many responses from others or not. To encourage this, it is therefore advisable for destinations to implement strategies focused on: 1) creating *physical* spaces that spotlight their unique appeal (such as purpose-designed camera-friendly features) and *virtual* spaces in addition to social networks (such as blogs and virtual communities); 2) communication activities (such as creating relevant hashtags, useful links, appealing content that inspires tourists to share their experiences, etc.); and 3) incentivization (competitions, challenges, promotions, and so on). To support these strategies, destinations could add a "personal touch" when interacting with that content, regardless of whether it is relevant or not, by liking, commenting-on, and sharing it (James, 2023).

Finally, the present results point to the need for the destination to take action to ensure that followers *continuously* support the content it generates (by liking, commenting, and sharing). This support is invaluable especially when its posts lack relevance, since this is where social cues prove most effective. To achieve this, destinations are recommended to implement strategies, such as Fan-Generated Content, that seek to build a loyal social-network following and strengthen the presence of the brand within that community, so that everything they post receives unconditional support from community members. It is also recommended that destinations promote the online engagement they are achieving, by highlighting the volume of interactions their posts receive and any outstanding comments, mentioning the number of followers they have, and sharing UGC about the destination. All of these efforts help to render the social cues more visible, to persuade followers who are not participating to do so, and thus to increase support for the destination's posts.

5.3 Limitations and future lines of research

Finally, we note some limitations of the study and point to potential future lines of research that stem from the results. First, we focused on a single variable, which is the degree of engagement with brand-related content. Given the proven importance of consumer engagement for brands on social media, it is necessary to explore this concept in even greater depth to better understand the repercussions it may have for brands. Likewise, we limited ourselves to the overall concept of COBRAs, without delving into their different levels of engagement. It would be interesting in future studies to differentiate between the characteristics analyzed in the present research to identify which ones have the greatest effect on each of the three dimensions of the concept.

The same is true of the characteristics of the content itself. It would be helpful to identify other features that can be complemented with the ones identified here and to compare them with other sources of communication—such as influencers—to develop a more complete behavioral model.

A further limitation of our research is that it was based on just one specific social network (Instagram). But engagement with branded content is highly context-specific, comprising different types of experiences on each social media platform (Poulis *et al.,* 2019). Future studies should study the differences according to the social network in question and compare the performance of each of them.

All these lines of research remain open to further investigation and will help us to better understand the variables that explain COBRAs a relatively new concept that is increasingly being recognized in the literature for its importance.

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**Appendix A.** Questionnaire

**"Welcome, and thank you for your collaboration in this study. Below are a series of questions that we ask you to answer honestly. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers—we are only interested in your opinion. Total condentiality of the data is guaranteed.**

**You will be shown information about a monumental complex. It is important that you pay close attention to this information because, further ahead, you will be asked to answer a series of questions about it.**

**Thank you very much".**

**- On which of the following social networks do you have a prole that you regularly use?**

You can select more than one option.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- TikTok

- Snapchat
- My profile is on none of the above

**1. Your general opinion of Instagram is:**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Good |
| I do not like it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | I like it |
| Negative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Positive |
| Unfavorable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Favorable |

**2. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:**

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Agree | Totally agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have the necessary knowledge to use Instagram. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Consider myself to be an experienced Instagram user. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| When I use Instagram, I have everything under control. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**An Instagram post will now be displayed for a minimum of 40 seconds. Please study all aspects of it carefully because we will be asking you some questions about the post. Once this time has elapsed and the "continue" arrow appears, you will be able to continue answering the questionnaire.**

*When clicking "next" an Instagram image in real size was displayed to the user for at least 40 seconds. After that time, he could continue with the survey one day.*

Example:
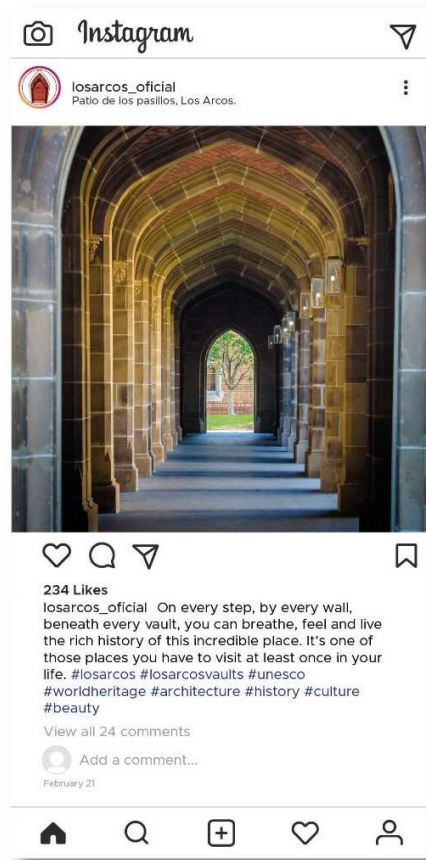
**3. Turning now to the LOS ARCOS Monumental Complex, the content you have just seen is:**

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uninteresting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very interesting |
| Not at all useful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very useful |
| Not at all informative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very informative |
| Not at all relevant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very relevant |
| Not at all indicative of the value of this monumental complex | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very indicative of the value of this monumental complex |

**4. Considering the number of likes and comments you have seen on the post, please rate the following statements from 1 to 7 (1 = Totally disagree and 7 = Totally agree):**

|  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Agree | Totally agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The number of likes shows that this post has generated interest among users. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| The number of comments shows that this publication has generated interest among users. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Overall, this post has sparked interest among Instagram users. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**5. Having viewed the content related to LOS ARCOS on Instagram, please select the level of disagreement/agreement that best describes your position relative to the following statements:**

|  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Agree | Totally agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I would read posts related to the LOS ARCOS Monumental Complex on social media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would read ocial pages related to LOS ARCOS on social networks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would look at photos on social networks related to this monumental complex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would follow hashtags (#) related to LOS ARCOS on social networks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would follow LOS ARCOS on social networks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would post comments about videos related to this tourist attraction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would comment on posts related to this monumental complex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I would comment on photos related to this place. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would share posts related to LOS ARCOS. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would"like" photos related to this tourist attraction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would"like" posts related to this monumental complex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| In my own posts, I would use hashtags (#) related to LOS ARCOS. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would initiate posts related to LOS ARCOS on social media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would post photos related to LOS ARCOS. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would post videos featuring this monumental complex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would tag LOS ARCOS in my post about this place on social media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I would post a gallery of photos/videos or stories about LOS ARCOS on my social media pages. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**6. Please indicate your gender:**

- Male
- Female

**7. Please indicate your age:**

_____

**8. Please indicate your main occupation:**

- Student
- Employee
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
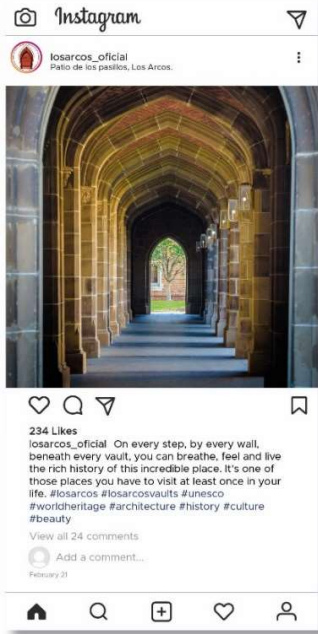
**9. Please indicate your net annual household income:**

- Less than €15,000
- Between €15,000 and €29,999
- Between €30,000 and €39,999
- Between €40,000 and €49,999
- Between €50,000 and €80,000
- More than €80,000
- Do not know / no response
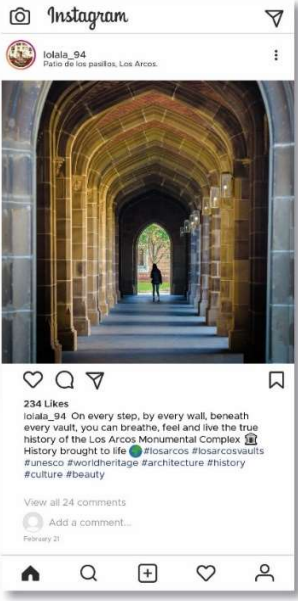
**10. How many trips did you make last year for tourism purposes?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- More than 4

**Appendix B.** Example of stimuli

| FIRM GENERATED CONTENT | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| High social cues & High content relevance | Low social cues & High content relevance |
|  |  |
| High social cues & Low content relevance | Low social cues & Low content relevance |

## USER GENERATED CONTENT



High social cues & High content relevance



Low social cues & High content relevance



High social cues & Low content relevance



Low social cues & Low content relevance