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Engaging with Destinations Brands on Social Media: Self and Social Motivations and The Mediating Role of Symbolic Value

Carolina Moscoso Antunes

Master in Marketing

Supervisor:
PhD Daniela Langaro, Assistant Professor,
Iscte-IUL

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Resumo

A competitividade da indústria do turismo tem acelerado a necessidade de branding dos destinos turísticos, com o objetivo de se diferenciarem. A natureza simbólica e as motivações (pessoais e sociais) das viagens já eram consideradas significativas, mas a ascensão das redes sociais elevou-as a um novo patamar. Este estudo investiga o efeito mediador do valor simbólico percebido de um destino na relação entre autocongruência e autocongruência social com o destino e engajamento nas redes sociais.

Para a análise dos resultados, foram realizadas Análises Fatoriais Exploratória e Confirmatória e análise dos processos de mediação utilizando software AMOS.

Os resultados confirmaram que tanto a autocongruência como a autocongruência social com um destino impactam o seu valor simbólico percebido. Enquanto uma das dimensões do valor simbólico (expressão da personalidade do destino) impacta totalmente o engajamento nas redes sociais, a outra (prestígio do destino) não impacta duas das três dimensões do engajamento nas redes sociais (contribuição e criação). Numa visão geral, o valor simbólico do destino medeia o impacto da autocongruência e da autocongruência social no engajamento nas redes sociais do destino.

Os resultados deste estudo sugerem que os profissionais de marketing precisam ter em consideração a necessidade dos turistas de exprimir a sua identidade e obter a aceitação de outros para aumentar o engajamento nas redes sociais, através da construção de um forte valor simbólico. A eficácia de uma estratégia de marketing, que vise destacar o valor simbólico de um destino, pode ser avaliada aplicando este modelo antes e depois da sua execução.

Palavras-chave: *Branding* do Destino, Valor Simbólico, Autocongruência, Engajamento nas Redes Sociais, Consumo Simbólico

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    M31 – Marketing

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Abstract

The competitiveness of the tourism industry has accelerated the need for branding tourist destinations, aiming to differentiate themselves. The symbolic nature and motivations (self and social) of travelling were already considered significant, but social media's rise elevated them to a new level. This study investigates the mediating effect of perceived symbolic value of a destination in the relationship between self-congruity and social self-congruity with the destination and social media engagement.

To analyse the results, Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses and the analysis of the mediation processes using AMOS software were conducted.

Results confirmed that both self-congruity and social self-congruity with a destination impact its perceived symbolic value. While one of the dimensions of symbolic value (destination personality expression) totally impacts social media engagement, the other one (destination prestige) does not impact two of the three dimensions of social media engagement (contribution and creation). In an overall view, destination symbolic value mediates the impact of self-congruity and social self-congruity on destination social media engagement.

The findings from this study suggest that marketers need to consider tourists' need for expressing their identity and gaining acceptance of others in order to enhance social media engagement, by building a strong symbolic value. The effectiveness of a marketing strategy, that aims to highlight the symbolic value of the destination, can be assessed applying this model before and after its execution.

Keywords: Destination Branding, Symbolic Value, Self-Congruity, Social Media Engagement, Symbolic Consumption

JEL Classifications System:

M31 – Marketing

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

x

Abbreviations

CEBSC - Consumer's Engagement with Brand-Related Social-Media Content

CFA – Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFI - Comparative Fit Index

CLT - Central Limit Theorem

COBRAs - Consumer's Online Brand-Related Activities

DMO - Destination Marketing Organisation

EFA – Exploratory Factor Analysis

FMCG - Fast-Moving Consumer Goods

GFI - Goodness of Fit Index

NTO - National Tourism Organisation

RMSEA – Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

TLI – Tucker Lewis Index

UNWTO - United Nations World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

During the recent years, the growth of globalisation, namely the economic and technological development, the political changes and the rapid urbanisation, has intensified the competition among countries, regions and cities aiming to captivate and attract different target audiences. These distinct audiences can embrace public resources, talented and skilled workforce, private investment and tourism. The circumstances reinforced the research development of the emerging disciplines of place branding and destination branding and, consequently, the adoption of branding strategies from policy makers to enhance the competitive advantage (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Ma et al., 2019). This study focuses on the tourism context.

Aiming to improve its positioning and to highlight the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the place, destinations are now sensitive to apply the branding concept around them and to build calculated strategies (Freire, 2011; Pereira et al., 2012). Branding a tourist destination is regularly introduced as a (re)source to ensure the growing of physical, economic and social investments in the tourism industry (Ma et al., 2019), bearing in mind that both the flow of international tourists and the number of potential tourist destinations keeps increasing (despite the slowdown felt during the pandemic period). As a growing study field, destination branding has been capturing the interest of both academia and industry and it is a discipline that holds potential due to the limited literature development (Ma et al., 2019; H. Qu et al., 2011).

Being tourism a hyper-competitive sector where price and loyalty are losing their leading roles, destination brands need to foster the commitment of the customer from a psychological attachment perspective (So et al., 2014). People consume products and services not only for what they do, but also for what they mean (Tan et al., 2003). "All products - no matter how mundane - may carry a symbolic meaning" (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 134). This statement can perfectly reflect the tourism industry where every element of the travel experience tends to be shared on social media to satisfy a need of self-expression and to convey desirable impressions to peers (Boley & Woosnam, 2021). Considering the prominence that narcissism began to have in travel (Canavan, 2017), there is a growing interest in investigating the influence of symbolic factors - self and social - on consumer behaviours (Moran et al., 2018). A destination with a strong perceived image or personality is more likely to satisfy the symbolic needs of tourists than their functional needs (M. Kim & Thapa, 2017).

Considering that consumers use brands as symbols in order to get social approval and emphasise personal characteristics (Seong-Yeon Park & Eun Mi Lee, 2005), it is expected and likely that self and social elements play a role in the consumer behaviour and purchase intention. Consumers prefer brands they think that match their images and personalities: self-congruent

brands (Seong-Yeon Park & Eun Mi Lee, 2005). The image and personality of the brand can match the self-image of the individuals, the desired self-image, the image others have of them or the image they wish others had of them. Any of these matches make people prefer to consume these brands (Sirgy, 1982). Self-congruity is considered to be a key driver of tourist's perceived value of a destination. Frías-Jamilena et al. (2018) affirm the need to continue investigating the antecedents of perceived value among tourists and to gain deeper knowledge of how tourists motivations contribute to perceived destination value. The conceptual and practical relevance of analysing the antecedents of brand symbolic value is "predicated on the extent to which brand symbolism, in turn, produces valuable brand outcomes" (Anisimova, 2015, p. 2).

Despite the consumption of destination brands being a consumption that involves a higher level of investment (both financial and time investment) than the consumption of most brands ,such as FMCG ones, previous research (C.-F. Chen et al., 2016; Correia et al., 2016; Ekinci et al., 2013) argues that the symbolic motivations and, consequently, the symbolic value of destination brands play a key role in tourist behaviour.

As has been mentioned, in recent years, people are sharing and exposing more their consumptions, especially due to the increasing use of social media and blogs. People constantly share their trips on Instagram or Facebook, expecting to gain social approval and status regarding the destination they chose to travel. "Consumers want others to be aware of what they saw and felt" (Luna-Cortés, 2017, p. 2).

It is important for brands to know how to take advantage of this bias. Marketers aim to create strategies that encourage and nurture consumers' voluntary interactions with brand-related content because these interactions reflect more authenticity and credibility and show a strong potential to shape brand perception and other consumers' behaviours (L. de Vries et al., 2017; Labrecque et al., 2013). This importance is confirmed by Schivinski et al. (2019, p. 1) when they state "consumers trust each other, not big brands". In order to be effective, marketers must understand who are actively engaging with brand-related social media content, what motivates these consumers and if the perceptions of brands they are building inspire consumers to have active and co-creating behaviours (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2019). Previous research attempt to recognize which characteristics unite brands that consumers talk about online and concluded that the social quality of brands (including both self and social identity expression characteristics) is the most important in the online context (Lovett et al., 2013). Travellers tend to post and create more content about their trip on virtual social networks, when they perceive congruity between their self and social identity and the tourism experience, and also when the symbolic value of the experience is high (Boley & Woosnam, 2021; Luna-

Cortés et al., 2019a). Along these lines, it is important to understand the mediating role of destination symbolic value in the relationship of self-congruity with the destination and social media destination engagement. Research remains limited about the aspects that encourage consumers to engage with particular brands while leaving others almost "unengaged" or "untouched" (Schivinski et al., 2019).

Although the amount of research on consumers' engagement with brands on social media is growing, its operationalization is still at the nascent stage and largely fragmented (Schivinski et al., 2016). Practitioners and researchers believe that a measurement instrument for social media consumer engagement should "not only covers a vast range of brand-related social-media activities but also differentiates across levels of media engagement from a consumer's point of view" (Schivinski et al., 2016, p. 65). Having this in mind, this study will translate social media consumer engagement into the COBRA framework (Consumer's Online Brand-Related Activities) and its operationalization will be carried out through the CEBSC scale (Consumer's Engagement with Brand-Related Social-Media Content). The weight of social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, TripAdvisor, YouTube, Pinterest, Reddit, as a means of reinforcement customer engagement of destination brands, cannot be ignored.

It is possible to study different variables of distinct natures that can contribute to the anticipation of consumer engagement but, regardless of the context, symbolic antecedents always incorporate a role on it (Luna-Cortés, 2017). Following this direction and the other described aspects, this study aims to investigate the influence of self-congruity (both self and social in order to get a solid approach of symbolic antecedents) and the mediating role of the symbolic value (or symbolism) of a destination brand in motivating consumers to develop engagement behaviours by means of consumption, contribution, and creation of destination brand-related content on social media. The present research also intends to answer which symbolic driver plays a more significant role in this relationship.

Destinations must market and manage their branding in a tactical and strategic way aiming to find and invest on sources for competitive advantages. The results of this study will not only be significant for destination's tourism organisations and authorities, but also contribute for marketers of specific products or services companies that are associated with tourism industry, namely hotel chains, travel agencies, airlines companies, tour operators, cultural organisations or companies that promotes experiential activities (wine tasting, gastronomic activities, radical activities, sport events, volunteer actions, etc.).

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

2.1. Destination Branding

While marketers have been using the concept of branding since the last years of the decade of 1980, place branding is considered an emerging discipline that is only been considerably explored for the past twenty years (De Noronha et al., 2017; Pereira et al., 2012). The increasing interest and consequent investment on marketing by governments and planning and local management authorities are resulting in a constant search for different approaches to increase the attractiveness of their countries, regions or cities brands (Morgan et al., 2011). Their aim is not simply target tourists, but also professionals, students, potential residents, investors, organizations and institutions (Zhou & Wang, 2014). Based on the explanation of brand knowledge by Keller (1993) and capturing its dimension, Zenker and Braun (2010, p. 4) stated that place branding is "a network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design". The concept of place branding represents a wider perspective than the destination branding one because it embraces all the interactions with the place environment.

On the other hand, considered as a sub-sector of place branding, destination branding essentially implies a tourism context (Govers & Go, 2009; Kasapi & Cela, 2017). Morrison and Anderson (2002, p. 17) shortly defined destination branding as the "process used to develop a unique identity and personality that is different from all competitive destinations". Destination branding covers sub-concepts that focus on different spatial scales, such as nation branding, country branding, regional branding, city branding (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016). Destination brands, just as brands in general, implies two significant functions: identification and differentiation. Compared to a product that normally suggests a physical offering, destinations present a more complicated nature, embracing not only tangible elements such as beaches, museums or monuments, but also include intangible attributes, namely history, culture and customs (Florek, 2005). Aiming to attract the tourists and differentiate itself, it is crucial to understand and emphasize which associations of a destination brand are advantageous over competitors and that can have a special meaning, contradicting the highlight of common characteristics to all the destinations (accommodations, restaurants, public spaces). As matter of fact, "a brand perceived distinctive and unique is hard to be replaced by other brands" (H. Qu et al., 2011, p. 466). It is important that tourism entities start focusing more on the relationship between destination and consumer, opting for approaches that deliver special

attention to concepts such as destination brand identity (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2017), destination brand personality (Mariutti & Giraldi, 2020), destination brand image (W. H. Kim et al., 2017), destination brand self-congruity (Çizel & Ajanovic, 2016), destination brand identification (Zenker et al., 2017), destination brand trust (Sharifsamet et al., 2020), destination brand reputation (Morgan et al., 2011), destination brand loyalty (R. Chen et al., 2020) and destination brand advocacy (Kumar & Kaushik, 2017).

Researchers defend that the understanding of the process between the tourist and the destination incorporates a multidisciplinary nature, translating into high levels of complexity and intangibility. The control of the destination brand has been one of the main subjects of concern to tourism managers due to the numerous stakeholders involved in the tourism industry retaining heterogeneous interests. Furthermore, tourists evaluate the elements of a destination not only through cognitive processes but also through affective ones. Destination branding plays an important role in the customer's destination decision-making. Therefore, the application of this concept comprehends a multicity of needs and, consequently, demands a multidisciplinary response (Boo et al., 2009; Deslandes & Goldsmith, 2002; Gnoth, 1998; Kasapi & Cela, 2017; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016; Pereira et al., 2012; Zenker et al., 2017).

2.2. Symbolic Consumption

A brand, a product or a service might reflect a response to functional, experiential (also referred as emotional) and/or symbolic (sometimes designated expressive) needs. However, the symbolic benefit that a brand can offer might be stronger than the quest for functional and experiential dimensions, becoming sometimes impossible to understand the decision-making process without it. Recurrently, consumers are not interested on a product or service due to its utility, its capability to solve a problem or its potential to evoke good feelings and pleasure, but they look for it in order to express themselves through it (C.-F. Chen et al., 2016; Cova & Cova, 2002; Moinat, 2011; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995).

Considered one of the first researchers to underline the importance of the symbolic benefit of brands, (Veblen, 1899) defended that the consumption act is mostly driven by the desire to communicate possessions and identities, reinforcing them through self-expression (R. W. Belk, 1988; Correia et al., 2016). With an increasing development of literature in this area, more than a hundred years later, Tangsupwattana and Liu (2018, p. 515) agree "much of a brand's success is the result of its symbolic attributes and the meaning portrayed via brand consumption". Generating symbolic benefits, the symbolic value of a brand was recognized by Solomon (1983)

and Belk (1985, 1988) who interpreted it as the extent of a brand that allows consumers to express themselves. Every person has their own self-concept that they seek to develop through the selection of brands they consume, which suggest particular symbolic messages (R. W. Belk, 1985; Correia et al., 2016; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Sun et al., 2014). Therefore, Ekinci (2013, p. 711) refers to symbolic consumption as a representation of the self's "creation, enhancement, maintenance, transformation, disposition, expression, association, and differentiation". Labelled as a "symbolic project" by Thompson (1995), self-concept is actively constructed and constantly preserved through symbolic consumption intentions.

At the same time, it is crucial to highlight the second aspect of symbolic consumption: social aspect. In everyday life, people employ consumption not only to construct and sustain the self, but also to establish associations (or disassociations) with others, locating themselves in society (Elliott, 1997; Tangsupwattana & Liu, 2017; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Intending to understand the role of brands as social tools with a clearer view, they should be interpreted as symbols used as communication mechanisms between the consumer and significant references. Aiming to fulfil needs of ego-identification, self-enhancement, status, prestige, role position or group membership, the symbolic value of a brand is then explored to communicate and connect with peers which allows people to build conclusions about preferences, social classes and social identities of others. After Veblen's (1899) study, Leibenstein (2014)defended that consumers intend to enhance social status by consuming the same as other ones with higher status (bandwagon effect) or differentiating themselves by consuming distinctively and in a unique way (snob effect). The needs for both self-esteem and social approval are regarded by Hankinson (2005) as two of the most relevant elements of motivation that impact consumer behaviour. Therefore, as one of the consequences, individuals tend to conduct their behaviour according to the norms of their reference group (Daye, 2010; Holt, 1995; Park et al., 1986; Schor, 1999; Tangsupwattana & Liu, 2017). Likewise, in case the symbolic meanings of a certain brand prove to be incongruent with the consumption preferences of significant references, people might reject its consumption (Elliott, 1999). Holt (1995) and Boley et al. (2018) believe that the symbolic nature of consumption plays an important role not only in establishing affiliation with a particular social group, but also in allowing consumers to have advantage over their peers, reinforcing distinction and impressing others. However, Anisimova (2015) concluded that consumers do not seem to differentiate between self and social components of the brand symbolism in their minds but, look to symbolic brand values as one whole.

Brands differ in symbolism. This difference is crucial in the construction of self-identity via the consumption of brands (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). But symbolic values and meanings of a brand tend to be shared because they arise from the social context (Tan et al., 2003). "Symbolic value is subjective value perceived by consumers" (Qiu et al., 2017, p. 96). Being the critical consequence of marketing efforts, perceived value becomes the first priority of destination management in tourism (M. Kim & Thapa, 2017).

2.3. Symbolic Consumption of Destination Brands

As it was referred, the purpose of the symbolic benefits of brands operates in two directions: inward by building the self-identity and outward by building social identity (Elliott, 1997). "Tourism choices are not exceptions" (Correia et al., 2016). Destination brands are densely charged with symbolic value and tourists tend to select according their actual and ideal self or social identities (Cai, 2002; Crouch, 2013; Niininen et al., 2007). Although the research about symbolic consumption has been gaining more attention, its application to leisure and tourism and, in particular to destination brands, is still scarce (Ekinci et al., 2013).

Similarly, to conventional brands, in the tourism consumption perspective, peoples' ideas of the self can mirror their choices to visit a particular destination or to engage in certain tourism activities (C.-F. Chen et al., 2016; Ekinci et al., 2013). As explained by Sirgy & Su (2000), symbolic consumption in tourism occurs when an individual reveals some part of their self-concept or identity through the consumption of a destination brand or image. These authors as well as other ones after them (Boley et al., 2018; Moran et al., 2018) defend that tourism choices are affected by the desire of people to strengthen both their self and social identities. However, in the same study, Sirgy & Su (2000) and also (2016) refer that these choices can sometimes be more motivated by the desire for status than for self-enhancement. Thus, it is possible to understand that the social component can commonly represent a higher impact in the consumer behaviour than the self-identity component. One of the objectives of this study is precisely to comprehend which of these dimensions has a greater influence on tourist behaviour, specifically on social networks.

Previous research focused mainly on the effect of symbolic drivers and destination symbolism on visit and revisit intention, destination brand loyalty and destination brand satisfaction (Çizel & Ajanovic, 2016; Ekinci et al., 2013; H. Kim et al., 2019; M. Kim & Thapa, 2017; Kumar & Kaushik, 2017; Moran et al., 2018; Nam et al., 2011). Despite of including some of these same constructs, Luna-Cortés, (2017) chose a different direction by studying the

impact of self-congruity, perceived value, satisfaction of tourism experiences and revisit of the related destination on the intensity of use of social networks. This study shows the significant role of social media networks in the symbolic nature of destination branding research.

2.4. The Role of Social Media

Playing a major role in affecting consumer behaviour, social media provides "awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behaviour, post-purchase communication and evaluation" (Zhou & Wang, 2014, p. 28). Nowadays, online presence is crucial when running a business. Particularly, social media allows customers direct access to brands encouraging two-way interactive communications between those parties. This drives important business challenges and enables a customer empowerment that was never known before in our consumer society, with more informed, connected and active consumers (Harrigan et al., 2017; Muntinga, 2016). While people "comment, review, create and share content across online networks" (Harrigan et al., 2017, p. 598) in real time, brands must engage with them. The expansion not only of social media, but also of mobile technologies provided an opportunity for customers of real-time experience. Marketers need to permanently manage meaningful amounts of incoming customer data. Also, "the tourism industry is facing challenges in managing future incorporation of social media, such as in developing a clear and measurable strategy, demonstrating a viable return of investment and integrating social media into business processes" (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014, p. 34). This clearly creates challenges for marketers but, if effectively managed, can be translated into vital opportunities (Harrigan et al., 2017; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014).

In this regard, one of the most relevant online tools used in Travel and Tourism sector by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and National Tourism Organisations (NTO) is social media platforms. Beyond the service delivery perspective of destination brands, this interaction allows them to connect with their customers and brings multiple ways to strengthen relationships with travellers (Ana & Istudor, 2019; So et al., 2016; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

The symbolic nature of travelling was already considered significant, but social media's rise elevated it to a new level (Boley et al., 2018). Tourists share their opinions and feelings about their travel experiences and destinations through text, photos and videos in social media (Molinillo et al., 2018). Travel products and services, that are included in a destination brand, are considered to be high involvement products and services (Ana & Istudor, 2019). According to Boley & Woosnam (2021), tourists seek unique travel experiences (experiences with

symbolic value) which they can report and share content in social media with friends and followers. Most of them "cannot imagine traveling without showing their holiday adventures" (Werenowska & Rzepka, 2020, p. 8) to their peers, carefully selecting and manicuring the pictures in order to portray a desired social image and accentuate the self-image they would like to achieve (Boley et al., 2018; Boley & Woosnam, 2021). It is no longer enough to have a memorable travel experience. For the experience to be truly worthwhile and satisfactory, it must be shared in order to be "approved" by others (Boley et al., 2018). In the present digital era, posting in social media is seen as an important self-presentation strategy. Siegel & Wang (2018, p. 14) insightfully concluded that "the increased visibility of the experiences of one's peers is tantamount to envying those experiences and wanting to imitate them".

2.5. Self-Congruity with a Destination Brand

The research on the brand self-congruity (Beerli et al., 2007; R. Chen et al., 2020; Çizel & Ajanovic, 2016; Sirgy, 1982; Stokburger-Sauer, 2011; Wang et al., 2013) aims to explain consumer choice, namely purchase intention or usage, brand preference and brand loyalty.

Referring to consumer behaviour, Ross (1971, p. 38) affirms that self-congruity is translated by "purchasing one thing or another only if these things are consistent with, enhance, or in some other way fit well with the conception they have of themselves". A few years later, Sirgy (1982) explained brand self-congruity as the match or link between the perception of the consumer's self-concept and the image of the brand. Brand image can be understood as the "consumers' perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller, 2013, p. 72). Formed by four dimensions, the brand self-congruity construct implies actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, actual social self-congruity and ideal social self-congruity. The actual self suggests to how the person perceives herself in reality; the ideal self indicates to the self the person wishes to become; the actual social self is associated to how the person perceives herself in the presence of others; and finally, the ideal social self refers to how the person would like to be perceived by others (Luna-Cortés et al., 2019b; Sirgy, 1982). In other words, the focus of the self includes both "what I am" and "what I want to be", covering the one's present characteristics, the planned and the desired image (Ekinci et al., 2013). Through consumption, individuals are able to become any of their possible selves (Elliott, 1997).

Several recent studies (Çizel & Ajanovic, 2016; Kumar & Kaushik, 2017; Mariutti & Giraldi, 2020; Matzler et al., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer, 2011; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Yang et

al., 2020) have been abandoning the concept of self-congruity as the combination of self-image and brand image and, in replacement, have been developing it as the connection between self-image and brand personality. Brand personality concerns the set of human characteristics that are associated to a certain brand. Linking brand image to brand personality as a component of brand equity (D. A. Aaker, 1991), Aaker (1997) suggests five dimensions for brand personality: competence, sincerity, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness. Being a part of brand identity, brand personality can build unique brand associations that turn into advantageous differences regarding brand's competitors (Seong-Yeon Park & Eun Mi Lee, 2005). Ekinci and Hosany (2006) supports that when raising a destination brand and aiming to position it as a singular offer towards the tourist's eyes, destination brand personality can be used as a tool. Self-congruity theory supports the relevance of self-concept in consumer behaviour defending that when the brand image or personality is perceived to be consistent with the consumers' actual self-concept, their motivation to both purchase and consume such brand is increased. What is more, the higher the match between the self-concept and the brand image or personality, the higher is the purchase intention of the individual related to that brand (Litvin & Kar, 2004; Seong-Yeon Park & Eun Mi Lee, 2005; Sirgy, 1982). Along these lines, considering the area of tourism, it has been recognised that self-congruity impacts both pre-trip and post-trip tourists' intentions and that the greater the link between the destination brand and the tourist's self-concept, the greater the intention to visit such destination. However, self-congruity loses this determining influence when the individual has already visited the destination. Also, destination choice represents one of the most relevant effects associated with the concept of self-congruity (Beerli et al., 2007; Nam et al., 2011; Y. Qu & Qu, 2015). Following the referred theory, when there is congruity between the consumer's self-image and the brand's image or personality, that individual presents more tendency to create positive emotions, preferences or a feeling of belonging to the brand. Therefore, approving and pleasant attitudes will be generated toward a brand destination (Chen et al., 2020; Sirgy & Su, 2000).

A large number of authors do not study the complete concept of self-congruity, leaving social self-congruity aside (R. Chen et al., 2020; Çizel & Ajanovic, 2016; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Yang et al., 2020). This can lead to incomplete conclusions and comparisons regarding symbolic drivers. As mentioned earlier, tourist behaviours are not only impacted by personal factors, but also affected by social factors (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Frías-Jamilena et al. (2018) reinforced the need of investigating all the four components of self-congruity construct. Therefore, this study will address the influence of actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, actual social self-congruity and ideal social self-congruity.

A tourist who considers his/her self-image consistent with a destination image is more likely to perceive higher benefits from that destination and, consequently, less likely to recognize higher valuable factors from an alternative destination (Murphy et al., 2007; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). In this way, "when a tourist builds strong self-congruity with a particular destination, it can enhance value perception" (M. Kim & Thapa, 2017, p. 9). Self-congruity is a key driver of a tourist's perceived value of a destination (Frías-Jamilena et al., 2018). More specifically, the symbolic meaning of a destination is dependent of self-congruity with that destination. In other words, tourist's self-congruity shows influence on the perceived symbolic meaning of a destination (Murphy et al., 2007). Frías-Jamilena et al. (2018) concluded that self-congruity has a positive effect on perceived social value of a destination. According to Luna-Cortés (2019b, 2019a) the tourist will perceive a higher social value (perceived value that generate or enhance personal characteristics, social reputation and social status) of the tourism experience when the consumer's self and social identity and the tourism experience are congruent. Capturing the self and social elements of symbolism, the following hypothesis were developed:

H1: Actual Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value

H2: Ideal Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value

H3: Actual Social Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value

H4: Ideal Social Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value

2.6. Consumers' Engagement with Brands on Social Media

The evolution of Internet and consequently of online environments, like media-sharing sites, blogs, social-networking sites and other social-media–based websites, impacted the manner and depth of consumer's involvement an interaction with brands (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Nowadays, consumer brand engagement is in the centre of social media scenario, and it has become an attractive and, consequently, a growing area of interest (Schivinski et al., 2019, 2020). However, the paucity of studies continues to suggest an important oversight of the literature,

remaining some research gaps, namely related to the symbolic component of consumption and destination brands (R. Chen et al., 2020).

Consumers can be held responsible for a significant part of brands' marketing on social media because of their social links with others, playing a role of exchange partners with brands. A message consumer-to-consumer is expected to have a greater impact and be more effective than the same message shared by a marketer (Goh et al., 2013; Harrigan et al., 2018). Being a buzz concept, a great dilemma for marketing specialists is to justify the investment in activities related to consumer engagement and that is why a complete approach of this concept, and its operationalization are so important (Bilro & Loureiro, 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Schivinski et al., 2019). Consumer brand engagement is connected to brand performance outcomes like customer feedback, "brand referrals, sales growth, customer co-creation, and profitability" (Harrigan et al., 2018, p. 2).

Despite being a priority research area, the concept suffers from the lack of a consensual definition. At the same time that certain approaches of engagement concentrate on its multidimensional nature (Hollebeek, 2011; Obilo et al., 2021), others have conceptualised it concerning particular customer activities or behavioural patterns (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2020). The definition of Hollebeek (2011, p. 565) is generally accepted by the authors who suggest a multidimensional approach, considering engagement as "the level of a consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investment in specific brand interactions". In this study, a behavioural perspective was chosen following van Doorn's et al. (2010, p. 253) definition of engagement as "customers' behavioural manifestations toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers". Noting that engagement is not limited to positively valanced engagement behaviours, that is, it does not discriminate positive and negative brand-related interactions (Schivinski et al., 2019). The fact is that there is a tendency when measuring the effectiveness of a marketing strategy to do it in terms of behavioural engagement such as likes, shares, uploads, comments or subscribes, and not in terms of cognitive and emotional engagement (Schivinski et al., 2019).While Muntinga et al (2011) were digging into the behavioural approach of consumer brand engagement on social media, the authors introduced the concept of COBRA, which is going to be explored in the next chapter of this study.

There are an array of tools and resources available on social media that allow people to be involved with brand-related activities (Schivinski et al., 2019, 2020). The majority of travellers engage on social media posts related to their travel in some degree, ranging from "occasional consumers" to "fully engaged" (Amaro et al., 2016). Regarding the hyper-competitive tourism

sector, the key question is how brands can use social media to boost engagement among their customers because social media is perceived as a mean that facilitates customer brand engagement. But studies of both these phenomena are insufficient in the tourism context (Harrigan et al., 2017).

A systematic literature review by Khan et al. (2020) aiming to determine and investigate the most predominant antecedents of consumer engagement, concluded that the social component broadly is one of the most significant antecedents and considered to be free from all contexts. Regardless the context, social antecedents always have a consolidated role in consumer engagement. Beall et al. (2020) gives the example that the need to obtain social status leads tourists to share their unique travel experiences on social media.

Regarding the self-element of the symbolic consumption, De Vries and Carlson (2014) analyse that brand self-congruity positively impacts brand engagement in the specific case of social media. In the tourism area, although (Luna-Cortés et al., 2019b) suggest that the congruity of the tourist with the tourism experience may not impact the use of virtual social networks, Chen et al. (2020) recognises destination brand self-congruity as a key driver of destination brand engagement.

2.6.1. Consumer's Online Brand-Related Activities

Studies about online consumer behaviour tend to choose a user typology approach. Behaviours are categorised into specific usage patterns and distinct user types are associated to them. In case of social media, the various ways individuals engage (content preferences, frequency and variety of activities, for example) with different media are divided into groups, creating contrasting social media user types (Li & Bernoff, 2011; Mathwick, 2002; Muntinga et al., 2011). However, user typology can be considered limited and an oversimplification of the reality because people "often engage in multiple roles" (Muntinga et al., 2011, p. 15). By contrast, usage typology covers the fact that individuals can engage in more than a particular behaviour. Although the usage typology is not so commonly explored as user typology, Shao (2009) opted for the first approach and outlined a framework according to the level of activeness of social media use: consuming, participating and producing brand-related media (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2019).

Due to the lack of a concept that embraces the diversity of behaviours that people can present in social media and based on Shao's (2009) study, a unifying framework was developed by Muntinga et al. (2011): Consumer's Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRAs). Capturing a path of gradual involvement with brand-related content on social media, this behavioural

14

construct is classified into three hierarchical usage types that correspond to different levels from passive to active interaction: consumption, contribution, and creation (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016, 2020). Commonly agreed, it is defined as "a set of brand-related online activities on the part of the consumer that vary in the degree to which the consumer interacts with social media and engages in the consumption, contribution, and creation of media content" (Schivinski et al., 2016, p. 66).

Consuming brand-related content

Representing people who consume brand-related media without active participation, consuming dimension represents a minimum level of involvement. Being the most frequent level of engagement of online brand-related activities among consumers, this dimension can be translated into watching posts, product ratings and reviews, reading content, (e.g., dialogues between members of online brand forums) or just clicking on content, all those created by the brands or other consumers (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016, 2020; Shao, 2009).

Contributing to brand-related content

Embracing both peer-to-peer and peer-to-content interactions about brands, the contributing dimension is the middle level of online brand-related engagement and express consumers' contribution by participating in previously created brand-related content, including firm-created and user-generated media (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016).

More recently, practitioners and brand researchers have given more attention to this component (R. Belk, 2014; Craig et al., 2015; Dickinson-Delaporte & Kerr, 2014) due to its interactive nature, such as liking, commenting, endorsing, sharing and reposting brand-related content that others have created (Schivinski et al., 2016, 2020).

Creating brand-related content

The creating dimension reflects the strongest and ultimate level of activeness where individuals create and publish brand-related content that others consume and contribute to. Co-developing, producing and publishing new brand-related content on social media include writing and posting reviews, uploading photos and videos about the brand or initiating hashtags. These creation activities can represent a stimulus for further consumption and contribution behaviours by other peers (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016, 2020).

Incorporating concepts that are already well-developed and explored but that do not adequately capture such diversification of behaviours, like eWOM and UGC (Ana & Istudor, 2019; Boley & Woosnam, 2021; D. Kim & Jang, 2017; Okazaki, 2009), COBRA concept allows us to collectively compare and analyse consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to- brand behaviours that were previously studied only in a separate way (Muntinga et al., 2011). As a result, scholars may acquire a richer understanding of the phenomena.

The three COBRAs' take the shape of an engagement pyramid, having a broad base with a large group of people that presents a passive consuming behaviour and a narrower top with a smaller group of consumers highly behaviourally engaged (Keller, 2016). It is necessary to highlight that the same individual may have distinct relationships, acting as a consumer, contributor or creator separately or simultaneously for the same brand or for different brands (Schivinski et al., 2016).

The impact of engagement on subsequent consumer behaviours and perceptions (e.g., consumer product judgement, behavioural intention of loyalty, self-brand connection and brand usage intent) is subject to a growing number of studies (Harrigan et al., 2018; Lee & Youn, 2009; So et al., 2014). Indeed, COBRAs have significant consequences for brands and that is one of the main reasons why investigating COBRAs' antecedents (namely motivations for engaging with brand-related content on social media) is also crucial (Muntinga et al., 2011). Aiming to understand these motivations, Muntinga et al. (2011) identified personal identity (self-presentation, self-expression and self-assurance) and social identity as some of the major drivers of the contributing and creating dimensions of COBRAs when studying the factors that anticipate each level of engagement.

According to Lovett et al. (2013), social quality of brands (including both self and social identity expression characteristics) is the most significant factor of influence when studying characteristics unite brands that consumers talk about online. Also focusing on understanding the most important antecedents of consumers' behavioural engagement with brands on social media, Schivinski et al. (2019) studied brand equity and concluded that it has a positive influence on the consumption, contribution, and creation of brand-related content on social media. Following that study, Schivinski et al. (2020) chose to explore the tourism context by examining the relationship between functional and hedonic brand image and social media engagement (in terms of COBRAs) and the mediation effect of consumers' perceptions of Airbnb brand equity on this relationship. Hedonic image is related to different aspects including self-concept connections and symbolism, among other ones, and the findings of the study

supported the dominant role of hedonic associations in the consumption, contribution, and creation of brand-related content.

It has been identified in previous research that consumer behaviour is more correctly explained when studied alongside the consumer's perceived value of a destination (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; M. Kim & Thapa, 2017). Hosseini & Aali (2021) shows that perceived value, specifically functional and social value, has a positive effect on consumer engagement in the banking industry and Aslam & Ramos de Luna (2021) concluded that perceived value affects customer engagement behaviours on social media in the form of feedback, collaboration and mobilizing intentions. Embracing the symbolic part of perceived value, Jahn & Kunz. (2012) showed that the social and self-concept values impact customer engagement of an online brand fan page. Bernritter et al. (2016) argues that high levels of brand symbolism increase consumers' intention to publicly engage with brands. In a tourism perspective, Huwae et al. (2020) defends that perceived destination value of the coastal destinations in Indonesia has impact on tourist engagement. As such, this study contends:

H5: Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value has positive impact on the Social Media Destination Brand Engagement

H5 a): Perceived destination brand symbolic value has positive impact on the consumption of destination brand-related content

H5 b): Perceived destination brand symbolic value has positive impact on the contribution of destination brand-related content

H5 c): Perceived destination brand symbolic value has positive impact on the creation of destination brand-related content

When there is a discrepancy between individuals' actual self (actual self-concept or actual social self-concept) and their desired image (ideal self-concept or ideal social self-concept), that gap will be filled with compensatory consumption. In the case of tourism, these discrepancies will not lead only to compensatory consumption, but also to posting of travel experiences on social media to broadcast this ideal self-image to themselves and to others (Boley & Woosnam, 2021). When travellers perceive that the tourism experience is congruent with their self and social identity and also that the symbolic value of the experience is high, they use more their virtual social networks, posting and creating content about the trip (Boley & Woosnam, 2021; Luna-Cortés et al., 2019a).

According to Schivinski et al. (2020), the more positive and significative is the perceived hedonic brand image of Airbnb (includes self-concept connections and symbolism), the more consumers will be willing to communicate their self-brand identification through the consumption, contribution and creation of brand-related activities in social media (Schivinski et al., 2020). Xu et al. (2020) concluded that perceived brand destination value mediates the relationship between the self-congruity with a destination and destination brand online engagement. Following the course of this study by focusing only on the symbolic element of the destination brand value, the last hypotheses were formulated. We propose to investigate the influence between destination brand symbolism reflected by consumers' self and social concept and expressed into social media destination brand engagement.

H6: Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value mediates the impact of Self-Congruity on Social Media Destination Brand Engagement

H6 a): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of actual self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

H6 b): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of actual self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

H6 c): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of actual self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content

H6 d): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of ideal self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

H6 e): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of ideal self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

H6 f): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of ideal self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content

H7: Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value mediates the impact of Social Self-Congruity on Social Media Destination Brand Engagement

H7 a): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of actual social self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

H7 b): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of actual social self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

H7 c): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of actual social self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content

H7 d): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of ideal social self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

H7 e): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of ideal social self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

H7 f): Perceived destination brand symbolic value mediates the impact of ideal social self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content
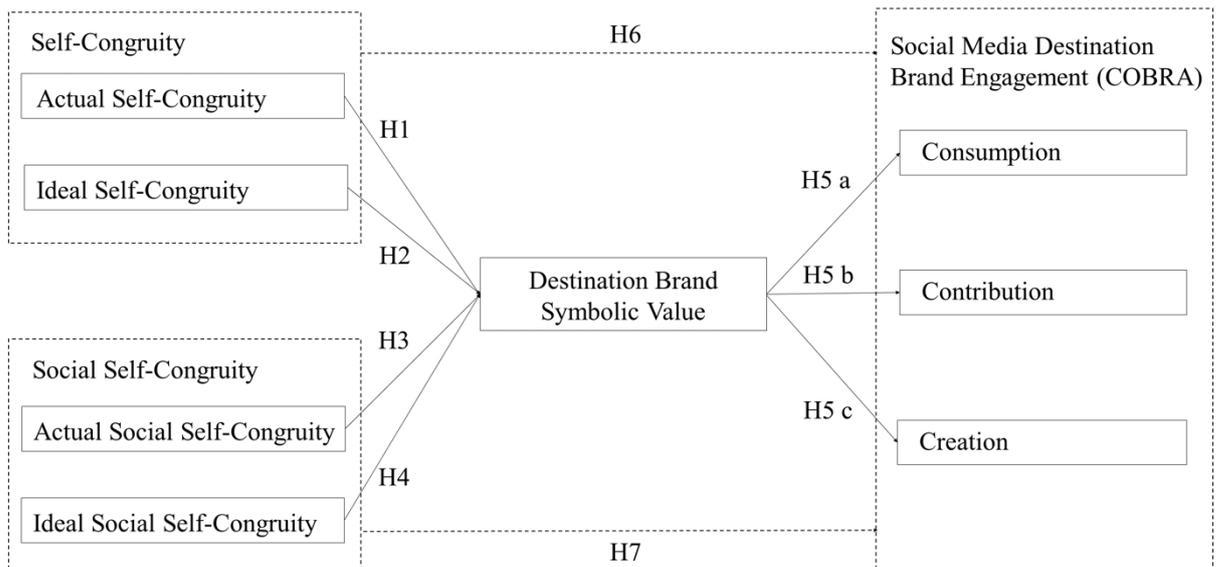

Figure 2.1 – Research Model

Note: Simple arrows denote direct paths. Dashed arrows represent the mediating role (indirect path) of Destination Brand Symbolic Value on the impact of Self-Congruity/Social Self-Congruity with the destination on Social Media Destination Brand Engagement.

2.7. Industry

2.7.1. Tourism

Tourism can be expressed as one of the industries that have the most powerful economic impact in the world. After generating USD 1.7 trillion in revenues in the year of 2018, international tourism is considered the third largest export category in the world, only loosing for fuels and chemicals, representing USD 2.4 trillion and USD 2.2 trillion, respectively. International tourism illustrates 7% of the overall exports in the world and, more specifically, 29% of the world's services exports (UNWTO, 2020). Tourism was addressed as a leading resilient economic sector after achieving 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals in the whole world in

2019, which represented a 4% increase comparing to the previous year. The same growth was expected for 2020 before the pandemic situation. Due to its top export sector position, tourism plays a vital role in the creation of employment and that is one of the major reasons for needing a responsible growth. Despite conjunctural circumstances as the most recent pandemic where tourism was one of the most affected sectors, international tourism rebounded moderately in 2021, being its second half the main responsible. Comparing to 2020, global tourism experienced a 4% rise in tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) in 2021 but, they were still 72% below the pre-pandemic levels in 2019. The year of 2020 was considered the worst one on record for tourism (UNWTO, 2022b).

According to (UNWTO, 2022a), the major travel trends that will continue impacting tourism in 2022 are domestic and close to home travels, rural tourism and open-air and nature activities. Despite the recent rise of COVID-19 variants, the widespread vaccination rollout and a common lifting of travel restrictions, can help to rebuild tourists' confidence and accelerate the recovery of global tourism in 2022. The majority of tourism professionals agree on better prospects for 2022. However, opinions differ regarding rebound. Some experts (58%) predict a rebound already in 2022, others (42%) expect it in 2023 and 64% point to 2024 or later. "Tourism has, therefore, a place at the heart of global development policies" (UNWTO, 2019, para. 5). However, predictions may change due to the current context of war and to the feeling of instability and insecurity that can make people shy away from traveling to some countries in Europe. "Russia and Ukraine accounted for a combined 3% of global spending on international tourism in 2020 and at least US$ 14 billion in global tourism receipts could be lost if the conflict is prolonged" (UNWTO, 2022a).

CHAPTER 3 - Method

3.1. Sample and Procedure

Aiming to test the proposed hypotheses, an online survey (Appendix A and B) was developed and hosted on the platform Qualtrics. Data for the study were collected during the first two weeks of March 2022 among people who usually travel as tourists and use social media. The survey was conducted in Portuguese and in English in order to reach tourists of different nationalities and countries. Respondents were invited to take part in the study through different social media channels with both public posts and private messages that included the survey link. It was also considered important to not restrict data collection to a specific generation so it would be possible to understand symbolic motivations and, specially, social media behaviour at different ages. Despite the use of social networks is more frequent among younger generations (Luna-Cortés et al., 2019a, 2019b; Saini & Arasanmi, 2020) it has become increasingly common among prior generations. The aim was to collect a heterogeneous sample of travellers to have more meaningful results.

Divided into blocks, the survey started with an introductory note informing briefly about the overall topic of the study, guaranteeing the anonymity and the use of data exclusively for academic purposes and asking respondents to answer as honestly as possible.

In the next block, respondents were asked to think about the last destination where they travelled to as a tourist by any means of transportation. Regarding the pandemic context, it was important to add this last detail. It was asked to consider it as Destination X and think about that destination when answering all the questions during the survey. Destination X could be a country, a region or a city and some examples were given in order to be clearer. The first question was intended for the respondent to indicate which Destination X was being considered.

Aiming to avoid large blocks so that it does not become tiring for the respondents, the scales' measurements of Self-Congruity, Social Self-Congruity, Destination Brand Symbolic Value and Social Media Destination Brand Engagement were divided into eight blocks. The respondents should consider the image/personality they have of Destination X for Self-Congruity and Social Self-Congruity scales, the characteristics of Destination X and the characteristics of destination X travellers for Destination Brand Symbolic Value scale and lastly, their use of social media regarding Destination X for Social Media Destination Brand Engagement scale.

The following section included demographic questions such as age, nationality, gender, education level, professional situation, frequency of trips during a year and frequency of social

media use (Instagram, Facebook and travel social networks). Considering that the study was developed in Portugal, the nationality question was divided into three options: Portuguese, European and Non-European. In the question regarding how many trips the respondent usually do during the year, it was asked to not consider the pandemic period. The survey was concluded with a last block containing a thank-you note for contributing to the study.

3.2. Data Analysis Strategy

The statistical analysis involved measures of descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequencies, means and respective standard deviations) and inferential statistics. Regarding inferential statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the internal consistency coefficient Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson's correlation coefficient, independent samples t-tests (Student's t-test) and the analysis of mediation processes were used. The significance level for rejecting the null hypothesis was set at $(\alpha) \leq .05$. The normality of distribution was tested with Shapiro-Wilk test and the homogeneity of variances was tested with Levene test. In samples larger than 30, the normality of distribution was accepted, according to the central limit theorem (CLT).

Statistical analysis was performed within SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 28.0 and AMOS 26.0.

3.3. Measures

All items were adapted from the original or existing scales and modified when necessary to fit the study context.

Destination Brand Self-Congruity and Social Self-Congruity scales (Tables 3.1 and 3.2) were adapted from Usakli & Baloglu (2011), Moran et al. (2018) and Šegota et al.(2021) which in turn were based on the original scale of Sirgy et al. (1997). Each scale is composed by two dimensions – actual and ideal - and each dimension was measured with three items. Items of both scales were measured using a 7-point scale varying between (1) completely disagree and (7) completely agree. This measurement aimed to understand the level of congruity between the tourists' self and social concepts (both actual and ideal) and the perceived image and personality of Destination X.

Table 3.1 - Destination Brand Self-Congruity Scale

Actual Self-Congruity
The image of destination X is consistent with how I actually see myself.
I am quite similar to the personality of destination X.
The personality of destination X is consistent with how I actually see myself.
Ideal Self-Congruity
The image of destination X is consistent with how I would like to see myself.
I would like to be perceived as similar to the personality of destination X.
The personality of destination X is consistent with how I would like to see myself.

Table 3.2 - Destination Brand Social Self-Congruity Scale

Actual Social Self-Congruity
The image of destination X is consistent with how I believe others see me.
The personality of destination X reflects the type of person others think I am.
The personality of destination X is similar to how others view me.
Ideal Social Self-Congruity
The image of destination X is consistent with how I would like others to see me.
The personality of destination X reflects the type of person I want others to think I am.
The personality of destination X is similar to how I want others to view me.

The selected scale to measure Destination Brand Symbolic Value in this study it is a three-sets 17-item scale (Table 3.3 - Destination Brand Symbolic Value Scale) that was developed by Bhat & Reddy (1998) to measure a brand's symbolic value to consumers, capturing both self and social components. The first set of questions sought respondents' agreement with various statements about tourists' travels to Destination X to express themselves. The answers were ranged from (1) completely disagree to (7) completely agree. The second set of items sought respondents' ratings on the characteristics of Destination X, being the answers variation between (1) not at all and (7) symbolic, (1) not at all and (7) prestigious, (1) not at all and (7) exciting, (1) not at all and (7) status symbol, (1) conventional and (7) distinctive, according to the order of items. The third and last set of items sought evaluations of the characteristics of Destination X's travellers and the respondents were able to answer between (1) simple and (7) sophisticated, (1) not at all and (7) very romantic, (1) not at all and (7) very successful, (1)

ordinary and (7) unique, (1) plain and (7) stylish, (1) subdued and (7) expressive, (1) sedate and (7) glamorous, (1) not at all and (7) very elegant. In all cases, items were measured with seven-point scales.

Table 3.3 - Destination Brand Symbolic Value Scale

Statements about tourists' travels to the destination brand
People travel to destination X as a way of expressing their personality.
Destination X is for people who want the best things in life.
Destination X traveller stands out in a crowd.
Travelling to destination X says something about the kind of person you are.
Characteristics of the destination brand
Not at all v. symbolic
Not at all v. prestigious
Not at all v. exciting
Not at all v. status symbol
Conventional v. distinctive
Characteristics of the destination brand's travellers
Simple v. sophisticated
Not at all v. very romantic
Not at all v. very successful
Ordinary v. unique
Plain v. stylish
Subdued v. expressive
Sedate v. glamorous
Not at all v. very elegant

Social Media Destination Brand Engagement (COBRA) was measured using the CEBSC scale (Consumer's Engagement With Brand-Related Social-Media Content). This scale (Table 3.4 - Social Media Destination Brand Engagement Scale) was developed by Schivinski et al. (2016) aiming to measure engagement with social media brand-related content rather than engagement with the brand per se and to allow the differentiation between the levels and types of engagement with brands on social media. Divided into the three dimensions of consumption,

24

contribution and creation, it is a three-factor 17-item scale. Ranging from (1) never to (7) very often, the items of CEBSC scale was answered using a 7-point scale.

Table 3.4 - Social Media Destination Brand Engagement Scale

Consumption
I read posts related to destination X on social media.
I read fan page(s) related to destination X on social network sites.
I watch pictures/graphics related to destination X.
I follow blogs related to destination X.
I follow destination X on social network sites.
Contribution
I comment on videos related to destination X.
I comment on posts related to destination X.
I comment on pictures/graphics related to destination X.
I share destination X related posts.
I "Like" pictures/graphics related to destination X.
I "Like" posts related to destination X.
Creation
I initiate posts related to destination X.
I initiate posts related to destination X on social network sites.
I post pictures/graphics related to destination X.
I write reviews related to destination X posts.
I write posts related to destination X on forums.
I post videos that show destination X.

CHAPTER 4 - Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

A total of 332 valid answers were collected for the study, in which 65.1% of the respondents were Portuguese. The majority of them were female (64.2%), aged 18-29 (35.2%), with a Bachelor's degree (33.7%), and employed/self-Employed (70.8%). Regarding the frequency of travelling, the sample includes 82,5% of people who travel up to three times per year, being the option "2-3 times per year" the most selected one (56%). A large percentage of people use Instagram (65,7%) and Facebook (42,2%) every day. On the other hand, a significant percentage of people (22,3%) rarely use Facebook. Considering specifically travel social networks, such as TripAdvisor, Travello or Trover, 43,3% of the respondents occasionally use them.

Table 4.1 - Sociodemographic Characteristics (N =332)

Gender	N	%
Female	213	64,2
Male	119	35,8
Age	N	%
18 - 29	117	35,2
30 - 39	45	13,6
40 - 49	39	11,7
50 - 55	40	12,0
> 55	91	27,4
Education Level	N	%
High School or under	28	8,4
Professional Degree	21	6,3
Bachelor's Degree	112	33,7
Postgraduate Degree	70	21,1
Master's Degree	94	28,3
Doctoral Degree (PhD)	7	2,1
Professional Situation	N	%
Student	22	6,6
Student-Worker	28	8,4
Unemployed	5	1,5
Employed/Self-Employed	235	70,8
Other	42	12,7
Nationality	N	%
Portuguese	216	65,1
European	32	9,6
Non-European	84	25,3

Table 4.2 - How often do you travel?

	N	%
1 time per year	88	26,5
2-3 times per year	186	56,0
4-5 times per year	40	12,0
More than 5 times per year	18	5,4
Total	332	100,0

Table 4.3 - How often do you use social media networks?

		I don't have an account	*I rarely use it*	*I occasionally use it*	*I use it every week*	*I use it every day*
Instagram	N	17	25	32	40	218
	%	5,1%	7,5%	9,6%	12,0%	65,7%
Facebook	N	15	74	55	48	140
	%	4,5%	22,3%	16,6%	14,5%	42,2%
Travel Social Networks (e.g.: TripAdvisor, Travello, …)	N	74	74	144	33	7
	%	22,3%	22,3%	43,4%	9,9%	2,1%

The relational structure of the items of the various scales was assessed through an exploratory factor analysis on the correlation matrix, with extraction of factors by the principal components method and followed by Varimax rotation (Table 4.4 - Rotated Component Matrix). The common factors retained were those with an eigenvalue greater than 1. The validity of the factor analysis was performed using KMO (.926, excellent) and Bartlett's test (significant), indicating acceptable values for its pursuit. The factor analysis converged to a solution with 9 principal components that explain 74.8% of the total variance. In order to improve the solution, items that show factor loadings lower than .50 and all those which saturate in more than 1 factor (cross loading) were removed (Marôco, 2018). In total, eight items were removed (rows in grey of Table 4.4 - Rotated Component Matrix) following these criteria and the theoretical context: three items from Symbolic Value scale ("status symbol", "stylish" and "exciting"), one from Consumption subscale ("I follow blogs related to destination X"), two from Contribution subscale ("I Like posts related to destination X" and "I Like pictures/graphics related to destination X") and two from Creation subscale ("I write reviews related to destination X posts" and "I write posts related to destination X on forums").

The saturation of items (> .30) in each of the main components can be seen in the table below. In order to be adjusted considering the theoretical model, the components were analysed. The second principal component was designated as Self-Congruity (Self-Congruity was

originally split into two dimensions – actual and ideal self-congruity - and became one-dimensional). The third principal component was named as Social Self-Congruity (Social Self-Congruity was originally split into two dimensions – actual and ideal social self-congruity - and became one-dimensional). Following the designations of the original scales, the ones assigned to the fourth, fifth and sixth components were, respectively, Consumption, Contribution and Creation (Social Media Engagement). Symbolic Value was assumed as a two-dimensional construct (instead of four-dimensional as the PCA indicated) in order to meet the theoretical background (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Consequently, the first and seventh components, despite being different, were later integrated into one, corresponding to the theoretical point of view and the original formulation of Bhat & Reddy (1998) and being designated as Destination Prestige (Destination Symbolic Value). The same was decided for eighth and nineth principal components, being later integrated into one and designated as Destination Personality Expression (Destination Symbolic Value). The designations assigned to the dimensions followed Bhat & Reddy's (1998) reasoning, as well as to match the definition of the construct itself.

Table 4.4 - Rotated Component Matrix

		Rotated Component Matrix[a]								
		Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sophisticated	SV_10	0.833								
Status symbol	SV_08	0.794								
Elegant	SV_17	0.779								
Glamorous	SV_16	0.747						0.362		
Successful	SV_12	0.738								
Prestigious	SV_06	0.698								0.439
Stylish	SV_14	0.607						0.553		
Romantic	SV_11	0.481								
The personality of destination X is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	SC_06		0.798							
The personality of destination X is consistent with how I actually see myself.	SC_03		0.798							
I am quite similar to the personality of destination X.	SC_02		0.794							
I would like to be perceived as similar to the personality of destination X.	SC_05		0.793							
The image of destination X is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	SC_04		0.754						0.316	
The image of destination X is consistent with how I actually see myself.	SC_01		0.714							0.310
The personality of destination X reflects the type of person others think I am.	SSC_02			0.843						
The personality of destination X is similar to how others view me.	SSC_03			0.817						
The image of destination X is consistent with how I believe others see me.	SSC_01		0.342	0.744						
The image of destination X is consistent with how I would like others to see me.	SSC_04		0.338	0.712						
The personality of destination X reflects the type of person I want others to think I am.	SSC_05		0.301	0.710						
The personality of destination X is similar to how I want others to view me.	SSC_06		0.306	0.708					0.320	
I initiate posts related to destination X on social network sites.	SME_13				0.881					
I initiate posts related to destination X.	SME_12				0.869					
I post pictures/graphics related to destination X.	SME_14				0.812					
I post videos that show destination X.	SME_17				0.781	0.314				
I comment on videos related to destination X.	SME_06					0.787				
I comment on posts related to destination X.	SME_07					0.787				
I comment on pictures/graphics related to destination X.	SME_08				0.329	0.748				
I write reviews related to destination X posts.	SME_15				0.493	0.658				
I write posts related to destination X on forums.	SME_16				0.522	0.614				
I share destination X related posts.	SME_09				0.455	0.485	0.380			
I watch pictures/graphics related to destination X.	SME_03						0.804			
I read posts related to destination X on social media.	SME_01						0.746			
I "Like" posts related to destination X.	SME_11						0.672			0.332
I follow destination X on social network sites.	SME_05					0.463	0.663			
I "Like" pictures/graphics related to destination X.	SME_10						0.641			0.383
I read fan page(s) related to destination X on social network sites.	SME_02					0.406	0.621			
I follow blogs related to destination X.	SME_04					0.534	0.552			
Unique	SV_13							0.741		
Expressive	SV_15							0.722		
Distinctive	SV_09							0.498		0.458
People travel to destination X as a way of expressing their personality.	SV_01								0.714	
Travelling to destination X says something about the kind of person you are.	SV_04								0.591	0.305
Destination X traveller stands out in a crowd.	SV_03								0.545	
Destination X is for people who want the best things in life.	SV_02								0.536	
Symbolic	SV_05	0.333								0.653
Exciting	SV_07		0.302						0.423	0.572

30

After the principal component analysis, it was verified that the dimensions of the variables were readjusted. Both Self-Congruity and Social Self-Congruity will be treated as one-dimensional constructs, while Symbolic Value will be considered as two-dimensional. The assessment of the overall fit of the structural model (hepta-factorial model – Figure 4.1 - Structural Model) was performed through a confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA). This analysis was performed using AMOS 26.0, which is a widely used software specialised in the analysis of structural equations. The CFA was conducted on the basis of the readjusted dimensions. The goodness of fit indicators used were ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom ($\chi2/df$), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and they should follow the values recommended in the literature: $\chi2/df < 3$ (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), CFI, GFI and TLI > .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and RMSEA < .08 (Hooper et al., 2008). The values obtained, $\chi2/df = 2.673$; CFI = .904; GFI = .775; TLI = .895; RMSEA = .071, indicate a good fit of the data. Model fitting implied the correlation of errors 13 and 14, 20 and 21, 20 and 22. Additionally, the Personality Expression subscale (Symbolic Value) presents some problems of: (1) convergent validity, namely the AVE value being lower than .050, and (2) discriminant validity because the value of the MSV is higher than AVE value and the square root of the AVE is lower than the absolute value of the correlation with another factor (Hair et al., 1998). However, they are not significant.
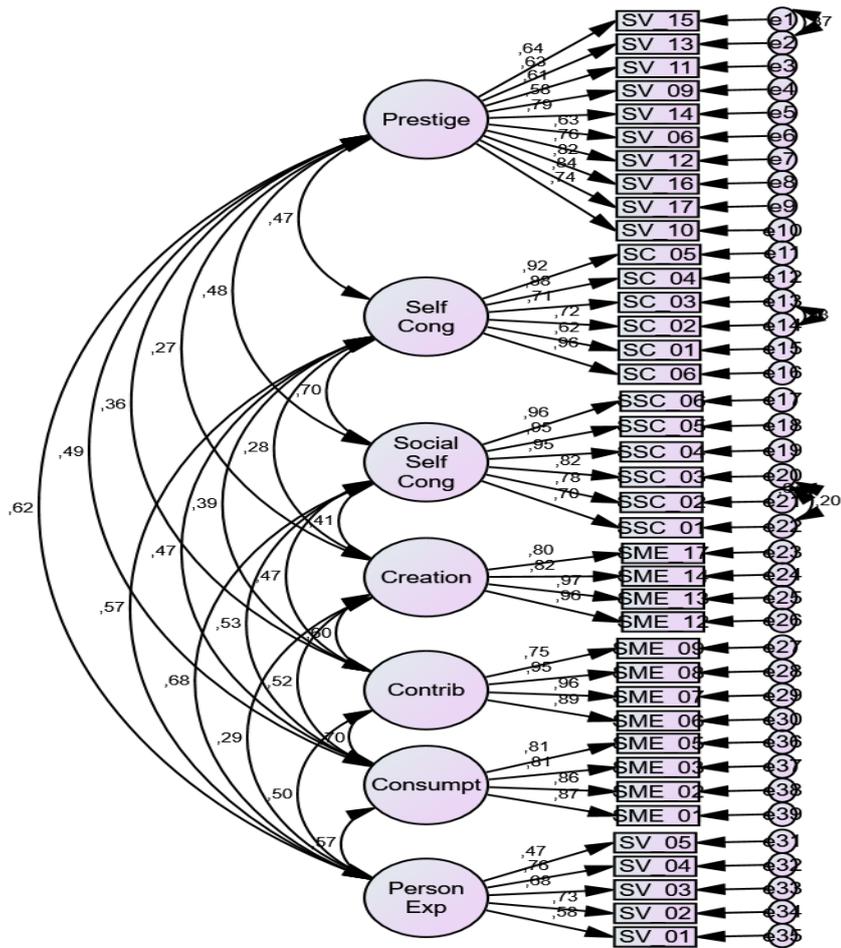
Figure 4.1 - Structural Model

Table 4.5 - Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Prest	SelfC	SSCong	Creat	Contrib	PersExp	Pass
Prestige	0,909	0,505	0,379	0,923	**0,710**						
SelfCong	0,919	0,660	0,492	0,960	0,466***	**0,812**					
SocialSelfCong	0,947	0,752	0,492	0,973	0,480***	0,701***	**0,867**				
Creation	0,940	0,798	0,355	0,973	0,272***	0,279***	0,411***	**0,893**			
Contrib	0,940	0,798	0,494	0,964	0,359***	0,387***	0,466***	0,595***	**0,893**		
PersonExp	0,784	0,427	0,461	0,807	0,616***	0,567***	0,679***	0,286***	0,503***	**0,654**	
Consumpt	0,905	0,704	0,494	0,908	0,488***	0,474***	0,529***	0,521***	0,703***	0,572***	**0,839**

In order to test for internal consistency, the new dimensions were considered. The internal consistency of the scales used, analysed using internal consistency coefficient Cronbach's Alpha, ranged from a minimum of .777 (reasonable) on the subscale Personality Expression subscale (Symbolic Value) to a maximum of .954 (excellent) on the Social Self-Congruity scale. The classification of Cronbach's Alpha values follows the reference in Hill & Hill (2005).

Table 4.6 - Internal Consistency Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Prestige (Symbolic Value)	.908	10
Self-Congruity	.928	6
Social Self-Congruity	.954	6
Creation	,940	4
Contribution	.933	4
Consumption	.904	4
Personality Expression (Symbolic Value)	,777	5

The values obtained by the respondents can be interpreted in the following table. In Table 4.7 - Descriptive Statistics it is indicated the minimum and maximum values, means and respective standard deviations. The Prestige, Self-Congruity, Consumption and Personality Expression values are all significantly above the midpoint of the rating scale (4), $p < .001$, while those of Creation and Contribution are significantly below the midpoint of the rating scales. The Social Self-Congruity mean is not significantly different from the midpoint of the rating scale, $t(331) = -.422$, $p = .673$.

Table 4.7 - Descriptive Statistics

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Prestige (Symbolic Value)	1,60	7,00	4,73	1,14
Self-Congruity	1,00	7,00	4,75	1,35
Social Self-Congruity	1,00	7,00	3,96	1,52
Creation	1,00	7,00	2,51	1,69
Contribution	1,00	7,00	2,38	1,65
Consumption	1,00	7,00	3,55	1,78
Personality Expression (Symbolic Value)	1,60	7,00	4,57	1,19

In Table 4.8 - Correlations it is possible to comprehend the correlations between the variables of the present study. In general terms, the correlation coefficients are statistically significant, positive and moderate.

Table 4.8 - Correlations

	Prestige	Self Congruity	Social Self-Congruity	Creation	Contribution	Consumption
Prestige	--					
Self-Congruity	,447**					
Social Self-Congruity	,495**	,668**				
Creation	,297**	,266**	,393**			
Contribution	,369**	,395**	,465**	,640**		
Consumption	,463**	,435**	,490**	,512**	,684**	
Personality Expression	,589**	,490**	,624**	,291**	,454**	,497**

$* p \leq .05 \;\; ** p \leq .01 \;\; *** p \leq .001$
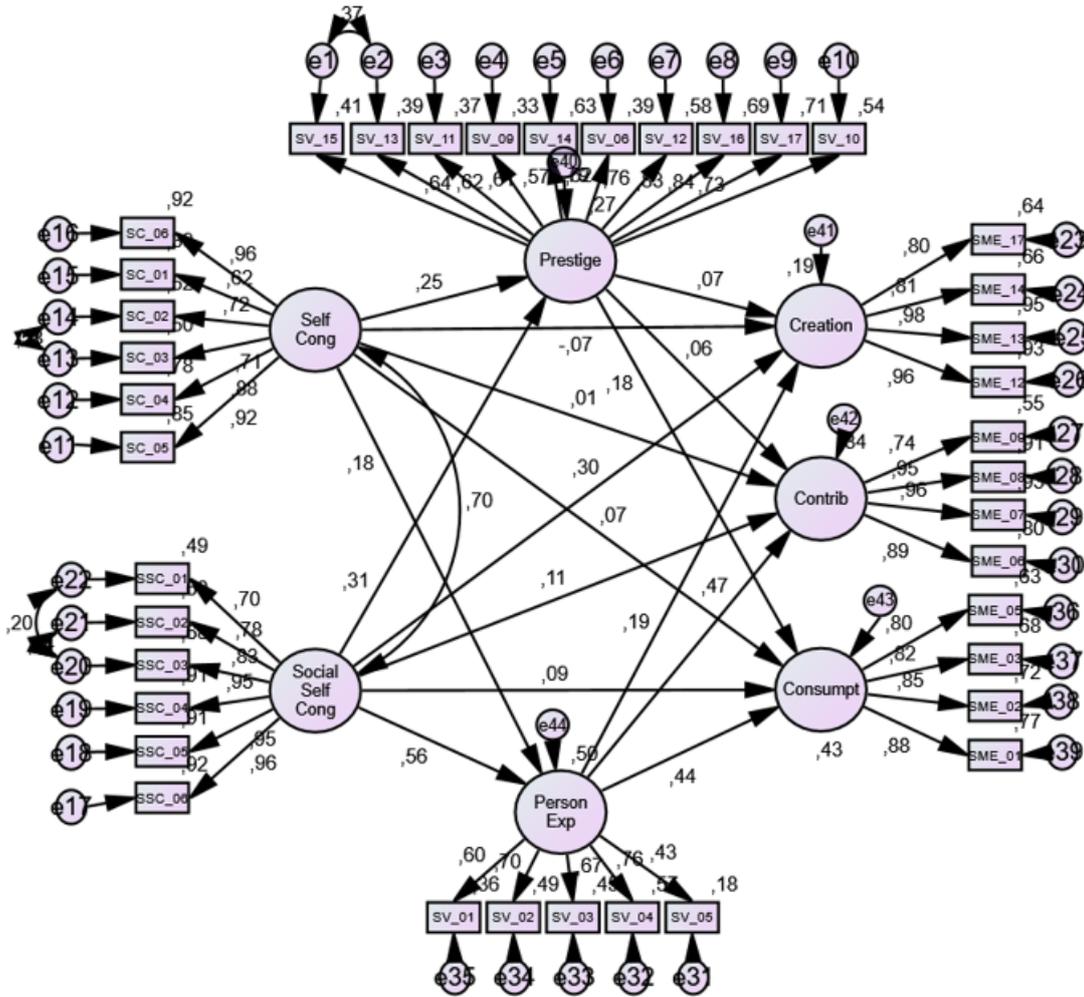
Figure 4.2 - Causal Model

Table 4.9 - Regression Weights and Standardized Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	Standardize	P
SelfCong	--->	Prestige	,153	,046	,252	***
SelfCong	--->	PersonExp	,071	,029	,184	,014*
SocialSelfCong	--->	Prestige	,174	,043	,309	***
SocialSelfCong	--->	PersonExp	,203	,036	,564	***
SelfCong	--->	Creation	-,065	,073	-,070	,372
PersonExp	--->	Consumpt	1,196	,270	,440	***
PersonExp	--->	Contrib	1,102	,245	,466	***
PersonExp	--->	Creation	,456	,217	,189	,036*
Prestige	--->	Contrib	,094	,088	,063	,286
Prestige	--->	Consumpt	,313	,102	,181	,002**
Prestige	--->	Creation	,103	,096	,067	,284
SocialSelfCong	--->	Consumpt	,092	,083	,095	,269
SocialSelfCong	--->	Contrib	,095	,074	,112	,201
SelfCong	--->	Contrib	,010	,067	,011	,883
SelfCong	--->	Consumpt	,077	,076	,074	,307
SocialSelfCong	--->	Creation	,260	,080	,300	,001***

* p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Reformulation of Hypothesis and Hypothesis Testing

Due to the readjustment of the dimensions after the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and its confirmation through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the hypotheses were reformulated. The first four hypothesis were analysed following Table 4.9 - Regression Weights and Standardized Regression Weights, considering the literature of Marôco (2018) and the ranges of r regarded as very weak [.00;.19], weak [.20;.39], moderate [.40;.59], strong [.60;.79] and very strong [.80;1]. Despite these limits, the context of the results should be considered. The significance level was considered as (α) $\leq$ .05.

H1: Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value

H1 a): Self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived destination prestige

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Self-Congruity and Destination Prestige (β = .252, p < .001), is statistically significant, positive and weak. As the coefficient is positive, this means that self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived destination prestige. Thus, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

H1 b): Self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Self-Congruity and Destination Personality Expression (β = .184, p = .014), is statistically significant, positive and weak. As the coefficient is positive, this means that self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

H2: Social Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value

H2 a): Social self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived destination prestige

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Social Self-Congruity and Destination Prestige (β = .309, p < .001), is statistically significant, positive and weak. As the coefficient is

36

positive, this means that social self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived destination prestige. Hence, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

H2 b): Social self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Social Self-Congruity and Destination Personality Expression ($\beta = .564$, $p < .001$), is statistically significant, positive and moderate. As the coefficient is positive, this means that social self-congruity with the destination has positive impact on the tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

H3: Perceived Destination Prestige has positive impact on the Social Media Destination Brand Engagement

H3 a): Perceived destination prestige has positive impact on the consumption of destination brand-related content

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Destination Prestige and Consumption ($\beta = .181$, $p = .002$), is statistically significant, positive and weak. As the coefficient is positive, this means that perceived destination prestige has positive impact on the consumption of destination brand-related content. Thus, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

H3 b): Perceived destination prestige has positive impact on the contribution of destination brand-related content

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Destination Prestige and Contribution ($\beta = .063$, $p = .286$), is not statistically significant. Hence, the formulated hypothesis is rejected.

H3 c): Perceived destination prestige has positive impact on the creation of destination brand-related content

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Destination Prestige and Contribution ($\beta = .067$, $p = .284$), is not statistically significant. Thus, the formulated hypothesis is rejected.

H4: Perceived tourist's Personality Expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the Social Media Destination Brand Engagement

H4 a): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the consumption of destination brand-related content

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Destination Personality Expression and Consumption ($\beta = .440$, $p = .001$), is statistically significant, positive and weak. As the coefficient is positive, this means that perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the consumption of destination brand-related content. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

H4 b): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the contribution of destination brand-related content

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Destination Personality Expression and Contribution ($\beta = .466$, $p = .001$), is statistically significant, positive and weak. As the coefficient is positive, this means that perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the contribution of destination brand-related content. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

H4 c): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the creation of destination brand-related content

The standardized coefficient of the direct effect of Destination Personality Expression and Creation ($\beta = .189$, $p = .036$), is statistically significant, positive and weak. As the coefficient is positive, this means that perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the creation of destination brand-related content. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is confirmed.

Using AMOS 26.0 and aiming to test hypotheses 5 and 6 (Table 4.10 - Indirect Effects), simple mediation analyses were carried out with Social Media Destination Brand Engagement (Consumption, Contribution and Creation) as the dependent variable, Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value (Destination Prestige and Personality Expression) as mediator and the variable Self-Congruity (H5) and Social Self-Congruity (H6) as independent variables.

Table 4.10 - Indirect Effects

	Standardize Estimates	P
Hypothesis 5a	.198	.010
Hypothesis 5b	.107	.004
Hypothesis 5c	.100	.004
Hypothesis 5d	.183	.005
Hypothesis 5e	.168	.006
Hypothesis 5f	.104	.004
Hypothesis 6a	.145	.006
Hypothesis 6b	.091	.005
Hypothesis 6c	.068	.007
Hypothesis 6d	.195	.009
Hypothesis 6e	.167	.010
Hypothesis 6f	.047	.169

H5: Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value mediates the impact of Self-Congruity on Social Media Destination Brand Engagement

H5 a): Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 28% of the total variance of the Consumption variable. The direct effect changes from .44 to .28, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .010). Thus, the results connote a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.
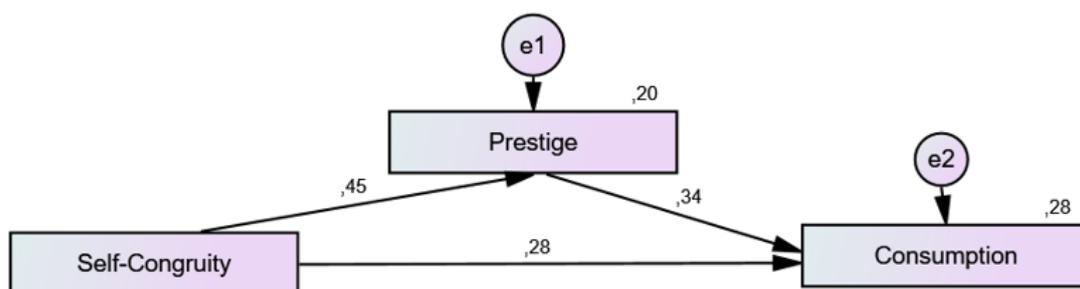
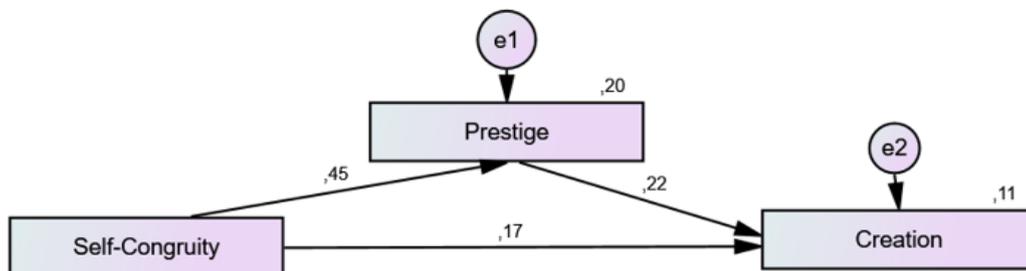*Figure 4.3 - Hypothesis 5 a) Mediation Effect*

H5 b): Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 20% of the total variance of the Contribution variable. The direct effect changes from .39 to .29, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect

is statistically significant (p = .004). Therefore, the results indicate a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.
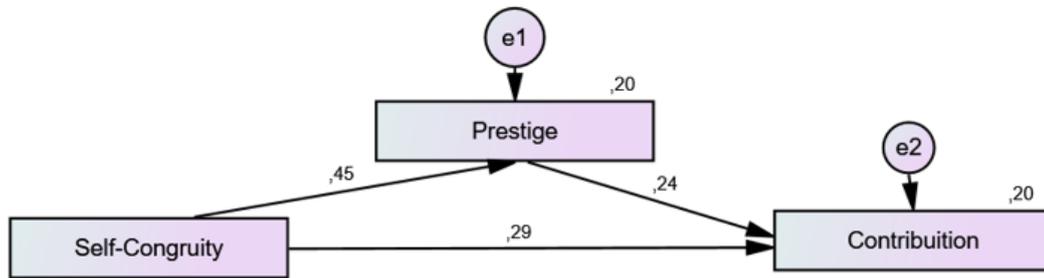
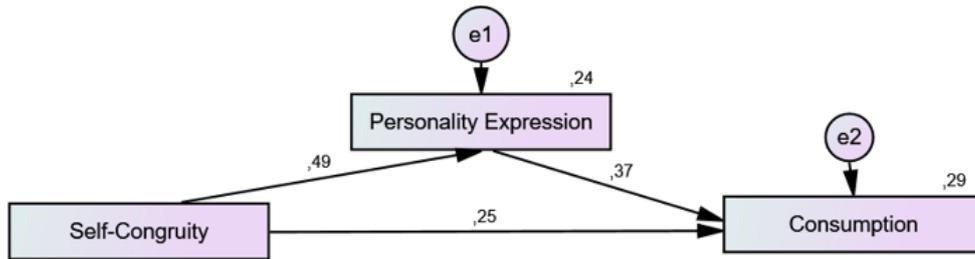*Figure 4.4 - Hypothesis 5 b) Mediation Effect*

H5 c): Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 11% of the total variance of the Creation variable. The direct effect changes from .27 to .17, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .004). Hence, the results demonstrate a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.
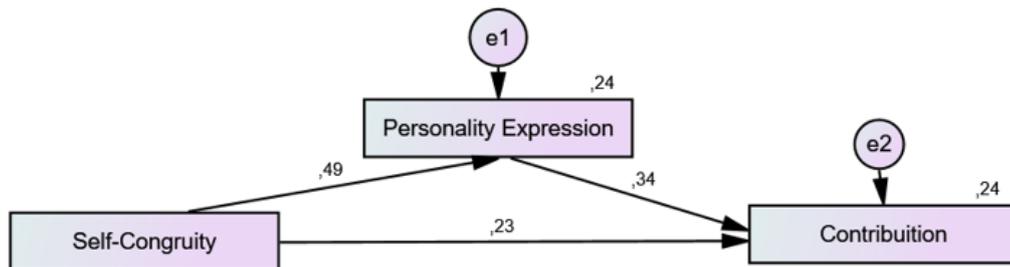

Figure 4.5 - Hypothesis 5 c) Mediation Effect

H5 d): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 29% of the total variance of the Consumption variable. The direct effect changes from .44 to .25, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .005). Therefore, the results indicate a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.
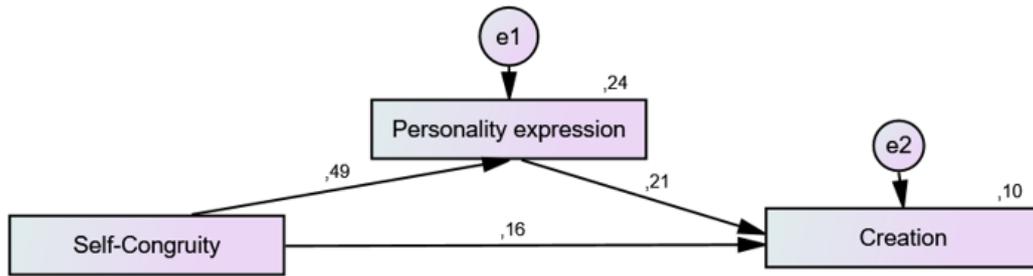
Figure 4.6 - Hypothesis 5 d) Mediation Effect

H5 e): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 24% of the total variance of the Contribution variable. The direct effect changes from .39 to .22, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .006). Thus, the results connote a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.

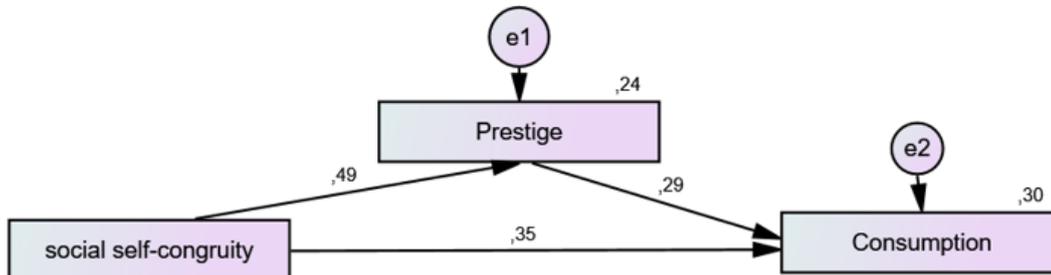*Figure 4.7 - Hypothesis 5 e) Mediation Effect*

H5 f): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 10% of the total variance of the Creation variable. The direct effect changes from .27 to .16, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .004). Hence, the results indicate a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.

Figure 4.8 - Hypothesis 5 f) Mediation Effect

H6: Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value mediates the impact of Social Self-Congruity on Social Media Destination Brand Engagement

H6 a): Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 30% of the total variance of the Consumption variable. The direct effect changes from .46 to .35, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .006). Therefore, the results demonstrate a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.

Figure 4.9 - Hypothesis 6 a) Mediation Effect

H6 b): Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 24% of the total variance of the Contribution variable. The direct effect changes from .46 to .37, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .005). Hence, the results connote a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.
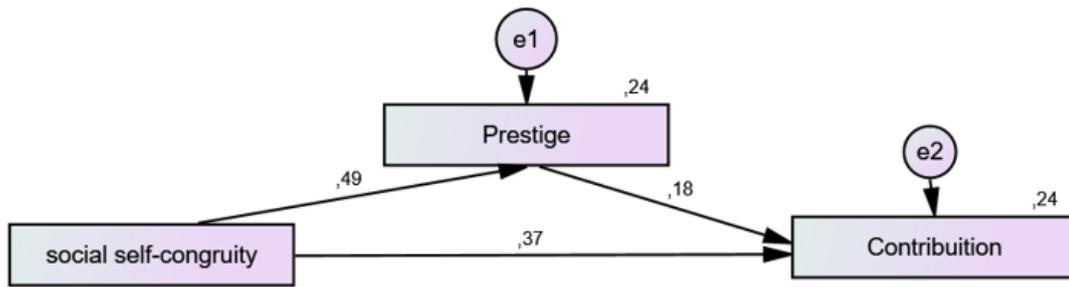
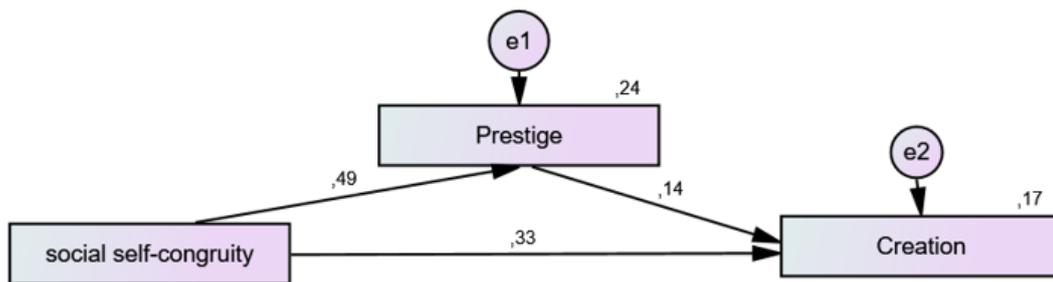*Figure 4.10 - Hypothesis 6 b) Mediation Effect*

H6 c): Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 17% of the total variance of the Creation variable. The direct effect changes from .39 to .33, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .007). Thus, the results indicate a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.

Figure 4.11 - Hypothesis 6 c) Mediation Effect

H6 d): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 30% of the total variance of the Consumption variable. The direct effect changes from .48 to .30, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .009). Therefore, the results connote a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.
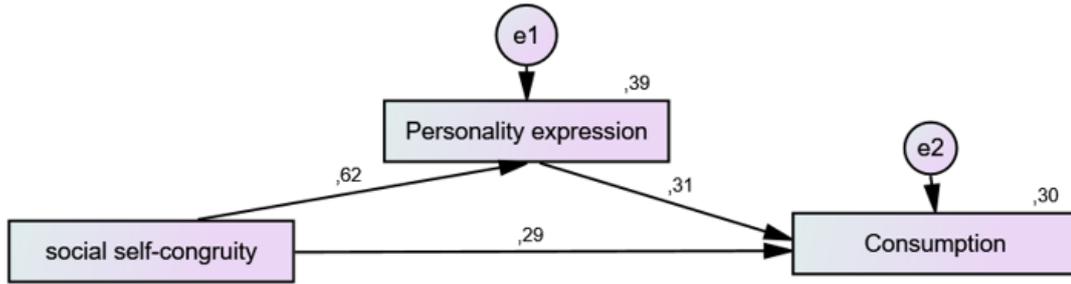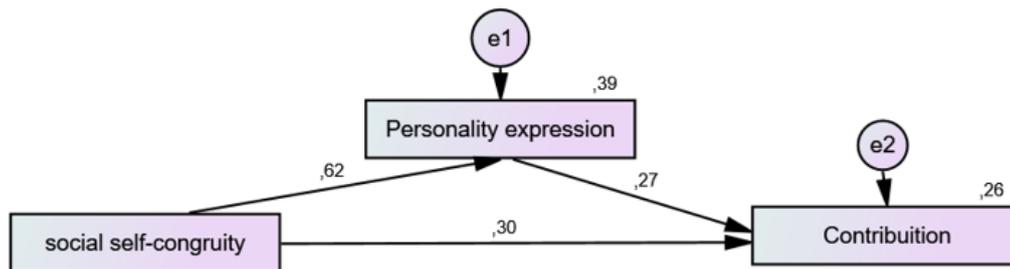
Figure 4.12 - Hypothesis 6 d) Mediation Effect

H6 e): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 26% of the total variance of the Contribution variable. The direct effect changes from .46 to .30, remaining statistically significant, and the indirect effect is statistically significant (p = .010). Therefore, the results demonstrate a partial mediation effect, validating the formulated hypothesis.

Figure 4.13 - Hypothesis 6 e) Mediation Effect

H6 f): Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content

The mediation model explains 16% of the total variance of the Creation variable. The direct effect changes from .39 to .35, remaining statistically significant, but the indirect effect is not statistically significant (p = .169). Hence, the results do not indicate a mediation effect, rejecting the formulated hypothesis.
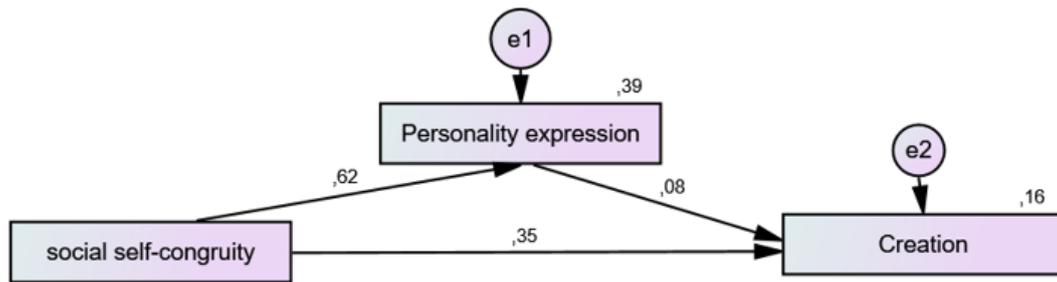
Figure 4.14 - Hypothesis 6 f) Mediation Effect

The following table (Table 4.11 - Hypothesis' Verification) shows a summary of the hypotheses' verification. It can be observed in the table that only two hypotheses were not supported.

Table 4.11 - Hypothesis' Verification

	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	*P*-value	Decision
H1	**Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value**	-	-	-
H1a)	Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived destination prestige	.252	.001	Accepted
H1b)	Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination	.184	.014	Accepted
H2	**Social Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value**	-	-	-
H2a)	Social Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived destination prestige	.309	.001	Accepted
H2b)	Social Self-Congruity with the destination has positive impact on the perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination	.564	.001	Accepted
H3	**Perceived Destination Prestige has positive impact on the Social Media Destination Brand Engagement**	-	-	-
H3a)	Perceived Destination Prestige has positive impact on the consumption of destination brand-related content	.181	.002	Accepted
H3b)	Perceived Destination Prestige has positive impact on the contribution of destination brand-related content	.063	.286	Rejected
H3c)	Perceived Destination Prestige has positive impact on the creation of destination brand-related content	.067	.284	Rejected
H4	**Perceived tourist's Personality Expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the Social Media Destination Brand Engagement**	-	-	-
H4a)	Perceived tourist's Personality Expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the consumption of destination brand-related content	.440	.001	Accepted
H4b)	Perceived tourist's Personality Expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the contribution of destination brand-related content	.466	.001	Accepted
H4c)	Perceived tourist's Personality Expression when visiting a destination has positive impact on the creation of destination brand-related content	.189	.036	Accepted
H5	**Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value mediates the impact of Self-Congruity on Social Media Destination Brand Engagement**	-	-	-
H5a)	Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content	.198	.010	Accepted
H5b)	Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content	.107	.004	Accepted
H5c)	Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content	.100	.004	Accepted
H5d)	Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content	.183	.005	Accepted
H5e)	Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content	.168	.006	Accepted
H5f)	Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content	.104	.004	Accepted
H6	**Perceived Destination Brand Symbolic Value mediates the impact of Social Self-Congruity on Social Media Destination Brand Engagement**	-	-	-
H6a)	Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content	.145	.006	Accepted
H6b)	Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content	.091	.005	Accepted
H6c)	Perceived destination prestige mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content	.068	.007	Accepted
H6d)	Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the consumption of destination brand-related content	.195	.009	Accepted
H6e)	Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the contribution of destination brand-related content	.167	.010	Accepted
H6f)	Perceived tourist's personality expression when visiting a destination mediates the impact of social self-congruity on the creation of destination brand-related content	.047	.169	Rejected

4.2. Discussion

Support was found for hypotheses 1 and 2 (H1 and H2). Self-congruity with the destination has a positive impact on both dimensions of perceived destination brand symbolic value (prestige and personality expression). It was also confirmed that social self-congruity has a positive impact on both dimensions prestige and personality expression of perceived destination brand symbolic value (H2). Examining H2 more closely, it should be highlighted that H2b is the strongest direct effect in the research model, which is interesting because implies the positive impact of a social driver (social self-congruity) on a self-expression dimension of the destination symbolic value. It should also be noted that, in the case of self-congruity and social self-congruity variables, both became one-dimensional and without the separation of actual and ideal. The findings also positively answered the question of whether the self and social symbolisms are distinguished in tourists' minds. It is also possible to understand that the social driver represents a greater weight on the perception of the destination symbolic value (hypothesis 2) than the self-driver (hypothesis 1), meeting the conclusions of Sirgy & Su (2000) and Correia et al. (2016).

When analysing H3, results showed that H3b and H3c were not corroborated. More active interactions, specifically contribution and creation, are not impacted by destination prestige (destination symbolic value). Tourists are not motivated to comment, share, write reviews or post pictures of the destination due to the prestige of the destination itself. Confirmed by H3a, the prestige of a destination only impacts passive interactions with destination brand-related content, that is to say, it only impacts consumption, such as reading posts, watching videos or following pages about the destination. In the case of hypothesis 4 (H4), all H4a, H4b and H4c were validated. Personality expression (destination symbolic value) has positive impact on all the three dimensions of social media engagement, being consumption and contribution the ones that are more impacted by personality expression. The personality expression dimension is translated into the capacity of the destination to express the tourists' personality when visiting it.

Except for hypothesis 6f which was rejected, the results supported that all the mediating effects are significant, yet partial (hypotheses 5 and 6 - H5 and H6). Playing a partial effect means that the destination brand symbolic value explains some, but not all, the impact of self-congruity and social self-congruity with the destination on social media destination brand engagement. The essence of social exchange theory suggest that consumers will more easily invest resources in engagement with a certain brand when they are in-turn receiving value for

that interaction, whether it is tangible or intangible value like status or affiliation (Harrigan et al., 2018). That is reinforced by this study, especially with the validation of hypothesis H6a, H6b and H6c. Social media engagement is fostered by symbolic drivers and symbolic meanings.

CHAPTER 5 - Conclusion

In hyper-competitive tourism industry, destinations brands are struggling to differentiate themselves. Being creative about building and strengthening destination value and tourist engagement might empower Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) to be more effective, profitable and encourage them to invest on unexplored opportunities. Knowing deeply that value and the relevance of engagement allow managers to readapt the value, shape it and optically implement it. The pandemic context reinforced the importance of branding tourist destinations and, consequently, strategic analysis and positioning. The exercise of destination branding gives a guidance to different players (both public and private) in the tourism industry, enabling to clarify return on investment and consequently new investment priorities.

Effective management of the variables covered in this research could help various destinations to position themselves on the global playing field. Positive outcomes must be expected when there is a reinforcement of destination symbolic value and tourists' engagement. These benefits are translated in terms of competitiveness, internationalisation, job creation, innovation, and economic development in general for the city, region or country (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020).

As previous research (e.g., Boley et al., 2018; Ekinci et al., 2013) this study supports the importance of promoting beyond functional, physical and even experiential features of a destination by giving special attention to symbolic attributes. Elliott (1994) highlighted the importance of exploring the symbolic nature of brands aiming to better understand the complexity of their meaning to consumers. Following this perception, it is easily recognisable the relevance of analysing and interpreting destination brand symbolism, learning how complex is the meaning of the destinations to tourists. It should also be noted that consumers play different social roles. Therefore, a destination can have symbolic value for the consumer as a tourist and not have symbolic value for the consumer as a worker. That is why it is important to study the symbolic consumption of destination brands for a specific target or social role.

As opposed to functional values that could be physically expressed, symbolic values and meanings are intangible. The symbolic benefits are acquired only "when the receiving person or group understands and shares the same meanings as the person who gives it" (Tan et al., 2003, p. 211). As such, symbolic values are derived both through the social context where individuals agree on shared meanings of certain symbols, and through the development of individual symbolic interpretations of their own. While Park et al. (1986) defended brands could not present themselves as functional and symbolic at the same time because consumers would

not clearly link the brand to either functional or symbolic needs, Bhat & Reddy (1998) supported the possibility of positioning a brand with both functional and symbolic meanings.

In any case, there is a tourist destination for every personality type. "Whether you're a traditionalist or a dreamer, there's a vacation or journey that suits you the best" (Huffpost, 2017, para. 1) and therefore, marketers and tourism organisations will always be able to find a positioning and a target that fit and bring good results. One need only consider the motivations of different natures, namely the symbolic ones that are often not sufficiently explored. It is important that DMOs and NTOs identify accurate opportunities to position destinations as playing an impactful role in the symbolic project of the tourists' self and social self.

The presence of destination brands on social media is progressively turning into a complex phenomenon in which its image and (perceived) value are co-created through interactions and relationships among all stakeholders, including tourists (Schivinski et al., 2020). Consumer behaviour concerning brand-related content is multiple, like consumption, contribution and creation of content, and it is placed at the heart of the effectiveness of social media as a marketing instrument (Schivinski et al., 2019). "Engagement is a never-ending process" (Khan et al., 2020, p. 333), which is in constant evolution. For this reason, its research is essential, as well as the reassessment of its weight in marketing strategies.

As seen by the research, results, and subsequent discussion, Destination Marketing Organisations and National Tourism Organisations are more likely to secure social media engagement if they can successfully position their destinations as coherent with the self-concept and social self-concept of their target audience. This impact is partially due to the strengthening of the perception of destination symbolic value. Hence, it is essential to consider the symbolic nature of destinations to better understand tourist behaviour and to allow their differentiation in the hyper-competitive tourism industry.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study complements the research of Luna-Cortés (2017) and Luna-Cortés et al. (2019a, 2019b) in the tourism context about the relation of symbolic drivers (both self and social), perceived symbolic value and the use of social media, its intensity and purpose. From a theoretical perspective of the tourism context, this research reinforces the validity of branding tourist destination and applying symbolism to its approach. Symbolic meanings have been continuously building a basis for positioning and differentiation of destination brands (Tan et al., 2003). If the destination brand is committed to serving as a symbolic means, it must enable

the tourist to achieve social recognition and self-expression when visiting the destination. This study allowed to simultaneous investigate both self and social components of symbolic drivers and destination symbolic perceived value, while most research tends to focus on just one of these components (e.g., R. Chen et al., 2020; Moran et al., 2018; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

Ensuring consistency between tourists' self and social image, destination image and tourist value perceptions of that particular destination is, then, a key objective in effective destination brand management. This will impact the tourist's interaction with destination-related on social media. The measurement of COBRAs through CEBSC scale is recent and this research expands the study of its application, being a pioneer to apply it to destination branding and to the symbolic nature of tourism.

5.2. Managerial Implications

The difference of the impact of self-congruity and social self-congruity, demonstrated by the results, can be dissipated if destination managers seek strategies that strengthen the perception of travellers regarding destination's personality and their own, highlighting the similarity between both personalities. Intending to work on particular personality traits when promoting the destination brand, they need to be well familiar with the personality characteristics of the destination's target group. Aiming to enhance tourists' self and social self-congruity with the destination and to develop sustainable differentiation, it is crucial to build a unique and clear destination image or personality that is desired by its target tourist segments. As a consequence, searching for the match between the self or social self of tourists and the destination image will help to increase the perceived symbolic value. Engineering destination symbolism will stimulate the creation of a continuous relationship between tourists and that particular destination (Tan et al., 2003).

It can be concluded that it is not enough to work on the construction of symbolic value, it is also necessary to work on its promotion. This promotion of destination's symbolic value can be developed in a strategic way by DMOs and NTOs, but also in an organic way by the tourists themselves. When tourists consume, contribute and create destination-related content on social media, they are promoting the destination almost without realising it. It is crucial that destination and tourism organisations recognise social media networks as a new opportunity to reach the market, to explore tourists' opinions, reviews, stories, advices and to understand what they consider to be worth sharing and engaging with.

While planning social media strategies, NTOs and DMOs must take into consideration that individuals might prefer social media pages that present content compatible with their perceptions of self and social self, especially if they perceive a strong symbolic value of that destination. Marketers can significantly improve the effectiveness of their social media positioning strategy by assessing tourists' self and social self-congruity with the destination and segmenting their social media audience accordingly to these results. Analysing destination brand's audience may disclose distinct clusters of interactivity requirements (e.g., volume of content, intensity of participation and interactivity like consumption, contribution and creation) which are generated to reach the needs of these segments.

Marketers should outline strategies where these symbolic attributes can be displayed and conveyed in a way that tourists want to express their self and social identities by engaging in social networks. Social media are nurtured by symbolic associations (Boley et al., 2018). The fact that people often want to do what others do (bandwagon effect) and the fact that they see someone engaging with a particular tourist destination on social media, especially through active participation, can make them want to travel to that destination. "Post-purchase engagement could help destinations to (…) attract potential tourists" (Xu et al., 2020, p. 4). Also, Boley et al. (2018) concluded that there is a significant relationship between social return and intention to travel, being social return the anticipated positive social media feedback that a tourist expect to have when sharing their posts about a particular destination. The engagement that a destination has on social networks can influence people who had never thought about traveling to that destination, to take into account the intention to travel. This generates great opportunities for increasing tourism in a certain destination. On the other hand, there is a desire to experience and broadcast what is unique, extraordinary and distinctive from what others usually visit and share (snob effect). Lo and McKercher (2015, p. 110) states "encountering the ordinary (…) rarely induced the desire to take a picture, for it was seen as 'meaningless' or 'nothing special'." A destination is able to maintain higher levels of prices based on the perception of being more distinct, unique, expressive or being a status symbol (Daye, 2010). Destination brand symbolism can entail implications to marketing mix aspects such as price, channel decisions, promotion strategies and respective media selection. Also, it will imply how those elements of branding strategy need to be driven in a way that provide long-term brand strength (Anisimova, 2015). Self-image and social-image benefits challenge marketers in finding an effective combination of destination positioning, namely on social media platforms where social drivers can represent a higher impact, according to the results. The decision of investing on the symbolic value of a destination brand must not be a random or haphazard

choice but, in turn, it should be careful and deliberated. This investment on symbolic attributes through a social media approach must always match the overall strategy of the destination brand. The chosen symbolic meanings that will represent the destination must be consistent with the marketing mix variables of the destination brand. It is important that this choice expresses the needs of the target tourists. An inaccurate decision can result in a negative impact possibly leading to a decline of the destination brand and its image (Tan et al., 2003).

Investing on destination brand engagement, namely on social media, may allow NTOs and DMOs to attract and retain more tourists, "convert browsers to buyers" (So et al., 2016, p. 2) and collect additional insights into their management effects. This investment might result in an encouragement to tourists to become effective advocates and ambassadors for the destination. Less engaged tourists may require more attention from marketers because they tend to be more susceptible to switching their destination choice or preference than committed tourists (So et al., 2014). On the other hand, tourists with a stronger connection with the destination will develop loyalty and increase revisit intention (R. Chen et al., 2020). Engagement usually reveals a degree of commitment to the focal object, in this case with a destination. "Engagement drives relationships beyond transactions" (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020, p. 4). Being pressured by organisations, marketing professionals usually face a major dilemma of how to justify the expenditure and investment on strategies related to consumer engagement (Khan et al., 2020). Representing a valuable instrument for tourism managers, this model enables them to present a measurable justification for future investment in social media engagement. This model can be applied before and after the execution of a marketing strategy that aims to increase or highlight the symbolic value of the destination, making possible to perceive the impact and effectiveness of its implementation on social media engagement. These results can be achieved by surveying tourists of that particular destination. The findings may also support public relations and communication managers in building up powerful commercial strategies, mainly on social media.

COBRAs (and CEBSC scale) occupy a strategic role considering the importance of social media not only on the communication between organisations and tourists, but also on the process of deciding and planning their trips. Taking up the space of traditional sources (such as, mass media advertising or travel agencies) and becoming one of the main sources of information for tourists, social media allows them to collect information about destinations among their online peers. This source conveys more credibility and relevance to tourists given its independency. Consequently, social media has been leveraging co-creating attitudes (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015; Schivinski et al., 2020). The discussion in is no longer only about

controlling channels or messages" (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020, p. 8). Tourists' online behaviours related to a destination are visible to innumerable actual and future tourists of that destination and they contribute to build a certain destination image. Dissemination of these public interactions becomes difficult for managers to control. Conclusions from Huerta-Álvarez et al. (2020) support that organic information sources that are tourist-generated present greater influence and credibility on destination image formation than content created by induced agents (DMOs and NTOs). That is why it is essential to stimulate people to voluntarily engage with destinations, namely by active participation like commenting, writing reviews or posting/creating content. DMOs and NTOs must be aware about the importance of not only outlining strategies that drives tourist-generated social media communication to obtain positive outcomes, but also effectively managing both tourist-generated and organisation-generated communication, finding a balance to have a beneficial impact. DMOs and NTOs need to comprehend how to effectively manage different functions of social media platforms, efficiently marketing the destination and positioning it via social media marketing (Ana & Istudor, 2019; Harrigan et al., 2017; Mistilis et al., 2014).

As Woodside et al. (2007) defended, "storytelling enriches the destination brand's offering and associations with tourist's social identity" (Ekinci et al., 2013, p. 716). Aiming to increase tourists' engagement, social media is an ideal way to build a storytelling strategy, integrating the various social media platforms and making use of their different tools. Storytelling captures the attention of the audience and allows tourists to see their social identity reflected in the image of the destination brand, resulting in a vigilant audience that engages with the content. Celebrity advertising is also usually closely linked to a symbolic approach, allowing interesting outcomes through social networks. Celebrities can reinforce the perceived symbolic value of a destination brand through the promotion in their own social media profile accounts (e.g., Madonna's sharing of content of Comporta and Lisbon on her social networks represented an important promotion for these Portuguese destinations). In the case of Comporta, it clearly became a trendy destination with significant symbolic value, with reinforcement of its sophistication and associated with social status.

Along with these strategies, it is essential to explore the new suite of data analytic tools, resulting from the development of Big Data, which enables to analyse who have recently visited pages about a certain destination, engaged with posts related to it and posted content about it. Also, it is decisive to understand which type of content is presenting a higher engagement on Instagram, Facebook or other travel social networks.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

Despite making several contributions for tourism and destination marketing, this study presents some limitations that can be converted into future research. This scale of symbolic value was chosen for this study because it is quite complete. However, the article from which it was taken is from 1998 and the scale may not be up-to-date and adjusted to the contemporary context. In line with the current moment, where social media plays an important role on the perception of brands and on the spread of them, a new symbolic value's scale or a readapted one can be created, (e.g., including an item about the destination being trendy or not).

Social media have been shaping all the process of pre, during and post trip (So et al., 2015). This study was conducted in a post-trip perspective. Future research can apply this model to a pre-trip context. In other words, respondents should choose a destination where they would like to go or are planning to travel in a future study. It can also be interesting to compare both results. Furthermore, the research model could be applied to the functional nature of destination brands, being self-congruity and social self-congruity replaced by functional drivers and symbolic value by the functional value of the destination. It would be important to understand its impact on social media engagement and it would allow the comparison of symbolic and functional natures weights when predicting social media strategies, highlighting the relevance of taking symbolic drivers into account.

Matzler et al. (2016) defended that the impact of self-congruity with a destination varies between cultures and demonstrated that a tourism context might generate different theoretical implications concerning the influence of national culture. Considering that the sample of this study is composed mostly by respondents from only one country (around 65%), one may consider it as a limitation. In that regard, future studies could include a more diverse sample, or the introduction of a moderating effect of culture or nationality can be included in this model for future studies.

Moreover, and following what was addressed in the discussion chapter about engagement being able to facilitate brand advocacy (So et al., 2016), this construct could possibly be added to this study's model in future research as a consequence of social media engagement. What is more, other suggestion would be adding destination brand loyalty, since brand symbolism has a strong impact on brand loyalty (Anisimova, 2015).

A previous study of Marine-Roig & Clavé (2015) suggested that user-generated content has a major influence on destination branding and destination image. Although the user

generated content does not cover the same actions as the concept of COBRA, it can be interesting to evaluate a possible circular effect of this model.

CHAPTER 6 - References

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Online Questionnaire in English

Welcome and thank you for participating in this survey.

This survey is carried out within the scope of my Master's thesis in Marketing at Iscte-IUL, which consists of a study on tourist destinations. The survey is anonymous, lasts approximately 5 minutes and the information collected will be treated confidentially, for academic purposes only. Please answer as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

If you have any questions about the study, you can contact me through the following email: cmaso@iscte-iul.pt.

Thank you for you collaboration!

Carolina Antunes

Take a moment to think about the last destination/place where you travelled to as a tourist by any means of transportation - car, plane, train, motorcycle, boat, etc. The destination/place may be a country, a region, a city (e.g. Italy, USA, Thailand, Douro, Algarve, Asturias, Paris, Seville, Dublin...). That destination/place will be Destination X.
Please consider Destination X when answering all the questions in this survey,

Please indicate which is your Destination X (the destination you thought about):

_____

Regarding the image/personality you have of Destination X, indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements from 1 to 7, being 1 "completely disagree" and 7 "completely agree".

	1- Completely disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Completely agree
The image of destination X is consistent with how I actually see myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am quite similar to the personality of destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The personality of destination X is consistent with how I actually see myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

68

Please keep considering the image/personality you have of Destination X and indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements from 1 to 7, being 1 "completely disagree" and 7 "completely agree".

	1- Completely disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Completely agree
The image of destination X is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to be perceived as similar to the personality of destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The personality of destination X is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Having destination X in mind, indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements from 1 to 7, being 1 "completely disagree" and 7 "completely agree".

	1- Completely disagree	2	3	4		6	7 - Completely agree
People travel to destination X as a way of expressing their personality.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Destination X is for people who want the best things in life.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Destination X traveller stands out in a crowd.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Travelling to destination X says something about the kind of person you are.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Think about the characteristics of destination X and evaluate them, i.e. Destination X is...

Symbolic

○ 1 - not at all

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - symbolic / iconic

Prestigious

○ 1 - not at all

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - prestigious

Exciting

- ○ 1 - not at all
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - exciting

Status symbol

- ○ 1 - not at all
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - status symbol

Distinctive

  ○ 1 - conventional

  ○ 2

  ○ 3

  ○ 4

  ○ 5

  ○ 6

  ○ 7 - distinctive

Think about the characteristics of destination X <u>travellers</u> and evaluate them, i.e. Destination X <u>traveller</u> is...

Sophisticated

  ○ 1 - simple

  ○ 2

  ○ 3

  ○ 4

  ○ 5

  ○ 6

  ○ 7 - sophisticated

Romantic

- ○ 1 - not at all
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - very romantic

Successful

- ○ 1 - not at all
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - very successful

Unique

- ○ 1 - ordinary
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - unique

Stylish

- ○ 1 - plain
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - stylish

Expressive

○ 1 - subdued

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - expressive

Glamorous

○ 1 - sedate

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - glamorous

Elegant

    ○ 1 - not at all

    ○ 2

    ○ 3

    ○ 4

    ○ 5

    ○ 6

    ○ 7 - very elegant

Please consider the image/personality you have of Destination X and indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements from 1 to 7, being 1 "completely disagree" and 7 "completely agree".

	1- Completely disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Completely agree
The <u>image</u> of destination X is consistent with <u>how I believe others see me</u>.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The <u>personality</u> of destination X reflects <u>the type of person others think I am</u>.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The <u>personality</u> of destination X is similar to <u>how others view me</u>.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please keep considering the image/personality you have of Destination X and indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements from 1 to 7, being 1 "completely disagree" and 7 "completely agree".

	1-Completely disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7-Completely agree
The image of destination X is consistent with how I would like others to see me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The personality of destination X reflects the type of person I want others to think I am.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The personality of destination X is similar to how I want others to view me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Regarding destination X and your use of social media, how often do you do the following activities, being 1 "never" and 7 "very often"?

	1- never	2	3	4	5	6	7 - very often
I read posts related to destination X on social media.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I read fan page(s) related to destination X on social network sites.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I watch pictures/graphics related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I follow blogs related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I follow destination X on social network sites.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Regarding destination X and your use of social media, how often do you do the following activities, being 1 "never" and 7 "very often"?

	1- never	2	3	4	5	6	7 - very often
I comment on videos related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I comment on posts related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I comment on pictures/graphics related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share destination X related posts.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I "Like" pictures/graphics related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I "Like" posts related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Regarding destination X and your use of social media, how often do you do the following activities, being 1 "never" and 7 "very often"?

	1- never	2	3	4	5	6	7 - very often
I initiate posts related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I initiate posts related to destination X on social network sites.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I post pictures/graphics related to destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I write reviews related to destination X posts.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I write posts related to destination X on forums.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I post videos that show destination X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Age

○ < 18

○ 18 - 29

○ 30 - 39

○ 40 - 49

○ 50 - 55

○ > 55

Nationality

○ Portuguese

○ European

○ Non-European

Gender

○ Female

○ Male

○ Other

Education Level

○ High School or under

○ Professional Degree

○ Bachelor's Degree

○ Postgraduate Degree

○ Master's Degree

○ Doctoral Degree (PhD)

Professional Situation

○ Student

○ Student-Worker

○ Unemployed

○ Employed/Self-Employed

○ Other

How often do you travel? (Please do not consider the pandemic context)

- ○ 1 time per year

- ○ 2-3 times per year

- ○ 4-5 times per year

- ○ More than 5 times per year

How often do you use social media networks?

	I don't have an account	I rarely use it	I occasionally use it	I use it every week	I use it every day
Instagram	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	○	○	○
Travel Social Networks (e.g.: TripAdvisor, Travello, Trover, Steller,...)	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix B: Online Questionnaire in Portuguese

Bem-vindo/a e obrigada por participar neste questionário.

Este questionário é realizado no âmbito da minha tese de Mestrado em Marketing no Iscte-IUL, que consiste num estudo sobre destinos turísticos. Este questionário é anónimo, dura aproximadamente 5 minutos e as informações recolhidas serão tratadas de forma confidencial, apenas para fins académicos. Desta forma, peço que responda o mais honestamente possível. Não há respostas certas ou erradas. Caso tenha alguma questão sobre o estudo, pode contactar-me através do seguinte email: cmaso@iscte-iul.pt.

Muito obrigada pela sua colaboração!

Carolina Antunes

Tire um momento para pensar no último destino/lugar para onde viajou como turista através de qualquer meio de transporte - carro, avião, mota, barco, etc. O destino/lugar pode ser um país, uma região, uma cidade (por exemplo, Itália, EUA, Tailândia, Douro, Algarve, Astúrias, Paris, Sevilha, Dublin...). Esse destino/lugar será o Destino X.
Por favor, considere o Destino X ao responder a todas as perguntas deste questionário.

Por favor, indique qual é o Destino X que escolheu:

_____

Relativamente à imagem/personalidade que tem do Destino X, indique em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações de 1 a 7, sendo 1 "discordo totalmente" e 7 "concordo totalmente".

	1- Discordo totalmente	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Concordo totalmente
A <u>imagem</u> do destino X é consistente com <u>a forma como eu realmente me vejo</u>.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<u>Tenho uma personalidade semelhante</u> à do destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A <u>personalidade</u> do destino X é consistente com <u>a forma como eu realmente me vejo</u>.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Por favor, continue a considerar a imagem/personalidade que tem do Destino X e indique em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações de 1 a 7, sendo 1 "discordo totalmente" e 7 "concordo totalmente".

	1- Discordo totalmente	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Concordo totalmente
A imagem do destino X é consistente com a forma como eu gostaria de me ver.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gostaria que a minha personalidade fosse reconhecida como semelhante à do destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A personalidade do destino X é consistente com a forma como eu gostaria de me ver.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Tendo em mente o destino X, indique em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações de 1 a 7, sendo 1 "discordo totalmente" e 7 "concordo totalmente".

	1- Discordo totalmente	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Concordo totalmente
As pessoas viajam para o destino X como forma de expressar a sua personalidade.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
O destino X é para pessoas que querem as melhores coisas da vida.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
O turista do destino X destaca-se da generalidade das pessoas.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Viajar para o destino X diz algo sobre o seu tipo de pessoa.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Pense nas características do destino X e avalie-as, ou seja, o Destino X é...

Simbólico

   ○ 1 - nada simbólico / icónico

   ○ 2

   ○ 3

   ○ 4

   ○ 5

   ○ 6

   ○ 7 - simbólico / icónico

Prestigioso

   ○ 1 - nada prestigioso

   ○ 2

   ○ 3

   ○ 4

   ○ 5

   ○ 6

   ○ 7 - prestigioso

Empolgante

○ 1 - nada empolgante

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - empolgante

Simbolo de status

○ 1 - sem *status*

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - símbolo de *status*

Distintivo

○ 1 - convencional

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - distintivo

Pense nas características dos turistas do destino X e avalie-as, ou seja, o turista do Destino X é...

Sofisticado

○ 1 - simples

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - sofisticado

Romântico

○ 1 - nada romântico

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - muito romântico

Bem-sucedido

○ 1 - nada bem-sucedido

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7 - muito bem-sucedido

92

Único

- ○ 1 - comum
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - único

Com Estilo

- ○ 1 - básico
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - com estilo

Expressivo

  ◯ 1 - contido

  ◯ 2

  ◯ 3

  ◯ 4

  ◯ 5

  ◯ 6

  ◯ 7 - expressivo

Glamoroso

  ◯ 1 - discreto

  ◯ 2

  ◯ 3

  ◯ 4

  ◯ 5

  ◯ 6

  ◯ 7 - glamoroso

94

Elegante

- ○ 1 - nada elegante
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 - muito elegante

Por favor, considere a imagem/personalidade que tem do Destino X e indique em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações de 1 a 7, sendo 1 "discordo totalmente" e 7 "concordo totalmente".

	1- Discordo totalmente	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Concordo totalmente
A imagem do destino X é consistente com a forma como acredito que os outros me vêem.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A personalidade do destino X reflete o tipo de pessoa que os outros pensam que eu sou.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A personalidade do destino X é semelhante à forma como os outros me vêem.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Por favor, continue a considerar a imagem/personalidade que tem do Destino X e indique em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações de 1 a 7, sendo 1 "discordo totalmente" e 7 "concordo totalmente".

	1- Discordo totalmente	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Concordo totalmente
A imagem do destino X é consistente com a forma como gostaria que os outros me vissem.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A personalidade do destino X reflete o tipo de pessoa que quero que os outros pensem que sou.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A personalidade do destino X é semelhante à forma como quero que os outros me vejam.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Considerando o destino X e a sua utilização das redes sociais, com que frequência realiza as seguintes atividades, sendo 1 "nunca" e 7 "muito frequentemente"?

	1- nunca	2	3	4	5	6	7 - muito frequentemente
Eu leio publicações relacionadas com o destino X nas redes sociais.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu leio páginas de fãs relacionadas com o destino X nas redes sociais.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu vejo fotografias/gráficos relacionados com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu sigo blogs relacionados com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu sigo o destino X nas redes sociais.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Considerando o destino X e a sua utilização das redes sociais, com que frequência realiza as seguintes atividades, sendo 1 "nunca" e 7 "muito frequentemente"?

	1- nunca	2	3	4	5	6	7 - muito frequentemente
Eu comento vídeos relacionados com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu comento publicações relacionadas com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu comento fotografias/gráficos relacionados com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu partilho publicações relacionadas com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu "Gosto" de fotografias/gráficos relacionados com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu "Gosto" de publicações relacionadas com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Considerando o destino X e a sua utilização das redes sociais, com que frequência realiza as seguintes atividades, sendo 1 "nunca" e 7 "muito frequentemente"?

	1- nunca	2	3	4	5	6	7 - muito frequentemente
Eu crio publicações relacionadas com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu crio publicações relacionadas com o destino X em redes sociais.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu publico fotografias/gráficos relacionados com o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu escrevo críticas relacionadas aos posts de destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu escrevo publicações relacionadas ao destino X em fóruns.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu publico vídeos que mostram o destino X.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Idade

○ < 18

○ 18 - 29

○ 30 - 39

○ 40 - 49

○ 50 - 55

○ > 55

Nacionalidade

○ Portuguesa

○ Europeia

○ Não-Europeia

Género

○ Feminino

○ Masculino

○ Outro

Nível de educação

○ Ensino Secundário ou Inferior

○ Curso Técnico Superior Profissional

○ Licenciatura

○ Pós-Graduação

○ Mestrado

○ Doutoramento

Situação Profissional

○ Estudante

○ Estudante-Trabalhador

○ Desempregado

○ Empregado por Conta de Outrém / Empregado por Conta Própria

○ Outro

100

Com que frequência viaja? (Por favor, não considere o contexto da pandemia)

○ 1 vez por ano

○ 2-3 vezes por ano

○ 4-5 vezes por ano

○ Mais de 5 vezes por ano

Com que frequência utiliza as redes sociais?

	Não tenho conta	Uso raramente	Uso ocasionalmente	Uso todas as semanas	Uso todos os dias
Instagram	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	○	○	○
Redes Socias de Viagens (ex: TripAdvisor, Travello, Trover, Steller,...)	○	○	○	○	○