



ISCTE Business School  
Department of Marketing, Operations, and General Management

## The role of consumer-brand engagement in a digital marketing era

Ricardo Jorge Godinho Bilro

Thesis specially presented for the fulfilment of the degree of  
Doctor in Management, with specialisation in Marketing

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July 2017



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*para a minha filha Margarida,*

*“If I have seen further,  
it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”*

Sir Isaac Newton

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the role of consumer-brand engagement in a digital marketing era. We explore the consumer-brand engagement construct in relation to consumers as the engagement subjects, and brands (i.e., brand/companies) as the engagement objects. Our intention is to contribute to advancing the theoretical knowledge of this subject and to provide useful insights that can be used by practitioners, particularly companies that use interactive platforms to create consumer-brand relationships.

Our research starts with an extensive and systematic literature review, followed by three studies applying different research methodologies. Together, we intend to provide a comprehensive understanding of consumer-brand engagement in the online environment. The first study employs a quantitative research methodology through two focus groups, one generalist regarding the subject, and the second focusing on the TripAdvisor Brand. The second study adopts a quantitative research method based on self-administered questionnaires, through validated scales, and focuses on the Booking brand. The third study employs a text-mining methodology focusing on the Yelp brand, using the ‘MeaningCloud’ text-mining tool, and with a sentiment analysis component.

Based on our findings, we can highlight several theoretical contributions. We argue that engagement is a multidimensional construct, with several dimensions operating towards brand advocacy. We found that information/content emerges as the most important stimuli of web experience for online engagement, followed by interactive features. We claim that brand advocacy is an outcome of online engagement and that engagement acts as a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy. We also claim that affection and activation dimensions act as mediators between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy. We propose that positive sentiments towards the brand, and the perceived knowledge of the value of their opinion, lead consumers to contribute with their referential endeavour to advocate a brand.

We also suggest several managerial implications. We encourage marketers and managers to take full advantage of social media platforms, considering how the diverse set of experiences enhance consumer engagement, how to build positive-oriented activities and positive content generation towards the brand, how to involve consumers in the co-creational process (i.e., new, or existing, products and services), the need to reflect on how to manage negative consumer

engagement, and suggest that managers should also pay close attention to consumers' engagement in relationships with other competing brands.

**Keywords:** Consumer-brand engagement; brand advocacy; stimuli of experience; emotions;

**JEL:** M31 and L86

## **Resumo**

O objetivo desta tese é o de compreender o papel do compromisso entre o consumidor e a marca nesta nova era de marketing digital. Exploramos nesse sentido o constructo do compromisso entre o consumidor e a marca, sendo o consumidor o sujeito do compromisso e a marca (isto é, marcas ou empresas) o objeto desse compromisso. É nosso objetivo contribuir para o avanço teórico do conhecimento sobre esta área do saber, bem como fornecer novos conhecimentos que possam ser úteis e utilizados pelos gestores nas empresas, nomeadamente no que diz respeito a empresas que utilizem plataformas interativas para criar relacionamentos entre os consumidores e as marcas.

A nossa pesquisa começa com uma extensa e sistemática revisão da literatura, seguida de três estudos que aplicam diferentes metodologias de pesquisa. No seu conjunto, pretendemos fornecer uma compreensão abrangente do compromisso entre o consumidor e a marca no ambiente online. O primeiro estudo utiliza uma metodologia de pesquisa quantitativa através de dois ‘focus group’, um primeiro generalista em relação a este assunto e um segundo que incide sobre a Marca ‘TripAdvisor’. O segundo estudo utiliza um método de pesquisa quantitativo baseado em questionários online, construído através de escalas validadas, e cujo foco é a marca ‘Booking’. O terceiro estudo utiliza uma metodologia de mineração de texto, com base na marca ‘Yelp’, utiliza a ferramenta de mineração de texto "MeaningCloud" e apresenta uma componente de análise de sentimentos.

Com base nos nossos resultados podemos avançar com várias contribuições teóricas. Defendemos que o compromisso (entendido como ‘engagement’) é um constructo multidimensional, com várias dimensões que atuam na defesa da marca. Propomos que a informação / conteúdo emerge como o estímulo mais importantes da experiência web para o compromisso on-line, seguido pelos estímulos dos recursos interativos. Afirmamos que a defesa da marca é um resultado do compromisso on-line, e que esse ato de compromisso atua como mediador entre os estímulos de experiência e a defesa da marca. Também afirmamos que as dimensões de afeição e de ativação atuam como mediadores entre os estímulos de experiência e a defesa da marca. Propomos ainda que os sentimentos positivos em relação à marca e o conhecimento do consumidor sobre o valor da sua opinião levam a que os consumidores contribuam com a criação de recomendações (ou comentários e opiniões) na defesa da marca.



Também sugerimos várias implicações para a gestão. Encorajamos os profissionais de marketing e os gestores a aproveitarem adequadamente as plataformas de redes sociais, considerando que o conjunto diversificado de experiências do consumidor aumenta o compromisso do consumidor em relação às marcas. Encorajamos ainda estes a desenvolver atividades positivas e de geração positiva de conteúdo em torno da marca, a envolver os consumidores no processo de co-criação (quer seja para produtos ou serviços novos ou já existentes), a refletirem sobre como gerir o compromisso negativo do consumidor, e também a prestarem grande atenção ao compromisso que os consumidores geram nas relações com outras marcas concorrentes.

**Palavras-chave:** compromisso entre o consumidor e a marca; defesa da marca; estímulos da experiência; emoções;

**JEL:** M31 e L86

## **Acknowledgments**

This thesis is a very important milestone for me. However, this is not an individual journey, it is the cumulative work of many people who have contributed to my life and to my Ph.D. adventure. I am truly grateful to all who have become a part of this incredible journey. If I am here today, I owe it to many people.

I am most grateful to my supervisor Professor Sandra Loureiro, for all the guidance, encouragement, work, and friendship. I cannot emphasize enough my deep gratitude for her role and support over the past years. Her message of encouragement, always with a positive and confident attitude, acted as an enormous incentive for me. This thesis would not exist without her supervision.

Since this has been a long journey, my family have also a crucial importance. I want to express my thanks to my wife, Cidália, and our daughter Margarida, for being my best inspiration in life. I also want to thank my mother and father, always supportive parents, who have taught me about determination and persistence and who deserve more gratitude than I can express here.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues at LLCT, my Ph.D. colleagues and my lecturers, all of whom have been an important source of both social and academic inspiration.



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## List of Abbreviations

APP	Application, developed for mobile devices
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
BESC	Brand Engagement in Self-Concept
CBE	Consumer Brand Engagement
CE	Customer Engagement
CEB	Customer Engagement Behaviour
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEV	Customer Engagement Value
CGM	Consumer-Generated Media
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
EE	Employee Engagement
eWOM	Electronic word-of-mouth
FPs	Fundamental Propositions
FT	Financial Times
NLP	Natural Language Processing techniques
MSI	Marketing Science Institute
S-D Logic	Service-Dominant Logic
SLR	Systematic Literature Review
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WOM	Word-of-mouth



# Chapter 1

## 1. Introduction

If we speak with a CEO of a FT 500 company or with a small business owner, we will find out that both are highly aware that consumers are the lifeblood of their business. They are also aware it is very important to be engaged with them. However, many companies simply do not understand the importance of engagement and insist on foisting their products on their consumers. Successful brands involve their consumers and understand that they want to interact with other consumers, share their experiences and learn something new, which has never been easier thanks to the development of technology.

Academics have also realised the importance of this issue for some time. The Marketing Science Institute (MSI) postulates in its 2014-2016 Research Priorities report, among its top priorities: *“One of the most important tasks in marketing is to create and communicate value to customers to drive their satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability. Any insights in this area have significant implications for the long-term financial health of an organization. It truly is at the heart of what marketing is all about.”* (MSI, 2014: 9).

### 1.1 Relevance of the engagement research field

Both scholars and practitioners have come to realise that more than satisfaction is needed to generate a loyal and profitable consumer (Haverila et al., 2011; Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). In fact, the existing standards for loyal and satisfied customers that create revenue and profit are no longer enough. Companies need to evolve into new frontiers, creating a new level of desirability for their products and/or services and differentiation from competitors, generating a sustainable competitive advantage (Harmeling et al., 2017; Kumar and Pansari, 2016; Leeflang et al., 2014). Therefore, the company mindset has evolved from traditional relationship marketing to engaging the consumer in all possible ways with their focal object (e.g., company/brand) (Brodie et al., 2011), which brings us to the term of engagement.

Nowadays, different meanings for engagement are being proposed and debated in different contexts. From a managerial perspective, engagement sometimes appears labelled as a contract.

In the academic literature, it is sometimes categorised as an organisational activity within internal stakeholders (e.g., Kumar and Pansari, 2016). For the marketing research field, engagement emerges as a consumer activity towards the company/brand and is labelled as consumer engagement (CE) (e.g., Brodie et al., 2011; Kumar et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012).

Both managers and academics recognise the interactive and practical nature of Consumer Engagement (CE). Brodie et al., (2011) define consumer engagement as a psychological state, and many managers also recognize it. Still, managers tend to focus on measurable consumer engagement behaviours related to consumer-brand purchase transactions (van Doorn et al., 2010). In fact, behaviours that go beyond transactions have been revealed as increasingly important (Kumar et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010). We can refer to this type of behaviour as word-of-mouth (WOM), electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), recommendations, reviews, blogging, online reviews, or other consumer-to-consumer interactions (e.g., helping other consumers; being an active brand community member).

In fact, evolving technology and the emergence of web 2.0 and social media channels (Balduş et al., 2015; O'Reilly, 2005) allowed the development of this type of behaviour. These channels became relevant for consumer engagement as they allow a regular and interactive relationship between consumer and brands, and between consumers (peer-to-peer interaction). This gives companies/brands the ability to become more customer-driven (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Schamari and Schaeffers, 2015). Through this digital advent, brands start to take advantage of the new context due to the vast reach of these platforms, the relatively low cost associated with them, and the increasing popularity among consumers. Most brands have created their own corporate social media accounts on different platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, among others) so that they can capitalise their exposure into engaged consumers (Fernandes and Remelhe, 2016; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Malhotra et al., 2013).

## **1.2 Selection of the research field**

As with every innovative research area, consumer engagement is still in its development stage (Graffigna and Gambetti, 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2016). This leads us to different perspectives about the conceptualization of consumer engagement. Several literature streams have been proposed, with both convergent and divergent viewpoints, exploring the construct according to

different perspectives (Brodie et al., 2011; van Doorn et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012). According to most authors, and based on the research developed so far, many questions are still being raised that lead us necessarily to fertile ground for further discussion and research (Grewal et al., 2017; Harmeling et al., 2017; Kannan and Li, 2017; Pansari and Kumar, 2017; Venkatesan, 2017).

When approaching this research, we should bear in mind current efforts to cover consumer engagement. Some efforts are already relevant in the literature, such as the influence that consumer experience produces on purchase behaviours. In this specific advancement of knowledge, the need for metrics, models and tools emerges (Bijmolt et al., 2010). These can be helpful to map the construct, and could be useful for practitioners and academics, for both online and offline environments. In this connection, we can point out some examples of research concerns, such as (i) how environmental features influence in-store shopping behaviours, or (ii) how consumers' interactions, such as online reviews and recommendations, or brand community membership, influence purchase and re-purchase behaviours (e.g., Rose et al., 2012).

We can also highlight that consumer engagement is a multidimensional construct. Moreover, managers and scholars have nowadays increasing access to diverse sources of information and data, related to consumers' interactive experience with the focal object (e.g., company/brand). This information can arise, for instance, from brand communities' interactions mapped through text-mining and sentiment analysis tools. Managers need a more innovative view of consumers, more global and interactive (towards brands, other consumers, other products or services, different media and channels), contrasting the fragmented view that for some time they were provided with. Nowadays, researchers have the opportunity to extend the scientific knowledge on consumer-brand engagement through the latest information and data available.

### **1.3 Conceptual context**

#### **1.3.1 Foundational theory**

As the world evolves in a fast-paced environment, companies and brands are also involved in this surrounding environment, and marketing must steer their focus. In the 1990s, the main goals for companies were to set up positive relationships with consumers and create drivers of

customer satisfaction and loyalty (Berry, 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). In this context, marketing shifts from a transactional-based perspective into a relationship marketing perspective (Fournier, 1998).

Later, marketing science discussed the relationship between consumer satisfaction, loyalty and profitability (Homburg and Giering, 2001; Shankar et al., 2011). Several other debates concerning these subjects have emerged, discussing, for instance, the length of time loyal and satisfied consumers will stay with a specific brand, which can be referred to as consumer lifetime value (Gupta et al., 2006; Jain and Singh, 2002; Venkatesan and Kumar, 2004).

Nevertheless, both practitioners and academics have realised this was not enough to create satisfaction in consumers in order to make them loyal and profitable. International competition leads brands/organisations to achieve something greater: brand attachments and brand value (Taylor et al., 2004; Thomson et al., 2005). Brands need to go further and move the game into a distinct stage of consumer-brand relationship involving desirability, love, distinction and sustainable competitive advantage (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Hennig-Thurau, 2000; Huber et al., 2001; Porter, 2008). In this phase, research has moved to analysis of how relational constructs and dimensions evolve, interact and influence each other (Thomson et al., 2005), and which are the antecedents and consequences that emerge from these relational constructs (Loureiro et al., 2012; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010; Tsai, 2011).

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the consumer-brand relationship is focused on the conceptualization of engagement, creating the necessary space for the emergence of the engagement construct (Calder and Malthouse, 2008; Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010a, 2010b; Kumar et al., 2010; Patterson et al., 2006; Sprott et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2010).

### **1.3.2 Research questions and objectives**

In the literature, we find several appeals to go further in understanding the meaning of engagement. Yet, academics are still debating and arguing about the definition, influence or importance of this construct. In fact, authors have theorised somewhat differently on this matter (Brodie et al., 2011; e.g., van Doorn et al., 2010; Hollebeek et al., 2014).



Some authors refer to consumer engagement as an attempt to distinguish consumer attitudes and behaviours that go beyond purchase behaviours (van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012), while others discuss the consumer role, which is taken to be active, involved and cocreational, as opposed to being a mere recipient of initiatives from firms (Brodie et al. 2011; Gambetti et al. 2016; Hollebeek et al. 2016; Kumar et al. 2010). Some research paths have discussed the interactive consumer experience and co-created value revealing an attitudinal perspective (Brodie et al., 2011). Other authors have highlighted the construct's multidimensional essence, which corresponds to the generic cognitive, emotional and behavioural nature of engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

We initially embrace this research field trying to understand what managers and academics seek to know about this construct. It emerges that both companies and scholars are interested in understanding how diverse experiences, such as emotions, social influences or stimuli of experiences interact in order to create consumer engagement states and consumer-brand relationships. How can companies engage consumers not only to build loyalty or purchase/repurchase intentions, but mainly to create positive non-transactional behaviours towards the brand, such as referral behaviours (e.g., recommendations, reviews), advocacy behaviours (e.g., supporting a brand), interactive behaviours (e.g., brand communities or online forum membership), or cocreational behaviours (e.g., inputs to develop existing or new products/services). Here, a gap is found in the literature: what are the core conceptualizations of engagement (depending or not on the context, for instance, online/offline) and what drives consumer-brand engagement.

Based on the above argumentation, this thesis discusses the following overall research questions:

- What are the core perspectives and conceptualizations of engagement?
- Which are the relevant stimuli of experience that act as antecedents of engagement?
- Is brand advocacy an outcome of online engagement?
- Can engagement act as a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy?
- Which consumer engagement dimensions influence brand advocacy most?
- What drives consumers to contribute with their referential endeavour (e.g., recommendation, reviews) to advocate a focal object (e.g., product/brand) besides its features?

## **1.4 Research structure and originality**

### **1.4.1 Research methods**

To develop the research paths that can help us to answer our research problems, we decided to walk through distinct stages conducting different studies and using distinct, but very specific and concrete methods and procedures. Therefore, the research design of this thesis is divided into four stages, including one systematic literature review and three independent but complementary studies.

In order to get insights from previous authors in the scientific literature on consumer-brand engagement, we conducted a systematic literature review. This process can be defined as a literature review method performed through an automated search, that allows us to collect information and identify, substantiate and conceptualise all key research on the topic under study (Moher et al., 2009). Thus, we intend to congregate information about scientific publications using a systematic process. By using this method, we intend to create an integrative overview of prior research findings and be able to summarise and discuss the literature findings and conclusions in our research field. In addition to the systematic literature review, this thesis presents three studies, using qualitative (focus group), quantitative (self-administered online survey) and text-mining methodologies.

The first study is a qualitative research method, based on two focus groups. The focus group technique is considered ‘group interviewing’, usually used to understand consumers’ attitudes and behaviours (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011), which allows researchers to interview several individuals at the same time on a specific subject to gain insights into their individual opinions (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010; Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Wimmer and Dominick, 2013). With this method, we intend to confirm or refute the preliminary findings obtained in the systematic literature review and gain usable consumer insights that can be applied in the next studies. To do so, we use two distinct focus groups with two distinct samples, so as to gain deeper insights into our research questions: one more general debate, and a second discussion focusing on a specific brand (TripAdvisor).

The second study follows a quantitative research method through self-administered online questionnaires. This type of research, although targeting a sample of respondents, aims to

estimate general population behaviours in a variety of contexts (Bostrom, 1998; Dillman, 2000), and is in line with common research practices in this area (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Malhotra, 2010). In this study, it is our intention to analyse the stimuli provided by/to consumers from a specific brand (Booking.com) that may be drivers of online consumer-brand engagement.

The third study follows a text-mining research method. This is a type of technique that analyses and processes a large amount of unstructured text aiming to extract meaningful information that can be translated into actionable knowledge (Fan et al., 2006). For this study, we use consumers' reviews from a geosocial media platform, YELP.com, aiming to understand what drives consumers to contribute with their review something that goes beyond the features of each focal object (i.e., company/brand). This research should also be able to underline sentimental and emotional drivers of consumer-brand engagement.

With these diverse methodological perspectives, it is our intention to explore different research methods in the same thesis, focusing on one research construct, i.e., consumer-brand engagement in a specific online environment. We also choose to use different online brands (TripAdvisor.com, Booking.com and Yelp.com). The use of assorted brands during different studies is so as not to become attached to a single brand, but at the same time to have focal objects (i.e., brands) with similar types of features.

#### **1.4.2 Value and originality of this thesis**

This thesis presents scientific value and originality, due to the novel character of the subject and the research methods employed.

Concerning the scientific domain under research, the literature has devoted limited attention to the contextual aspects of consumer-brand engagement, specifically concerning their interactive contexts (which is enhanced by the diverse online platforms available). With this thesis, we intend to clarify and advance with new insights into this matter. Furthermore, another distinctive point of this thesis is the inclusion of three different brands in the studies made (TripAdvisor, Booking, Yelp). Although these brands have the same type of consumer (online leisure and travel consumer) and compete in the same sector of activity (leisure, tourism and

hospitality management), they present consumers with distinct characteristics and interactive features.

Regarding the research methods employed, the originality and value of this thesis relate to the use of four distinct procedures to analyse the subject of study. As far as we know, it is the first attempt to combine qualitative research, quantitative research, and text-mining research in one thesis, supported by a systematic literature review. Still regarding the novelty in the methods used, as far as the authors are aware, this is the first attempt to create a text mining dictionary/thesaurus based on pre-validated scales and then developed through an automated thesaurus tool (Wordnet® 2.1, from Princeton University).

### **1.4.3 Thesis structure**

The thesis comprises six chapters, as follows:

The first chapter is devoted to the introduction. In this section, we underline the relevance of the research field and the rationale for the choice of this research subject. The conceptual context is discussed, and the foundational theory highlighted. We then identify the research questions, the purpose and objectives of this research. The thesis structure is described, regarding both the methodological stages and its value and originality. A structural framework is presented.

The second chapter deals with the theoretical background. In this section, we present a background of literature beyond the systematic literature review. Regarding the systematic literature review, the researchers explain the method and the process. The strategy for categorising the best quality papers is addressed, and outcomes are presented in a data extraction form. Conceptual findings from this research stage are discussed.

The third chapter contains the first study. This is a quantitative research, based on two focus groups. The first focus group of eight consumers are questioned about their general opinion regarding consumer relationship towards brands, and engagement, in an online context. The second focus group, also formed of eight consumers, are questioned about their specific opinion about consumer-brand engagement in an online context towards a specific brand (TripAdvisor). In the end, preliminary findings are highlighted.

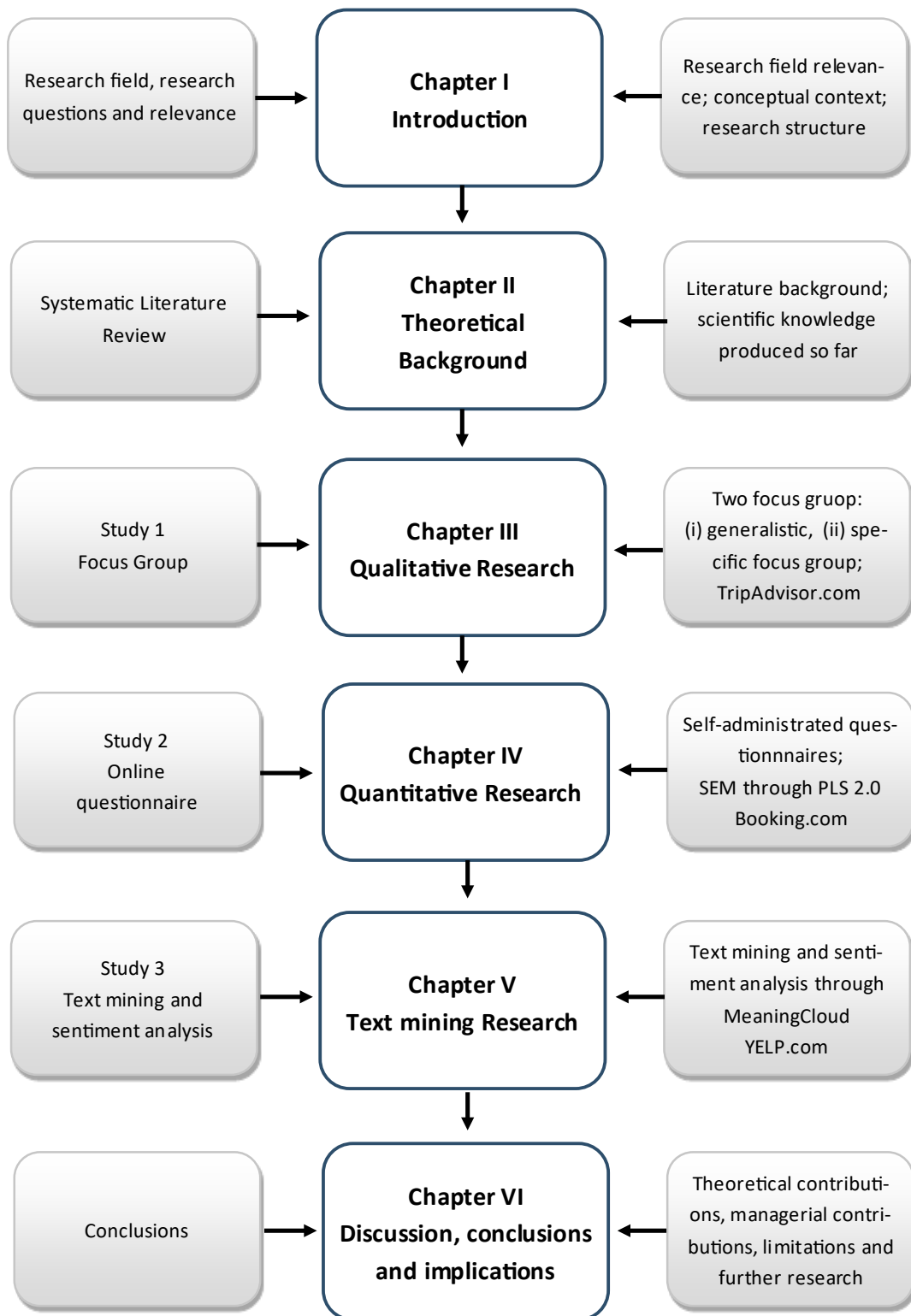
The fourth chapter presents the second study. In this section, we present the quantitative research study of this thesis. We start by presenting a theoretical background specifically related to this study, followed by an explanation of the method used, namely concerning data collection, variables and measurements, and the sample profile. We also underline the data analysis used, a structural equation modelling approach using SmartPLS 2.0. The results and findings are discussed, regarding measurement results, structural results and mediation results. A discussion of the conclusions and implications is presented.

The fifth chapter presents the third study. This study uses text-mining methodology, with a sentiment analysis component. The researchers explain the technique, the text-mining tools available, and the one chosen (MeaningCloud). We also explain the research to be followed, namely the data collection and preparation, the sample, and the creation of a dictionary and thesaurus. The results and findings are discussed, regarding theoretical and managerial implications.

The sixth chapter is devoted to the discussion, conclusions and implications of this thesis. In this section, we debate both the theoretical and the managerial implications, and present the limitations and future research avenues in this field.

The structural framework of this dissertation is presented as follows:

Figure 1 - Structure of the thesis



Source: own elaboration

## **Chapter 2**

### **2. Theoretical background: a systematic literature review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the theoretical background. We start by presenting a preliminary section where we review the literature about previous constructs related to our research field, such as relationship marketing or consumer-brand relationship. Then, we carry out the systematic literature review (SLR) regarding consumer-brand engagement. We explain the methodology and the research stages, present a data extraction form and discuss the conceptual findings from this research methodology.

#### **2.2 Theoretical background**

##### **2.2.1 Relationship Marketing**

Since the last decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, both marketers and scholars have paid increasing attention to how brands connect to consumers and markets. This growing interest results in the emergence of the expression ‘relationship marketing’. In fact, this expression was proposed by Leonard Berry in 1983 (Harker, 1999) and comprises three distinct stages: attract, maintain and improve (Berry, 1983).

Since then, several authors have presented distinct points of view on this subject. Some researchers have identified relationship marketing as a process (Grönroos, 2004), others have highlighted the concept as an organisational value (Sin et al., 2005), or even as a group of interactions and networks (Gummesson, 1994). In their seminal article, Morgan and Hunt (1994) define relationship marketing as the marketing actions aimed to establish, develop and maintain successful relational exchanges. Other innovative research proposes explanatory models that define the relationship between buyer and seller in stages or phases, such as the five-stage model of relationship development comprising awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment, and dissolution (Dwyer et al., 1987).

We can also understand relationship marketing from the perspective of different variables. From a commitment perspective, which appears as a significant and central variable and can be

defined as the desire to support a valuable relationship (Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). From a trust perspective, which is a valuable and important variable regarding relationship marketing, it can be defined as the consumer's perception of credibility, integrity and consumer goodwill (Ganesan, 1994), and an essential characteristic of the consumer relationship (Anderson and Weitz, 1989). From a satisfaction point of view, it can be defined as the consumer's effective and emotional state towards the relationship (Palmatier et al., 2006).

From an industrial marketing point of view, relationship marketing appears as evolving from business-to-business to company/end-user interaction, and crossing the various departments of firms, since different corporate functions join efforts to achieve its success (Bolton et al., 2008; Dwyer et al., 1987; Seijts and Latham, 2003; Swaminathan et al., 2007)

### **2.2.2 Consumer-brand relationship**

We can describe the consumer-brand relationship as a complex environment of relations, expressed through psychological ties that consumers and brands create with each other (Loureiro et al., 2012; Tsai, 2011; Verhoef, 2003). As marketing has moved from the transactional to the relational perspective, marketers realise it is essential to promote consumers' repeat purchase behaviours in order to increase brand loyalty (Gummesson, 1987). Therefore, firms' interest in the relationship between consumer and brands has grown. They aim to understand how consumers relate to brands, why consumers choose one brand in favour of another, and why consumers develop negative feelings and sentiments towards some brands (Ashley et al., 2011; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Fullerton, 2005).

In a seminal article, Fournier (1998) proposes a brand quality model, which emphasises different consumer-brand relationship dimensions, such as love and passion, commitment, self-connection, or judgement and trust in the brand. Other studies arise in this research field, with advancements in the analysis of the causal relation of these dimensions (Thomson et al., 2005), about their antecedents and consequents (Chang and Chieng, 2006; Loureiro et al., 2012; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010; Tsai, 2011), or regarding advances in measuring each dimension (e.g., Batra et al., 2012).

In fact, related to the consumer-brand relationship we can highlight three distinct but essential studies that propose different models. First, the previously mentioned comprehensive approach



by Fournier (1998), which proposes a non-causal relationship among several dimensions. Second, a causal model approach, which claims that the relationship between consumer and brand is influenced by hedonism and self-expression, which leads to a positive effect on brand loyalty and word-of-mouth, and includes two dimensions: (i) inner self, and (ii) social self (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Third, a systematic approach that joins distinct constructs such as brand loyalty, satisfaction and attitude towards a brand (Batra et al., 2012).

Another stream of research can be found in the study by Park et al. (2013), who suggest the attachment–aversion (AA) model of consumer–brand relationships. This model suggests two main constructs: (i) brand attachment - a consumer will be attached and feel close to a brand when the brand is perceived as a means of self-expansion (Park et al., 2013)-, (ii) and brand aversion - a consumer will be averse to the brand and feel distant when considering it a threat of self-contraction (Park et al., 2013). A final note to highlight the research of Schmitt (2012), which proposes that brand experience may be a condition for consumer-brand relationship evolution over time, either by the influence of brand features on consumers or by the consumer's motivational behaviours (Schmitt, 2012).

### **2.2.3 Experience and stimuli of experience**

The literature has studied experience in many different contexts and research fields (e.g., Grewal et al., 2009; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Loureiro, 2010, 2015; Roschk et al., 2017; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), emerging in the consumption and marketing research field from Holbrook and Hirschman's seminal paper from 1982. Concerning consumer experience, the authors described this as a package of sensory memorabilia which engage the consumers' five senses and succeed in delivering a sensory feeling (e.g., Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). The literature highlights that when consumers purchase goods or a service, they pay in order to become associated not only with the tangible features but also with a series of memorable events (Joy and Sherry, 2003; O'Sullivan and Spangler, 1998). Similarly, a company will succeed in offering a product or service if it delivers actions that engage consumers in a memorable way for a lasting period (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

Concerning the online environment, the previous literature has not yet found a standard and commonly accepted method for assessing website features or attributes concerning stimuli of website experience. Consequently, academics choose the stream of research that seems most

appropriate for their study (Ip et al., 2011; Law et al., 2010; Loureiro, 2015). Nevertheless, we can find three core concepts of consumers' stimuli of experience that are more used than others to evaluate websites' features, and that are considered appropriate to assess stimuli of experience: (i) information/content, (ii) interactive features, and (iii) design-visual appeal (Han et al., 2006; Law et al., 2010; Loureiro, 2015).

The information/content dimension can be related to the importance of correct information and content in order to seduce consumers and lead them to be involved. Different studies have pointed out that comprehensiveness, uniqueness, accuracy and entertainment value, as well as up-to-date information/content, will increase consumers' involvement with the shopping experience (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002; Kaynama and Black, 2000). Therefore, we can define the information/content dimension as the extent to which consumers believe the information/contents are useful, updated and reliable (Loureiro, 2015; Park et al., 2007). Consumers who read these contents, and find them useful and up-to-date, can develop gratification during this experience process, which may generate a motivational impulse that engages them (Graffigna and Gambetti, 2015).

Regarding the design-visual appeal dimension, the literature has already underlined the influence between webpage design and aesthetics, and the perceived attractiveness for consumers (Donthu, 2001; Schaik et al., 2005; Shchiglik and Barnes, 2004). Features such as colour combinations, the type and size of fonts, animation, sound effects, and the clarity and readability of texts make a website both visually attractive and user-friendly (Park et al., 2007).

#### **2.2.4 Emotions: pleasure, arousal and dominance**

Previous research has defined emotional states as a “*transitory condition of the organism that can vary substantially, and even rapidly, over the course of the day.*” (Mehrabian, 1996: 1). This condition contrasts with emotional traits - that are stable for long periods of time (e.g., years, lifetime) - and arise with relevance while assessing consumer behaviour towards external stimuli. In fact, environmental stimuli work as a trigger for individuals' perceptions and may originate a variation in the individual emotional state (Sherman et al., 1997).

The literature has conceptualized the emotional state with the concepts of pleasure, arousal and dominance (Mehrabian, 1996; Russell and Mehrabian, 1976). The pleasure concept is defined

by scholars as the affective response to a stimulus, grounded on the degree to which the stimulus empowers individuals to achieve their main goals (Kaltcheva and Weitz, 2006), or the extent to which an individual feels good, happy or fulfilled in a circumstance (Menon and Kahn, 2002).

Concerning the arousal concept, the literature has defined it as the level of incitement caused by a stimulus and is characterised as the degree to which an individual feels excited, alert and active (Menon and Kahn, 2002; Wu et al., 2008). This stimulation is the result of an affective dimension that may range from a person being immobile to being wildly excited (Kaltcheva and Weitz, 2006).

Referring to the dominance concept, academics argue that consumers have a tendency to pursue satisfaction from their desire for dominance in a dyadic relationship (Ward and Barnes, 2001), and have defined dominance as the level of influence and power that individuals can exert over the definition, implementation and final result of a given focal relationship (Van Raaij and Pruyn, 1998).

The literature has also considered that these three concepts have different weights in the influence on individuals' emotional states. Some authors claim that arousal and pleasure explain most of the construct, and that dominance is superfluous (Donovan et al., 1994). Other authors highlight that arousal and pleasure are correlated (Kuppens, 2008), or even that the dominance concept has a direct and positive influence on arousal and pleasure (Hui and Bateson, 1991; Ward and Barnes, 2001). Additionally, diverse research considers that these three concepts influence individuals in an autonomous way (Massara et al., 2010; Menon and Kahn, 2002).

Nevertheless, regarding the online environment, scholars highlight that dominance can be a more critical concept as website navigation may enhance the individual's control and improve their experience (Dailey, 2004; Lunardo and Mbengue, 2009), and that in the case of an online shopping website, dominance can have a direct influence on arousal, which may lead to influencing pleasure (Ho and Lee, 2007).

## **2.3 Systematic literature review - engagement**

### **2.3.1 Purpose of the systematic literature review**

If we intend to study an emergent construct in the marketing field, we know the literature will not be abundant. Even so, to extract meaningful information we must impose a quality benchmark so that we can lay emphasis only on the best research discussing the subject under study. Therefore, we decide to perform a systematic literature review, which allows us to define a clear and objective procedure that could ultimately lead us to a flawless mapping of our research field.

Systematic literature reviews intend to discuss a problem resulting from the enormous amount of research that is produced every year, often with different findings. In fact, it is not always clear what the overall picture is, which results are more reliable, and which should be used as a guide in following decisions, either for future research or for managerial implications. Systematic literature reviews address this problem by identifying, critically evaluating and integrating the findings of all relevant, high-quality studies in the research field under analysis. So, the purpose of this systematic literature review is to develop extensive research that can highlight relevant literature discussing the consumer-brand engagement phenomenon, and from that be able to frame the recent emergent construct.

Specifically, it is our intention to establish and explore the extent to which research has contributed to clarifying the construct, to understand how the main authors outline and define it, as well as to identify the different relationships within the construct and how it is interconnected with the remaining marketing literature. Additionally, we hope to perceive the future avenues of research for this emerging topic. Therefore, in defining the systematic literature review method, several criteria were established in terms of quality, namely assuring that we use only research published in the best journals. We will detail the path that leads us towards this goal in the following sections.

The result is an extensive and systematic review of engagement, consumer engagement and consumer-brand engagement which, hopefully, contributes to the development and improved understandability of this construct. This work is of practical relevance for those who want to

extend their knowledge in this area, by reflecting what has already been accomplished, and also showing future research paths.

The value and originality of this systematic literature review is related to the fact that this is, as far as we know, the first attempt to develop this type of research in this field.

### **2.3.2 Systematic literature review: methodological process**

To carry out this systematic literature review, several electronic databases are used. In these, we apply different research terms to perform the research process. We chose to make these searches through two distinct search aggregators that include the following databases: EBSCOhost (which includes among others, Academic Search Complete and Business Source Complete), Web of Science, ABI/Inform Collection (which includes ABI/Inform Dateline, Global and Trade & Industry) and EconLit. These aggregators also ensure the presence of the main editors, such as Emerald, Elsevier, IEEE, Springer, Sage, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley, among others.

Concerning the choice of terms to be used in the literature search, we define five different expressions to ensure that they cover, as much as possible, all the literature addressing this topic. So, we decide to use “*Customer Brand Engagement*”, “*Consumer Engagement*”, “*Customer Engagement*”, “*Brand Engagement*” and “*Online Engagement*” as search terms. The selection and definition of the terms to be used is of foremost importance.

As proposed by Groeger et al., (2016), the different ‘engagement’ concepts include ‘consumer’ and ‘customer engagement’ (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013), ‘community engagement’ (Algesheimer et al., 2005) and ‘brand engagement in self-concept’ (Sprott et al., 2009). At this stage, we find it useful to distinguish between the expressions ‘Customer’ and ‘Consumer’. As we know, these expressions are often used to mean the same thing (Frain, 1999). In the literature, we can find the engaged subject commonly referred to as the user, customer or consumer (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). In this thesis, we argue that the concepts of consumer engagement and customer engagement may reflect a similar concept, in line with the main authors in this research field (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014). It is therefore important that we gain insights in our research from the literature discussing both terms (Groeger et al., 2016).

One remark about the use of the terms ‘brand’ and ‘online’. The term brand is connected to our research focus, which is linked to the engagement between the consumer, as the subject, and the brand, as the object of this relationship (consumer-brand engagement). Concerning the online term, our research intends to focus on the online environment due to the development that this environment has created in this relationship (Calder et al., 2009).

Regarding quality and credibility assessment we assume as a starting point that our purpose is to use only cutting-edge research, in the best quality papers published in the best journals. To do so, we apply several filters to the database:

- Full-text papers: with this first filter, we intend to ensure that only full-text papers are used;
- Peer-reviewed papers: with this second filter, we aim to confirm that the papers have scientific standards;
- Scholarly journals: with the third filter, we intend to consider only papers published in scientific journals (published by scientific editors).

In order to use only the best quality journals, we have resorted to a selection of quality journals. We used the Journal Quality List – Fifty-seventh edition, 18 April 2016, compiled and edited by Professor Anne-Wil Harzing (Anne-Wil Harzing, 2016). From this list, the researchers select to apply the WIE 2008 Rating - WU Wien Journal Rating May 2008 List. This list includes only A and A+ journals, and from those on that list, we considered only the journals inside the scope of study. This ranking is also very close to ABS 2015 regarding the positions 3, 4 and 4+. Thus, during the methodological process, we keep in mind these two rankings.

Knowing that the topic studied involves several scientific areas, we use all journals in the subject areas of Marketing, General Management and Strategy, and International Business. With this choice, we try to cover different possible areas of study that could address this topic. However, aware that this is an increasingly multidisciplinary field studied by different disciplines, care has been taken to divert from areas of study related to other social science disciplines which are not representative of our scope of interest.

Concerning the period to be examined by the systematic literature review, we must bear in mind that this topic is relatively recent in the marketing literature. Accordingly, we decided to search

for all publications available until 2017. Additionally, we consider it interesting to find out when papers with the searched terms began to appear. Table 1 shows that information.

*Table 1 - Oldest paper in each search, without content validation*

<i>Search terms</i>	<i>Oldest paper</i>
Customer brand engagement	2000
Consumer engagement	1986
Customer engagement	1993
Brand engagement	2002
Online engagement	2009

*Source: own elaboration.*

On reaching this stage, the methodological procedure evolves to content validation. It should be remembered that this research only considers papers written in English or in Portuguese, due to the researchers' linguistic limitations.

The results of each search are now assessed in terms of 'Title Reading'. In this regard, each paper is measured regarding its title with the exclusion of all papers that demonstrably do not address the topic of Engagement. All papers accepted at this stage are moved to the next phase.

Following the procedures of content validation, all papers arriving at this stage are submitted to 'Abstract Reading'. At this point, and once again, each paper is evaluated concerning its scope. The researchers carefully analyse what constructs are dealt with by each paper, what scientific research paths they cover, and their adherence to the scope of study. All papers accepted at this stage go to the next phase.

We reach the last phase of our content analysis, 'Full-Text Reading'. Similar to the previous phases, it is our intention to accept in this systematic literature review all relevant papers addressing the Engagement construct. However, to measure their relevance we choose to apply two questions that each paper should answer, and only papers that respond affirmatively to both can be accepted for the final group in this systematic literature review. Therefore:

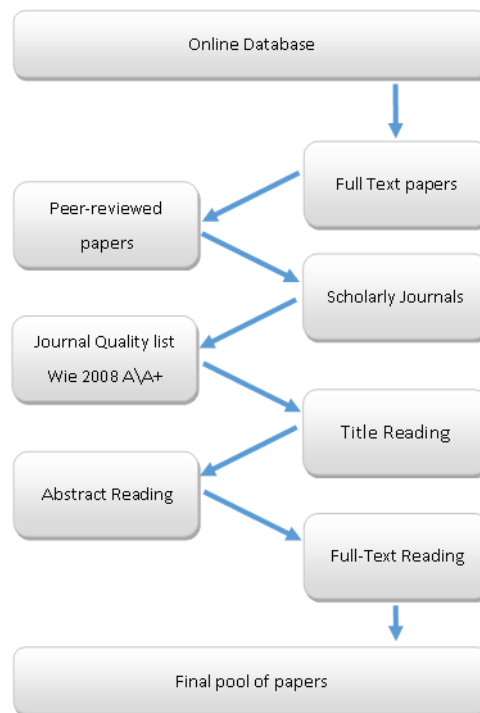
- i. Does the paper address our well-defined scope of study?
- ii. Does the paper under analysis contribute to evolution of the engagement construct (or one of its variations, such as customer engagement, consumer

engagement, brand engagement, customer-brand engagement, or theory of engagement)?

In order to clarify, we exemplify how this is performed. For instance, when assessing the paper “Why customers won’t relate: obstacles to relationship marketing engagement” (Ashley et al., 2011), we concluded that although some engagement dimensions are taken into consideration, this specific paper focuses and contributes to the development of the relationship marketing construct and is therefore not accepted in our final group of papers. On the other hand, when assessing “Narrative-transportation storylines in luxury brand advertising: motivating consumer engagement” (Kim et al., 2016), it is clear that this research addresses luxury brand advertising as a major construct; nonetheless, the engagement construct is well revisited in the study and contributions have been made to its evolution: “*this research advances the theory and practice of luxury brand advertising effectiveness by decoding brand-consumer engagement grounded in narrative transportation*” (Kim et al., 2016: 304).

To better understand the steps that have been taken in this Systematic Literature Review, we present a flow chart of the procedure (Figure 1), as well as a summary table of the methodological procedure (Table 2):

Figure 2 - SLR methodological procedure flow chart



Source: own elaboration



Table 2 presents a summary of the methodological procedure.

*Table 2 - SLR methodological procedure resume*

Criteria	Filters - screening process
Electronic database	- EBSCOhost (includes among others, Academic Search Complete and Business Source Complete); - Web of Science; - ABI/Inform Collection (includes ABI/Inform Dateline, Global and Trade & Industry); - EconLit.
Source type	Scientific papers
Source quality assesement	Full-text papers; peer-reviewed papers; scholarly journals.
General Topic	Engagement
Topic	Customer Engagement Consumer Engagement Brand Engagement Online Engagement Customer-brand Engagement
Research areas	Marketing General Management & Strategy International Business
Year	All
Journal quality assessment	Journal Quality List - Fifty-seventh edition, 18 April 2016; WIE 2008 — WU Wien Journal Rating May 2008 List; A and A+ Journals
Content analysis assessment	Title Reading Abstract Reading Full-text Reading

*Source: Own elaboration*

### **2.3.3 Different term searches for the systematic literature review**

To perform the research process, we employ separate term searches through two distinct search aggregators, which encompass the selected electronic databases. Therefore, we decided to search each of the selected terms “Customer brand engagement”, “Consumer engagement”, “Customer engagement”, “Brand engagement” and “Online engagement” separately in these database aggregators, which leads us to a final set of ten searches of terms. In Table 3 we can see this final set.

Table 3 - SLR Term search identification

Search terms	DB Aggregator 1	DB Aggregator 2
Customer brand engagement	#A	#A1
Consumer engagement	#B	#B1
Customer engagement	#C	#C1
Brand engagement	#D	#D1
Online engagement	#E	#E1

Source: Own elaboration

The results of each of the ten terms searched are presented separately and illustrated in a flow chart. They can also be consulted in the appendix section of this dissertation, from appendix A to appendix J. Figure 3 shows the aggregate outcome of the search strategies, showing the aggregate results of all the screening processes. It should be noted that from the final results before full-text reading, six papers were found to be repeated and therefore withdrawn, thus reaching the final number of sixty-one papers. After the last screening process (full-text reading), a final group of thirty papers emerges.

Figure 3 - SLR aggregated search outcome



Source: Own elaboration

Thereafter, to achieve consistency and reduce subjectivity, the final aggregated result of this systematic literature review is checked and rechecked separately by the authors of this ongoing research, as suggested by the relevant literature in this domain (Moher et al., 2009).

### 2.3.4 Aggregate outcome of the systematic literature review

We employ a rigorous assessment method with the purpose of analysing the selected final papers. A comparative table - data extraction form - is created in Excel to better present the final group of papers, and systematize the main information contained. This process allows us

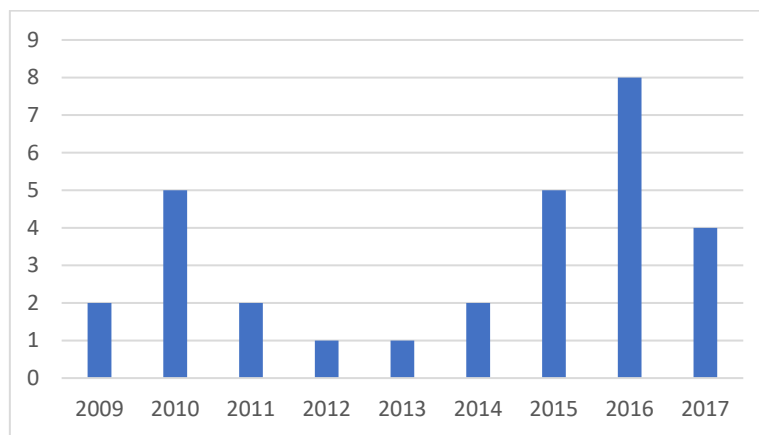
to reach several goals, such as (i) documenting the selected research, (ii) reducing the possibility of human error, (iii) decreasing the use of subjective-driven data selection criteria, (iv) reflecting on the differences and comparing the similarities of the key ideas of each paper in this literature review, and finally (v) being able to support other researchers' work that may be of interest in this research field (Athanasopoulou, 2009).

From the final group of articles in our systematic review of the literature, several findings stand out, providing us with an initial idea of the research path regarding the construction of Engagement.

### **Period of time**

Regarding period of time, and despite some initial literature approaching the engagement topic arising around 2005, we can observe that only from 2009 do we have significant literature addressing this issue (Figure 4).

*Figure 4 - SLR papers published by year*



*Source: Own elaboration*

In fact, between 2009 and 2011 there are several relevant seminal articles discussing this subject. They have contributed to development of the Engagement literature by framing the construct, and by discussing future avenues of research for the construct. After the emergence of these seminal papers, the next couple of years were scarce in scientific production addressing this marketing concern, probably because interested authors were developing their empirical research. From 2014 onwards, several relevant scientific studies start to be published, with this

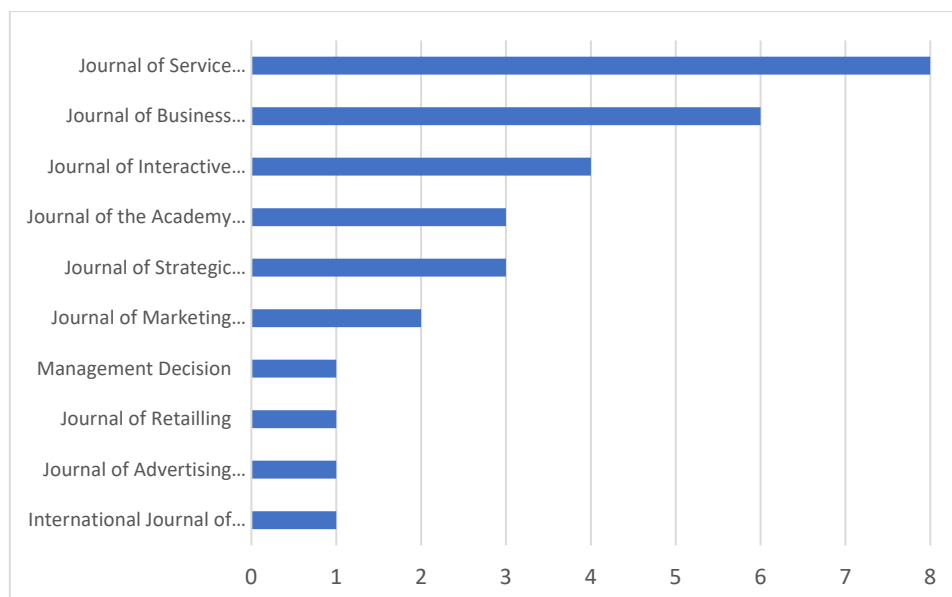
number increasing year by year. It is likely that relevant scientific research published in 2017 will be greater than that in 2016.

## Journals

In this section, we analyse in which journals the relevant scientific research on Engagement is being published. However, we should first remember that we have previously made a choice to consider only A and A+ Journals from the WIE 2008 Rating (WU Wien Journal Rating May 2008 List). This rating is included in the Journal Quality List (Fifty-seventh edition), compiled and edited by Professor Anne-Wil Harzing (Anne-Wil Harzing, 2016), and connected to ABS 2015 list 3, 4, 4+, all from the highlighted field of research. Therefore, the final group of papers has been published in ten different journals, as highlighted in Figure 5.

As we can see, from the final group of papers almost half of them were published in two journals: *Journal of Service Research*, with eight (8) papers, and *Journal of Business Research*, with six (6) papers. To this result, the 2010 *Journal of Service Research* Special Issue entitled “Customer Engagement” (Volume 10, Issue 3) contributed significantly. In fact, some of the most important seminal articles addressing the customer engagement construct were published in this special issue (e.g., Kumar et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010).

*Figure 5 - Major journals that published relevant research*



*Source: Own elaboration*

In the follow-up of these papers published in the *Journal of Service Research* Special Issue on CE, several others were published in this journal in the following years, based on the call for research arising from this special issue. One example is the seminal article “Customer engagement: conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research” (Brodie et al., 2011) published one year later in the same journal. Table 4 shows the number of papers published per journal in each year:

*Table 4 - SLR Journals that published papers by year*

Journal	Year									Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
International Journal of Research in Marketing								1		1
Journal of Advertising Research								1		1
Journal of Business Research		1			1		3	1		6
Journal of Interactive Marketing	1					1	1	1		4
Journal of Marketing Research	1							1		2
Journal of Retailing									1	1
Journal of Service Research		4	1			1	1		1	8
Journal of Strategic Marketing			1					2		3
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science								1	2	3
Management Decision				1						1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>

*Source: Own elaboration*

## Authors

Following our analysis of the systematic literature review results, and bearing in mind that the ‘Engagement’ construct is a relatively new research topic in the marketing area, it seems important to underline which authors stood out in this research area.

Therefore, taking into consideration the final group of papers in our systematic literature review, we can see that although many authors have devoted considerable research time and attention to this topic in recent years, several stand out. Table 5 shows the top authors in our final group of papers.

Regarding universities, several educational institutions stand out with their contribution to authors in our final group of papers. Table 6 shows the most represented universities by number of authors with research in the final group of papers in our systematic literature review.

*Table 5 - SLR top authors by affiliation*

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Number of papers</i>
Linda D. Hollebeek	University of Auckland Business School	6
Roderick J. Brodie	University of Auckland Business School	3
V. Kumar	Georgia State University	3
Ana Ilic	University of Auckland Business School	2
Anita Pansari	Georgia State University	2
Biljana Juric	University of Auckland Business School	2
Peter C. Verhoef	University of Groningen	2

*Source: Own elaboration*

*Table 6 - SLR main universities*

<i>University</i>	<i>Number of Authors</i>
University of Groningen	5
University of Auckland Business School	4
AUT University	3
Babson College	3
Ghent University	3
Northwestern University	3

*Source: Own elaboration*

In terms of authors' country of affiliation, the top five countries are presented (Table 7), with the United States of America standing out in this list.

*Table 7 - Country of affiliation of top authors*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Authors</i>
USA	26
Germany	11
New Zealand	8
The Netherlands	7
UK	6

*Source: Own elaboration*

In Tables 5, 6 and 7 we highlight only the main indicators. A complete list can be found in the appendix section (appendix K) with all the authors by affiliation that have contributed with their research to the final group of papers in this systematic literature review.

## Major dimensions related to the construct

The Engagement construct is studied from different points of view. Many authors present their research revealing distinct engagement dimensions. Even the construct definition itself presents, in the same period, different interpretations according to different authors. To exemplify, we can compare the conceptual findings of Kumar et al., (2010) versus van Doorn et al., (2010).

In our final pool of papers, authors have explored a large number of dimensions related to the consumer engagement construct (e.g., consumer engagement behaviour or customer engagement). Table 8 shows this construct/dimension relationship. In this table we only emphasize those that appear more than once as the base-theory of each study.

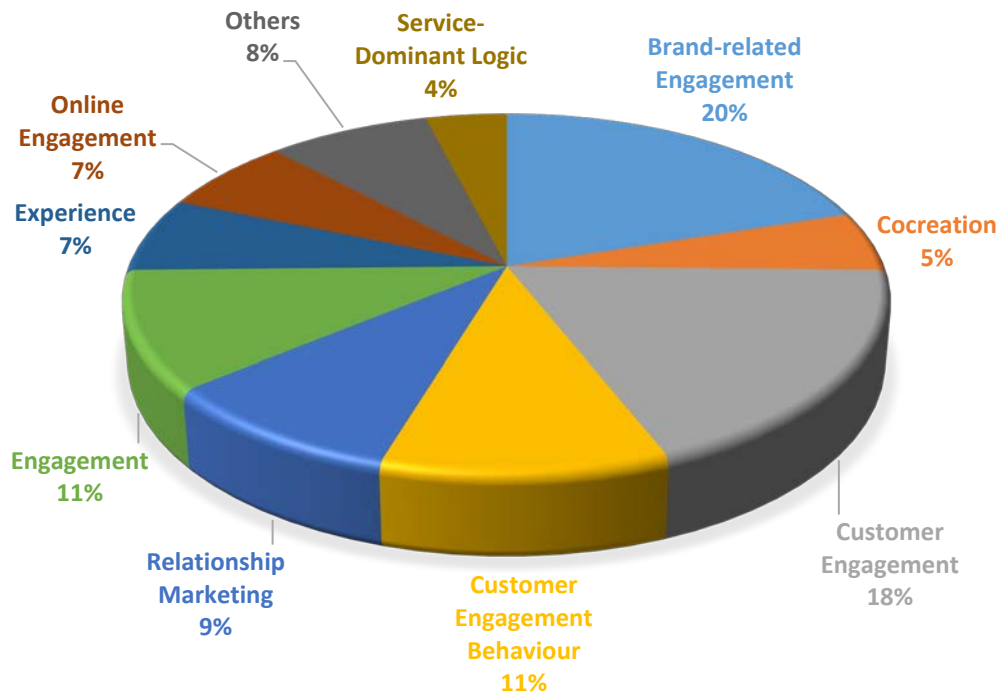
*Table 8 - Most researched dimensions of engagement in final pool of papers*

<i>Dimensions / Constructs</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Customer engagement	10
Engagement	5
Cocreation	4
Customer engagement behaviour	4
Consumer brand engagement	4
Brand engagement	3
Consumer engagement	3
Service-dominant (S-D) logic	3
Customer relationship management	2
Online community engagement	2
Relationship Marketing	2

*Source: Own elaboration*

Other dimensions only emerge once in our final pool of papers. Nevertheless, some may be very similar. Examples of these are ‘Engagement Marketing’, ‘Engagement Theory’ or ‘Theory of Customer Engagement Marketing’. To deal with this atomization of expressions, we choose to classify them into clusters in order to have a more structured view. For this purpose, we have grouped the different expressions into clusters, such as ‘Relationship Marketing’ or ‘Customer Engagement’. The weight of these new topic clusters is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 - Major dimension clusters for the Engagement construct



Source: Own elaboration

## Research methodologies

At this stage it seems important to discuss the research design of the final group of papers. One of the most relevant findings arising from this analysis is linked to the large number of conceptual/theoretical papers in this final group. In fact, conceptual research represents 46,67 % of the final papers. We may assume a linear relation between this finding and the novelty of the topic (see figure 7).

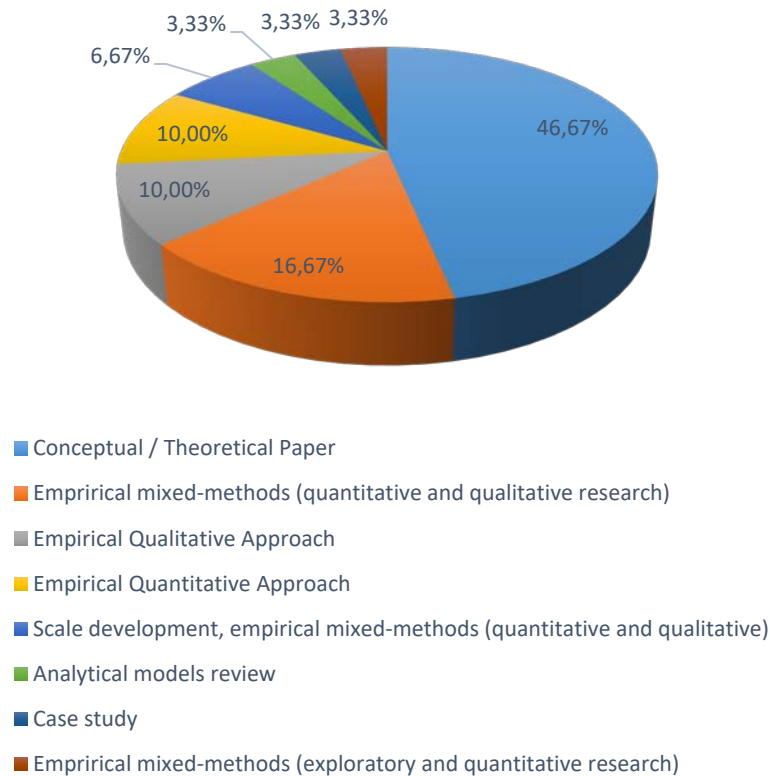
The studies that use empirical methodologies also represent 46,67 % of the total, although in this case distributed between different methodologies, from single to mixed-method approach, or scale development studies. Regarding scale development, this can be an interesting topic for future research in this area.

Our analysis of the final group of papers ends with a reference to two particular studies in this pool in terms of research design. The first study uses a case study, which is also a first attempt to address the role of customer engagement behaviour in value co-creation (Jaakkola and Alexander, (2014). The other highlighted research is the seminal article by Bijmolt et al.,



(2010), which carries out a systematic review concerning analytic models for customer engagement.

*Figure 7 - SLR papers' research design*



*Source: Own elaboration*

### **2.3.5 Systematic literature review: data extraction form**

To properly systematise and document the main information resulting from the final group of papers in the systematic literature review, a data extraction form is created.

To organize the group of papers more clearly, this data extraction form is built with eight categories. These categories summarize the core information of each analysed research: authorship and year of publication, journal of publication, the base theory of the study or construct(s), adopted methodology and sample (with characteristics), main conclusions, limitations and future research, and managerial implications.

Table 9 presents the systematic literature review data extraction form.

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Table 9 - Systematic literature review: data extraction form

<i>Pap. Numb</i>	<i>Authors and Year of Publication</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>The base theory of the study or construct</i>	<i>Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)</i>	<i>Main Conclusions</i>	<i>Limitations and future research</i>	<i>Managerial Implications</i>
1	(Calder et al., 2009)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Engagement; Consumer behaviour; Online experiences.	Quantitative approach; primary data; online survey; sample of 11.541 from 11 sites in the USA; a control group of 1.502.	Two different types of engagement: Personal engagement and social-interactive engagement (participating in discussions and socialising with others through a site); online media involve a distinct form of engagement (with impact on advertising effectiveness).	Limitations regarding low representativeness of product categories and a small number of sites (11); future research should consider more sites and more product categories, and also consider actual insertion of ads on websites rather than only intercepting users on the sites.	The importance of engagement in communication effectiveness; the principle of engagement (and its effects on communication effectiveness) can be extended to other media, such as mobile media and social media.
2	(Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016)	International Journal of Research in Marketing	Brand engagement; Brand value co-creation.	Integrative framework; theoretical approach.	Theoretical foundation of the co-creation of brand value through joint agencial and experiential creation. Individualised brand experiences emerge from the interaction environments provided by brand engagement platforms.	Theoretical approach which needs to be empirically tested; future research avenues should focus on connectedness with brands, brand relationship dynamics, brand communities and brand management systems.	Brands and brand building through co-creation experiences; Brand value co-creation rooted in joint agencial-experiential creation; Brand experiences are emergent from environments of interactions afforded by platforms of brand engagement.
3	(Gambetti et al., 2016)	Journal of Strategic Marketing	Consumer-brand engagement; Client-agent relationship; Strategic brand management.	Ethnographic interviews: 9 practitioners, 12 communication professionals; content analysis combined with interactive interpretative analysis.	Engagement as a flexible interactive space where consumers are recognised as having a central role in setting consumer-brand encounter; brands and agencies should reshape the structure and meaning of their position, looking beyond their duet relationship.	Limitations due to the interpretive research design, insights need additional confirmation. Further studies should advance towards deepening the network logic of consumer-brand engagement, mapping the territory starting from consumers.	Practitioners should reverse their standpoint by authentically adopting a logic of co-creation in consumer-brand engagement, instead of dealing with consumers as the separated end recipient of brand initiatives.

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4	(Groeger et al., 2016)	Journal of Strategic Marketing	Customer engagement behaviours (CEB); Non-paying CEBs; Word-of-mouth.	Mixed methods research design: primary data from a survey with a sample of 1.010 participants followed by in-depth interviews with 17 respondents; secondary data from agency campaigns.	Development of a novel non-paying customer engagement behaviour (CEB) concept; proposed framework linking customer engagement and co-creation; contribution to developing a broader service-dominant (S-D) logic.	Limitations concerning the use of qualitative data and analysis with limited sample size; Future research should consider longitudinal research methodology in order to measure long-term effect; The value from network effects should be deepened.	Firms can more accurately measure value created including non-paying customers in identification and evaluation of CEB, and more accurately estimate returns on marketing investment. Non-paying customers selected for inclusion in a specific marketing activity as a 'strong hub', or act as opinion leaders, within their respective networks. The choice of an appropriate 'free' offer and effective promotion of this to the target audience represents a key strategic challenge.
5	(Kumar and Pansari, 2016)	Journal of Marketing Research	Customer engagement; Employee engagement.	Mixed methods approach: exploratory quantitative research through semi-structured interviews (worldwide sample of 26 managers); qualitative approach through development of survey measures for customer engagement (study 1: pre-test with a sample of 135 respondents and final set with 300 respondents ), refine existing scales for employee engagement (study 2: sample of 180 respondents in pre-test and 750 in final set sample) and implementation of engagement framework (study 3: sample of 120 companies, either B2B and B2C or manufacturing and service, exceeding 1.000 respondents	Strong theoretical rationale and empirical evidence for the positive impact of high engagement scores on firm performance; a firm's level of engagement can be improved by implementing relevant strategies. The engagement framework is effective even in an economy in recession; firms can ensure sustained profits if both customers and employees are engaged; this strategy would ensure superior customer experience (increasing customer purchases, influence and referrals) without any additional marketing investment.	Future research should consider: using data from longer time periods; measuring the proposed constructs in different countries or continents; understanding the relative impacts of the individual components of Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement on firm performance; investigating the impact of the engagement framework on non-profit organizations; understanding the consequences of engagement orientation on the different facets of firm operations such as innovation and new product development.	Several specific strategies are suggested to help companies improve their level of customer engagement (CE) and employee engagement (EE), taking into account their specific categories (four categories defined): High-high segment (High CE and High EE); High-low segment (High CE, low EE); Low-high segment (Low CE, high EE); Low-low segment (Low CE and low EE).

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				including consumers and employees); follow-up study, one year after, study 3 replicated.			
6	(Hollebeek et al., 2014)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Consumer-brand engagement.	Study 1: exploratory quantitative research, through focus group and in-depth interviews (sample of 10 consumers), followed by selected items screened by a panel of 12 stakeholders; Study 2: quantitative research, questionnaire applied to 194 undergraduate business students (about Facebook brand); Study 3: quantitative research, refine and confirm study 2 results, sample of 554 consumers (regarding Twitter brand); Study 4: quantitative research, examine the previous scale's dimensionality, new sample of 556 consumers (using LinkedIn brand).	Consumer brand engagement (CBE) represents a promising, under-explored concept; has relevance in theoretical interactive consumer-brand relationship (including consumer culture theory, S-D logic and relationship marketing); shows significant associations with other marketing constructs (e.g. consumer brand involvement); is useful for both scholars and practitioners seeking to predict specific consumer behaviour outcomes.	Concerning the limitations, the scales and validation should be applied to different types of online settings and different brands; Future research should adopt a longitudinal design, in order to measure potential CBE phases or cycles; further investigations may also examine the potential contributions of CBE to the development of distinct (e.g. consumer-or firm-perceived) forms of online 'brand usage intent' for focal organizations and brand, to examine the development of consumers' CBE levels within and across focal, brand interactions; to understand how the nature of particular (e.g. perceived utilitarian, versus hedonic) brands serve to affect consumers' ensuing CBE levels, online and offline.	Provide managers with an enhanced understanding of the emerging 'engagement' concept, which may be adopted in the design of specific CBE strategies and tactics; argue for the adoption of the proposed CBE scale to measure and quantify consumers' level of CBE in specific organizational or brand-related settings; contribute to the development of enhanced insight into consumers' specific cognitions, emotions and behaviours during brand interactions, which may be used to rethink or redesign the nature of specific consumer/brand interfaces for enhanced effectiveness.
7	(de Villiers, 2015)	Journal of Business Research	Consumer brand engagement; consumer brand enmeshment.	Exploratory conceptual paper; set theoretic models and asymmetric analytics using Boolean algebra, rather than normative matrix algebra and symmetric analytics.	Offers a new perspective on CBE by offering an expanded typology of brand fans or advocates to include negatively engaged, disenfranchised, alienated consumers or prospects; includes in CBE	The proposed model does not include competitor activities or other macro environmental factors, but concentrates on the direct bilateral relationship between a brand and its uniquely different consumers.	Development of a more predictive model, as well as a more comprehensive model, for the configurations of antecedent conditions necessary or sufficient to cause high levels of consumer brand

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					model an intensity scale, to deliver a multi-dimensional model of engagement; the suggested model contributes with an asymmetrical, configurational view of CBE, that considers multiple paths to consumer enmeshment (more related to reality).	The suggested typography and multi-dimensional model needs to be empirically tested with primary data from several contexts, using well-established scales; future research can contribute through re-assessment of prior CBE theories using alternative data analysis tools.	engagement (and enmeshment).
8	(Brodie et al., 2013)	Journal of Business Research	Consumer engagement; Brand; Online community.	Netnography, multi-method approach; observation of communities' members and use of qualitative in-depth interviews with community members.	Shows consumer engagement as an interactive, experiential process, based on individuals' engagement with specific objects (e.g. brands, organizations), and/or other brand community members; distinguishes consumer engagement from other relational concepts, including involvement and participation; consumer engagement as a context-dependent, psychological state with different levels of intensity; the construct may emerge at different intensity levels over time reflecting distinct engagement states; consumer engagement as a multi-dimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions; several consequences of identification of the consumer engagement process, which arise as a result of the perceived co-created value by virtue of the engagement process.	Present research focus on relationship marketing and S-D logic; future research should address other relevant theoretical perspectives; Limitations concerning the relatively small online community in use, future research should address larger online groups across different product categories and with a larger sample of consumers; Future research should also embrace the role of focal engagement platforms, employee interactions and co-creation of value, as well as paying attention to the specific roles of different engagement objects (people, organizations or institutions).	The importance of understanding how consumers engage in specific brand communities, and its consequences; consumer engagement enhances loyalty and satisfaction, empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust and commitment; how the level of control over specific brands is shifting within online communities (the role of consumer engagement and empowerment in co-creating brands); the relationships among relevant variables linked to the consumer engagement process, including specific engagement antecedents and consequences.

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9	(Raïes et al., 2015)	Journal of Business Research	Community commitment; Brand loyalty; Brand engagement.	Quantitative research, within a virtual consumption community in France (photography - Nikon - 30.000 community members), 1.065 respondents to an online questionnaire.	Intensive engagement in the community is no single predictor of behavioural brand loyalty; high levels of commitment combined with strong engagement in the community are sufficient but not necessary for brand loyal intentions; highly brand loyal newcomers and longstanding members differ in their patterns of commitment (calculative, affective and normative commitment differ in length of membership); strong commitment to a consumption community can lead to high behavioural brand loyalty with or without intensive engagement in community activities.	The study is limited to one French consumption community in a specific activity and one brand; future research is needed to generalise the results to another type of community, activity and culture. The community studied was created by consumers. It would be desirable to study members' engagement and commitment in communities initiated by companies. Self-selection of respondents may lead to a higher number of very engaged member respondents; other studies need to obtain a more balanced participation of less and more highly engaged and/or committed members.	Raising community member engagement in shared activities is not enough to reach increased behavioural brand loyalty; For the development and maintenance of affective and behavioural loyalty to the brand, managers need to understand the impact of affective, calculative or normative commitment to the community on brand loyalty; Activities should address the needs of newcomers and established members in a differentiated manner to keep them engaged.
10	(Verhoef et al., 2010)	Journal of Service Research	Customer engagement; Customer Relationship Management.	Conceptual paper.	Customer engagement as an important new development in customer management; customer engagement considered a behavioural manifestation towards the brand or firm that goes beyond transactions.	Future research should address conceptualization of Customer Engagement (CE) and Customer Engagement Value (CEV), taking into account that CE behaviour goes beyond transactions.	In an increasingly networked society where customers can interact easily with other customers and firms through social networks and other new media, non-transactional customer behaviour is likely to become more important in the near future.
11	(van Doorn et al., 2010)	Journal of Service Research	Customer engagement; Consumer loyalty; Cocreation.	Conceptual paper.	Development and discussion of the concept of customer engagement behaviours (CEB); development of a conceptual model of the antecedents and consequences of CEB; a CEB management process is proposed;	Future research should discuss conceptualization and empirical research to more exhaustively classify antecedents of customer engagement behaviours, as well as classify dimensions and moderators; Future research should try to	A customer engagement behaviour management process is proposed; CEB can also serve as a useful framework for classifying and segmenting customers, based on their propensity to engage and the types of engagement behaviour they display; firms

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						understand how antecedents interact with each other; research avenues should also focus on understanding how customer engagement behaviour can be managed in ways that benefit several stakeholders.	could consider the multitude of moderators to develop comprehensive segmentation strategies with the goal of maximising profitability.
12	(Brodie et al., 2011)	Journal of Service Research	Engagement; Customer relationship management; Relationship marketing; Service-dominant (S-D) logic.	Conceptual paper.	Contributes to the customer engagement (CE) construct by providing a broader and more rigorous theoretical analysis of the CE concept in order to define its conceptual domain and provide a general definition; highlights the role of interactive customer experience and co-created value as the underlying conceptual foundations of CE; proposes five themes of CE, and five fundamental propositions defining the conceptual domain of customer engagement;	Future research should address the nature and dynamics underlying specific S-D logic-based conceptual relationships (e.g., cocreation), and the role of broader higher level marketing theory; establishment of conceptual links with other theoretical perspectives, including social practice theory; customers' engagement with different types of objects; exploring focal networked dynamics across different engagement contexts, taking into account specific dynamics underlying two-way, interactive engagement with different objects and potential value cocreation or loyalty outcomes; development of a consumer engagement scale; empirical research is required, to integrate relevant interpretative and quantitative methods of inquiry; longitudinal investigations suggested; the need for empirical research towards managerial implications is also pointed out.	Taking forward the challenging event of optimal design and implementation of relevant CE campaigns, some theoretical contributions can be construed as managerial concerns: the fundamental nature of customers' interactive engagement experiences across contexts; the development of the role of CE in a dynamic, interactive process of value cocreation in service relationship; the nature of conceptual relationships between CE and other relational concepts within particular service relationship dynamics; the multidimensional nature of CE, focusing on cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions; the exploration of the determinants of CE levels.

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13	(Sashi, 2012)	Management Decision	Customer Engagement; Relationship Marketing.	Conceptual paper. Examination of practitioner views of customer engagement.	Development of a model of customer engagement cycle with connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, loyalty, advocacy and engagement; including customer engagement in a matrix according to the degree of relational exchange and emotional bonds that characterize their relationship with sellers (four types of relationship: transactional customers, delighted customers, loyal customers and fans.	Future research should discuss empirical studies to test the implicit hypothesis and better understand several aspects of the framework; Future research can examine the mix of social media, other digital media and non-digital media appropriate for each stage of the customer engagement cycle.	Connect and interact with sellers or current customers with potential customers, and succeed in turning them into transactional customers, creates the possibility of their transition through subsequent stages of the customer engagement cycle; some of them eventually becoming fans; customer engagement turns customers into fans.
14	(Pansari and Kumar, 2017)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	Customer engagement; Engagement theory.	Conceptual paper.	Contribution through a new perspective on the theory of engagement; customers become engaged with the firm when a relationship based on trust and commitment is satisfying and has emotional bonding; process of Customer Engagement (CE) analysis by focusing on both the direct and the indirect contributions of CE, antecedents (satisfaction and emotion) and consequences (tangible and intangible); analysis of relationship between satisfaction and direct contribution in a service industry (B2B and B2C firms), for different levels of product involvement, and brand value;	Future research can provide insights by testing the proposed framework over a period of time and across industries; it would also be useful to see how this framework applies to different countries and continents; research can try to understand the impact of the customer engagement framework in different scenarios, such as the education context where students are the customers, or in the non-profit context (donor engagement).	Suggested a set of strategies for managing CE (via satisfaction and emotion), through a proposed customer engagement matrix: indifference, passion, attraction, and true love; once firms manage the level of satisfaction and emotions, they can have a positive impact on customers' direct contributions (buying) and indirect contributions (referring, social media influencing and feedback).



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15	(Bijmolt et al., 2010)	Journal of Service Research	Customer engagement; Customer management; Analytics models; Data mining.	Analytical model review; Models for customer engagement.	Overview of available data for customer analytics; models for studying customer engagement based on three stages: customer acquisition, customer development and customer retention; identified six barriers to implementation of customer analytics.	Further developments regarding data availability will allow for more detailed and advanced analysis in each stage of the customer life cycle; some organisational issues of analytics for customer engagement still remain, which constitute barriers to implementing analytics for customer engagement; therefore, a continuation of the research stream will help to overcome these barriers.	[unidentified]
16	(Mollen and Wilson, 2010)	Journal of Business Research	Engagement; Telepresence; Interactivity.	Conceptual paper.	Refute the assertion that engagement is simply a mistranslation of more well-known academic constructs; engagement is not a proxy for flow, telepresence or interactivity, it is, rather, a discrete construct, characterized by specific experiential dimensions; provides a framework for further research on this topic, enabling empirical investigation into experiential metrics, and bringing together practitioners and scholars' view on engagement.	Future research should address engagement as a sustainable intermediate variable between the website drivers of consumer experience and commercially desirable consumer attitudes and behaviours; development of engagement scales to test the conceptual framework and its dimensions; investigate the potential mediator effects of engagement, namely experiential quality and narrative drive of online entity (brand, firm, product); to explore the relationship and relative valence between cognitive and affective components of the engagement construct.	Engagement as an independent construct, as practitioners had already pointed out, and misaligned with scholars; the importance of engagement dominance and its managerial significance (consumers' greater response towards the product and the website influence firms' performance).

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17	(Hollebeek, 2011a)	Journal of Strategic Marketing	Customer brand engagement.	Conceptual paper. Research gap evidence through a literature review followed by a CBE conceptualization based on an integrative deductive/inductive approach; data was gathered by in-depth interviews and focus group (14 informants).	Preliminary insights into the nature of Customer Brand Engagement (CBE); has sought to solidify the conceptual embeddedness of CBE within Relationship Marketing, Service-Dominance logic and Social Exchange Theory informed perspectives; also provides a catalyst for future research, which is required to verify and/or quantify specific CBE dynamics.	Poor generalizability of findings due to qualitative small-scale data, with snapshots of individuals' engagement with specific brands; further research should use large-scale, quantitative methods and experimental research; future research should consider developing scales for measuring customer engagement and CBE dimensions need validation; future longitudinal research design could contribute to future insights concerning lifetime value relationships; understand the interrelationship between CBE and brand image and/or brand identity; explore the positive effect of CBE and its possible levels of engagement (does an optimal level exist? how can it be managed?).	Research provides managers with greater understanding of this emerging construct, which they can exploit when designing their relationship marketing or engagement strategies; the proposed CBE themes can be used to guide managerial development of organizational CBE tactics and/or strategies; further managerial benefits can be expected from subsequent research that develops a CBE instrument to quantify individuals' level of CBE.
18	(Schamari and Schaefer, 2015)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Consumer engagement; Webcare.	Quantitative research, through an online survey; sample of 437 respondents, from an online panel of a professional market research firm in Germany, with a total of 188 valid responses; use of an international mass-market car brand to measure engagement and webcare;	Focus on webcare as a brand communication tool to increase engagement; innovation in use of webcare as a response to positive consumer engagement; the type of social environment influences the effect of webcare on consumers' engagement (mainly consumer-generated platforms); surprise dimension as a mediator between webcare and CE; revealed that brand humanization in webcare has an influence on consumer-	Limitations concerning the sample used, namely by using participants from an online panel (which may be more responsive to engagement); findings should be replicated in situations where respondents actually experience consumer engagement and webcare, and where their subsequent behaviour could be observed in order to increase external validity; limitations concerning the use of a single	Identifies webcare directed at positive consumer engagement as an effective means for brands to reinforce the engagement of observing consumers; results stress that firms should not only react to negative consumer engagement but also manage positive CE (e.g. thanking consumers, which can be perceived as a reward for being positively engaged); marketers should apply webcare outside their own

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					generated, but not brand-generated platforms;	product category, future research should address different social media environments across different types of industries; future studies should investigate moderating factors that influence how we care encourages observing consumers to engage in brand-generated platforms; future research should also focus on possible factors that can lead to an effect on brand humanization (even on brand-generated platforms).	social media platforms (use of tools to monitor social media platforms), as well as using surprise as a tactic to reinforce positive engagement; marketers should increase the level of brand humanization (e.g. responding to customers by using a name and a photo).
19	(Schivinski et al., 2016)	Journal of Advertising Research	Consumer engagement; Consumers' online brand-related activities.	Multistage process of scale development and validation; five studies (three qualitative and two quantitative) were conducted; study 1, online focus group with 25 participants; study 2, online in-depth interviews with 32 participants; study 3, netnography conducted through 5 researchers; study 4, online questionnaire (sample of 48 respondents in pre-test and sample of 2.252 valid respondents in the final questionnaire), covering 299 brands through a range of industries; study 5, scale validation through questionnaire with 416 respondents.	Development and validation of a consumer's engagement with brand-related social media content scale; authors empirically show that consumers engage in higher levels of online brand-related activities as a result of a learning process; also identified was the consuming dimension as an antecedent of consumers' engagement in the contribution of brand-related content on social media and the contributing dimension as an antecedent of user-generated content.	Limitations concerning the list of consumer activities, which is not exhaustive; this list should be adjusted in future research; the data used in qualitative studies were not factored for consumers' past brand usage; this limitation should also be discussed in future studies; limitation concerning the use of data from a single country (Poland); cross-cultural research should be considered.	Advertisers can use consumers' engagement with Brand-Related Social-Media Content scale as an instrument for auditing and tracking the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies; each individual item of the reported scale provides advertisers with specific brand-related social media activities they could pursue; brand equity and brand attitudes correlate positively and significantly with individual brand related social-media activities.

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20	(Grewal et al., 2017)	Journal of Retailing	Customer engagement; Customer experience; Consciousness.	Conceptual paper.	Using the foundations of conscious capitalism, conscious retailers increase levels of customer engagement; proposed a hierarchy of customer engagement; engagement may be at the level of an outstanding experience, an emotional connection, or shared values and higher purpose.	Conceptual research, based on previous conceptual individual constructs that are interconnected to create an explanatory framework; future empirical research is suggested in order to test the proposed framework; future research could also focus on how firms connect with employees, customers and suppliers and the impact on firms' performance.	Retailers with foundations in consciousness may achieve different levels of engagement with their customers: delivering outstanding customer experience, creating an emotional connection with customers through shared purposes and values and establishing a shared identity based on the firm's purpose and values.
21	(Kim et al., 2016)	Journal of Business Research	Brand-consumer engagement; Luxury brands.	Empirical research through an online semi-structured qualitative questionnaire, conducted in three countries (France, South Korea and Australia); four brands were chosen ( <i>Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Chanel</i> ) and advertising placed in <i>Vogue</i> magazine was used; sample composed of women only, with a final 270 respondents (84 from Australia, 106 from France and 80 from South Korea), aged between 25 and 55.	Develop the theory and practice of advertising effectiveness by surfacing and decoding brand-consumer engagement through narrative transportation; consumers from different countries and cultures create similar narrative themes for the same luxury brands and are just as likely to engage in co-authoring of advertisement narratives.	Limitations concerning the choice of brands used due to its narrowness and origin factor (French and Italian); Additional limitations concerning selected countries; although they chose to explore the cultural differences or similarities of engagement, the research does not explain the mechanism or theories for those differences or similarities; Future research should examine empirically the research findings and provide an explanation of underlying cultural differences in the modes of engagement with brands' advertising narrative.	Emphasises that if global luxury brand advertising employs powerful implicit imagery whereby consumers are able to project themselves into the storylines, luxury advertisements portraying European characters and referring to European contexts, it provides an effective vehicle for transportation and creates an effective route to brand engagement.

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22	(Baldus et al., 2015)	Journal of Business Research	Online brand community engagement	Mixed methods research design, across six studies; study 1, focus group with 11 members; study 2, open-ended surveys with a final 24 valid respondents; study 3, initial validation study through an online survey (usable sample of 344 respondents); study 4, validation and confirmatory online survey with a final sample of 198 respondents; study 5, final validation of a short-form scale and nomological validity testing through another online survey with 620 usable responses; Study 6, test-retest reliability assessment using an online survey with a final sample of 160 respondents who had previously responded to study 5.	Insight into the motivations of community members, as the internet evolved to an interactive environment; first dedicated effort to develop a multidimensional measure of online brand community engagement and the first substantial investigation into online brand community engagement since the emergence of web 2.0; providing a complete battery of engagement dimensions (eleven) that have been validated across a range of brand communities and consumers, which allows marketing researchers to extend the work on offline brand communities; research has demonstrated that these engagement dimensions predict intentions to participate in a brand community.	Limitations concerning the size of the samples used, namely when attempting to apply the norms to individual online brand communities. Future research should categorise the diverse subtypes of brand communities to better understand how stable these motivational profiles are across different brands and types of communities. Researchers could examine why certain motivations dominate participation intentions; if certain engagement dimensions are stronger under different situational circumstances; and explore the mechanisms through which online brand community engagement affects loyalty to the brand outside the community.	The online brand community engagement scale is a reliable and valid tool to measure consumer motivations for interacting with an online brand community; two of the engagement dimensions (seeking assistance and up-to-date information) had significant, negative effects on participation; community managers may need to find new ways to engage information seekers towards brand connections (to become more active community members); important potential applications for the engagement scale: profiling of community members, targeted communication efforts and lead user campaigns.
23	(Hollebeek et al., 2016)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	Customer engagement; Service-Dominant (S-D) logic; CRM.	Conceptual paper.	Development of an integrative framework for Customer Engagement (CE) and Service-dominant (S-D) logic, which serves as a theoretical foundation for subsequent development; development of a set of revised S-D logic-informed fundamental propositions (FPs) of CE (based on previous framework); contributes to marketing practice through the application of the S-D logic-informed FPs	Limitations concerning empirical testing and validation of proposed framework, which is also an interesting research avenue; other macro-theoretical foundations may also exist, which can substitute or complement S-D logic (e.g. actor network theory); research provides few insights into disengaged customers, or those actively resisting engagement. Limitations concerning research focus,	Customer Relationship Management can be used to engage customers, as engaged customers typically provide longer-lasting, stronger and more stable relationships; CE also creates greater customer contributions and responsiveness, increased referrals, customer advocacy and retention rates, besides higher stock returns;

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					of CE to customer relationship management (CRM).	business-to-consumer (B2C), future research concerning business-to-business (B2B) should be considered; future research should focus on the theoretical development of S-D logic informed CE, customer engagement in networked settings and insights into CE's contribution to marketing performance.	
24	(Chandler and Lusch, 2015)	Journal of Service Research	Engagement; Service-dominant (S-D) logic; Value proposition; Service experience.	Conceptual paper.	Contributes to the theory highlighting the importance of engagement, and, consequentially, value propositions as invitations from distinct actors to one another to engage in service; emphasizes that service rarely begins or ends with a single actor/single point in time; value propositions invite, shape and potentially transform engagement in service; different actors (including firms) cannot sustain service experiences by themselves, and thus need to engage others and can only offer value propositions as invitations to engage in service systems.	Future research should examine how all actors offer and choose from many value propositions to engage in service; future research may use several different methods of research, such as case studies, ethnographic, survey, experimental, analytical, simulations, and others to understand the complex and adaptive systems of value propositions; future research should follow deeper examination of value proposition intensity, engagement, and the phases of service experience; can also draw stronger theoretical links to five existing service research areas: time, stakeholders, context, meaning making and institutions.	[unidentified]

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25	(Sprott et al., 2009)	Journal of Marketing Research	Brand engagement; Self-concept; Brand equity; Brand preferences; Brand attitudes.	Multistage process for scale development and validation, mixed methods research design; scale development validation study, five subsequent studies to validate theoretical perspectives. Scale development study, sample of 430 undergraduate student respondents; study 1, sample of 106 respondents (consumer associative memory toward brands); study 2, N=56, (memory as consumers recall currently owned brands); study 3, N=42, (attention to brands); study 4, N=153, (consumers' preference from attitudes toward products); study 5, divided into 5a and 5b, sample of 30 for 5a and sample of 126 for 5b, measuring loyalty (5a, product attitudes and intentions; 5b, preferences to wait for a branded product).	Consumers do engage and create links with their favourite brands and their self-concepts; the empirical findings point out that brand engagement in self-concept (BESC) is valuable because it meaningfully affects brand-related consumer constructs, including brand knowledge, attention, preference and loyalty.	Future research can investigate not only how high-BESC (versus low-BESC) consumers behave towards their favourite brands but also how they respond to their least favourite brands; further research can also address BESC and varying attention to brands under conditions of incidental exposure; measuring the level of how higher BESC consumers pay more effortless attention to brands.	Being the favourite brand of a segment does not mean the same thing for all consumers; substantial variations among consumers in their level of engagement with their favourite brands are presented; favourite brands play a self-defining role only for some consumers. Firms may benefit from investigating whether, in addition to other relevant criteria, a brand's current target segments are lower or higher in BESC and adapt brand communication strategies accordingly. Brand managers should consider how consumers build connections not only with their own brands but also with competing brands; managers should actively consider how to incorporate their brands as part of high-BESC consumers' self-concepts, and how to inhibit competing brands from building such connections.
26	(Hsieh and Chang, 2016)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Engagement; Brand co-creation; Brand relationship.	Mixed-method approach, with a preliminary quantitative study (in-depth interviews, a sample of 10 respondents) followed by a quantitative study (survey with a sample of 300 final validated responses).	Brand-self connection and perceived psychological benefits of competence towards the establishment of brand co-creation engagement, which leads to strengthened brand relationship behaviour. Provides a new perspective on consumer brand co-creation, drawing from the theoretical implications of self-determination theory and	Limitations concerning the data used, from six brand co-creation competitions; future studies should investigate a wider range of brand co-creation through other product or service categories; study focused on the psychological mechanism of brand co-creation engagement, future studies should investigate other variables that may	Firms should design brand co-creation tasks that provide the perceived psychological benefits of competence and relatedness. Marketers should invest in building brand strategies that cultivate strong connections with consumers. By building strong brand connections and furnishing well-designed co-creation task characteristics, firms can

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					implicit self-esteem theory, offering an integrative framework that extends the concept from organisational behaviour to the marketing field. Points out the influence of brand co-creation on consumer brand relationship, and demonstrates that individual and team factors interact to affect the brand co-creation experience.	influence brand co-creation engagement (e.g., the knowledge intensiveness of tasks); Further investigation can address the way in which the opportunities of brand-consumer interaction may vary and may affect the level of engagement; future research can examine the effect of co-creation task length (time frame) on brand co-creation engagement.	transform online brand community members into becoming an ample source for co-creation innovation.
27	(Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014)	Journal of Service Research	Customer engagement behaviour; Value co-creation.	Case study approach; "Adopt a station" scheme, run by FirstScot Rail (operator of rail services in Scotland); 10 stations (4 selected for further research), during 10 months; primary data collection through unstructured in-depth interviews (42 respondents, among all stakeholders); secondary data through observation, newspaper articles, presentations, reports and websites.	Customer engagement behaviour (CEB) affects value cocreation through customers' diverse contributions towards firms and/other stakeholders, which modify and/or augment the offering itself, and/or affect other stakeholders' perceptions, knowledge, preferences, expectations or actions. CEB affects value processes between customer and firm, and value co-creation between the firm and other stakeholders. CEB makes value co-creation a system-level process. Nine propositions explaining the connections CEB has with value co-creation through focal customers, focal firm and other stakeholders. Identification of four primary types of CEB: augmenting, co-developing, influencing and mobilising behaviour. The drivers, manifestations and outcomes of CEB are iterative and cyclical,	Limitations considering use of the case study method, which is often seen as limited for generalisations (which is not the method's aim), and concerning the study context (railway stations as a common cause for many stakeholders and enjoying near monopoly status). Future research should explore both CBE and its outcomes for firms, focal customers and other stakeholders in a range of contexts; should also address the interplay between the drivers of CBE and its outcomes at the system level; a longitudinal approach can also be a research avenue, exploring how the relationship between firms, customers and stakeholders changes over time and the cumulative effect of CEB on each party.	Firms should evaluate the importance of each CEB type to their business and take that into consideration when assessing the potential value of their customer base; customers and stakeholders are willing to invest through co-developing or augmenting behaviours; also consider how communities of customers can be involved in the tangible assets of the firm, enabling greater customization and augmentation of the firm's offering; explore how existing customers' resources can be enhanced to enable them to operate as proactive collaborators with the firm; also explore the potential to engage diverse stakeholders and their network of relationships; firms also need to be prepared for potentially negative effects of a loss of control, namely when the



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					as the positive outcomes for each party further motivate them to engage in or support CEB. Customer satisfaction, trust and commitment may be both drivers and outcomes of CEB, and customers' motivation to engage relates to their expectation of value outcomes.		offering and its brand take a direction not planned by the firm.
28	(Harmeling et al., 2017)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	Customer engagement; Engagement Marketing; Theory of Customer Engagement Marketing; Experiential Engagement	Conceptual paper. Quasi-experimental field study.	The conceptual model and empirical test serve as guides to advance research in Engagement Marketing and for practitioners who need to design and implement effective engagement marketing strategies. Successful engagement marketing depends on the firm's ability to identify and leverage customer-owned resources, so firms must heavily invest in, develop and use new tools that enable customers to contribute their own resources to the firm. Four types of engagement tools identified: amplification tools, connective tools, feedback tools and creative tools. Experiential engagement initiatives can increase customers' resources and increase knowledge.	Future research into the dynamic aspects of engagement marketing to assess the potential impact of initiatives on the customer trajectory, how it varies over the customer's lifetime, and the degree to which engagement effects decay over time. A more systematic investigation of which product types (e.g., generic, luxury) are more conducive to engagement marketing will also be of great value. Future research can also be conducted towards other engagement perspective marketing functions (e.g., product merchandising).	Empowering customers to engagement marketing brings potential risks, due to a lack of control over customers' actions which may result in a state of vulnerability (e.g., negative word-of-mouth); for firms' researchers and practitioners should investigate ways to manage this vulnerability (both proactively and reactively). Firms that do not respond appropriately, quickly and sincerely to customer feedback risk not only losing a customer but also risk their reputations; a brand that fosters greater engagement may experience a disproportionately higher level of disappointment if it fails.

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29	(Kumar et al., 2010)	Journal of Service Research	Customer engagement value.	Conceptual paper.	Customers can generate value for the firm through more ways than only their purchase behaviour; customers provide value through their own transaction (customer lifetime value), behaving or referring prospects (customer referral value), supporting others to make initial or additional purchases (customer influencer value), and feedback to the firm on ideas for innovations/improvements (customer knowledge value). These four dimensions together form the Customer Engagement Value (CEV) construct.	Future research should address and explore the relationship between the four dimensions of the CEV construct, namely those that could measure customer influencer value and customer referral value.	Propose several behavioural, attitudinal and network metrics in order to measure the four dimensions of Customer Engagement Value; some are readily available to firms (e.g., acquisition rate, churn rate), others are more difficult to collect and compile. Nevertheless, this is likely to change in the near future due to technological advancements that improve tracking of customers. As a new metric and approach to customer valuation, CEV provides firms with a new and more complete way of assessing their customers and allows firms to create better and more effective marketing strategies to target, acquire and retain their best customers.
30	(Verleye et al., 2014)	Journal of Service Research	Customer engagement behaviour.	Research design through two exploratory studies and one empirical study: first exploratory research based on a case study design, regarding two Belgian nursing homes (sampling strategy to allow literal replication); second quantitative exploratory research based on self-administered questionnaires, final sample of 141 usable questionnaires; main empirical study based on quantitative analysis through self-administered questionnaires	Identification of managerial processes that contribute to different forms of Customer Engagement Behaviour (CEB), improving its understanding, and also providing forms to manage it effectively and efficiently. Shows that psychological processes mediate the impact of managerial processes on CEBs; demonstrates that overall service quality towards significant others and organisational support generate customer affect towards the organisation (affecting CEB);	Limitations concerning the focus on nursing homes (and therefore high-contact services), and customers who are not consuming services but related to service consumers. Future research should investigate if managerial processes to encourage beneficial CEBs can also discourage CEBs with unfavourable effects for firms and their stakeholders; investigate if frontline employees are equally important in settings where customers have less emotional	Research shows that not only customers who consume services can show CEB; equally important is the broader network of customers and/or stakeholders. The CEB scale provides practitioners with a tool to assess customers' likelihood of showing CEB. The present research helps managers to develop more effective and efficient CEB management practices (by showing strategies that encourage CEB). Efficient and effective CEB management practices

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				with a final sample of 413 respondents.	organisational socialisation, organisational support and support from other customers increase customers' role readiness, resulting in higher levels of all forms of CEB.	ties to CEBs, and how firms can involve frontline employees in customer socialisation and support in low-contact services. Future investigations can study if all frontline employees are able to manage CEBs, as well as explore their less time-consuming socialisation and support tactics. Future research should also integrate individual customer traits as a moderator of the impact of managerial process on CEBs.	help business practitioners to engage not only their consumers but also the broader network of customers and stakeholders.

## **2.4 Conceptual findings from the systematic literature review**

### **2.4.1 Main findings**

A systematic literature review is a type of research that allows us to address a research question in a much broader way than single empirical studies are usually able to do (e.g., uncovering connections among many empirical findings (Baumeister and Leary, 1997)), and with the potential to deliver the most relevant practical implications. Therefore, we can obtain from this type of research an integrative overview of prior research, which enables us to summarise and discuss the findings and conclusions from our field of research.

The term engagement appeared in early scholarly research linked to various academic fields, such as education and learning (e.g., Kearsley and Shneiderman, 1998), sociology (e.g., Jennings and Stoker, 2004), psychology (e.g., Achterberg et al., 2003), psychology and management (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) or even on psychological presence, meaning to “be fully there” (e.g., Kahn, 1990, 1992). In the management field, engagement begins to emerge in studies related to an individual’s application to workplace tasks and environment, which could be described as an experiential state that accompanies personally engaging behaviours (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In fact, these authors proposed three dimensions of engagement: vigour, dedication and absorption. Later, Schaufeli and Bakker, (2004) defined engagement as a persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any specific object, event, individual or behaviour.

This early management view of engagement is built to some extent within the service and marketing perspectives. From this view, authors later theorised it as a psychological state that emerged from specific interactive experiences (for more, see Brodie et al., 2011). In fact, in the marketing perspective, the engagement construct appears as integrating distinct concepts, from brand-related engagement dimensions to consumer engagement concepts, or co-creation.

In the field of marketing, relevant research addressing this issue appears in the middle of the last decade. Algesheimer et al., (2005) developed seminal research concerning community engagement, showing the positive influences of identification with the brand community through the consumer's essential motivation to interact and/or cooperate with community

members. Indeed, in this research the authors highlighted the role of the brand community in the effect of community commitment on attitudinal loyalty and repurchase intentions.

Moreover, in the middle of the last decade, a preliminary approach towards the concept of customer engagement arises. Patterson et al., (2006) place at the centre of the discussion the need for deeper understanding of the engagement construct in the marketing field through their article for the 2006 ANZMAC conference in Brisbane. These authors define it as the level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organisation. They also proposed that consumer engagement is a higher-order construct comprising four components: *absorption*, i.e., concentration on a brand (cognitive); *dedication*, which can be described as sense of belonging to a brand (affective); *vigour*, which is the level of energy and mental resilience in interacting with the brand (cognitive and affective); and *interaction*, the two-way communication between a consumer and a brand (behavioural).

Other emerging and relevant discussions concerning different dimensions of engagement arise. Calder and Malthouse (2008) discuss the concept of media engagement. These authors focus on the consumer's psychological experience while consuming media, and distinguish media engagement from mere liking, implying that engagement is a stronger state of connectedness between the customer and the media than simply liking. Later, the same authors (Calder et al., 2009) continue on this path and discuss the engagement concept linked to the online environment. They propose two distinct types of engagement: personal engagement and social-interactive engagement, which can be described as taking part in discussions and socialising with peers through a site. In this approach, online media cover a distinct form of engagement with an impact on advertising effectiveness and they propose that the principle of engagement can be extended to other media, such as mobile media and social media. These authors have also proposed engagement as a second-order construct when considering measurement models, prevailing experience being the first-order construct. This position will later be refuted by the majority of authors in subsequent research.

A different approach is proposed by Sprott et al. (2009). These authors focus their research on brand engagement in the self-concept (BESC), where they try to demonstrate the nature and importance of this concept, proposing that consumers can create associations between brands

and their self-concepts. The empirical findings point out that brand engagement in self-concept (BESC) is valuable because it meaningfully affects brand-related consumer constructs, including brand knowledge, attention, preference and loyalty. The authors also claimed a substantial variation among consumers in their level of engagement with their favourite brands, that firms may benefit from understanding whether - in addition to other relevant criteria - a brand's current target segments are lower or higher in BESC, and that managers should adapt their brand communication strategies accordingly.

Other studies have presented the dissonant perspective between practitioners and academics' opinions concerning the engagement construct (Mollen and Wilson, 2010). These authors argue that there is not only a semantic dissonance between practitioners and academics, but a different assessment of the cause-effect between engagement and transactions (i.e., sales) in both worlds: practitioners are more focused on consumer investment in a brand, while academics are more focused on flow and interactivity. In fact, these authors argue that engagement is a discrete construct, characterized by specific experiential dimensions and assessed as an independent construct (as practitioners had already pointed out, and out of step with scholars). This study also discusses the importance of engagement dominance and its managerial significance (consumers' greater response to the product and the website influences firms' performance).

Regarding development of the engagement construct, and particularly customer engagement, a specific event has great importance: the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thought Leadership Conference held in Montabaur, Germany, in September 2009. This conference brought together a diverse set of academics from around the world to discuss customer management, and one of the key focuses of this 3<sup>rd</sup> conference was the notion of customer engagement. A special issue of *Journal of Service Research* (Volume 13, Issue 3, August 2010) discusses the results of this conference. In order to have a more concrete idea of its importance, we may highlight that one of the most cited papers of all times from this journal is "Customer Engagement Behaviour: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions" (van Doorn et al., 2010). We can also underline that some of our systematic literature review's final pool of papers are from this journal's special issue (Bijmolt et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010), or built on the research published in this 2010 *Journal of Service Research Special Issue* (Bolton, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011).

In fact, the research presented by van Doorn et al., (2010) innovates by proposing the customer engagement behaviour construct. According to these authors, the customer engagement construct is linked to several behavioural expressions, arguing that customer behavioural manifestations towards a brand or firm go beyond purchase, highlighting that it can be either positive or negative. In this study, the authors also highlighted the difference between this new construct and trust, satisfaction and commitment. The authors proposed that “*customer engagement behaviors go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers*” (van Doorn et al., 2010: 254).

Moving to a firm value approach, studies continue to suggest that consumers can generate value for firms through several behavioural contributions besides purchase (Kumar et al., 2010), pointing out customer lifetime, referral and influencer value which lead to the customer engagement value construct (Kumar and Pansari, 2014; Kumar and Reinartz, 2016). Further research has also emphasized behavioural dimensions. Verhoef et al. (2010) see consumer brand engagement as a consumer’s behavioural manifestation towards a focal object (i.e., brand or company) that goes beyond transactions. This perspective is more aligned with the practitioners’ point of view about engagement, which pays increasing attention to aspects such as consumer-to-consumer (C2C) interactions (i.e., word-of-mouth, e-word-of-mouth; recommendations, reviews, among others), in an interactive environment (Verhoef et al., 2010).

Other advancements in knowledge about engagement have been suggested by Bijmolt et al. (2010). These authors carried out an overview of available data for consumer analytics, and proposed distinct models for studying consumer engagement based on three phases: customer acquisition, customer development and customer retention. They also highlighted that an increasing part of consumer behaviour towards brands or companies occurs in the online environment, which results in new sources of data for consumer engagement research (Bijmolt et al., 2010). In this study, researchers also underline six barriers to implementation of customer analytics, related to data - (i) data size, data quality, new types of data, (ii) data ownership-, to models - (iii) complexity of models, (iv) ownership of modelling tools-, (v) usability of the results, and (iv) integration of customer analytics in organizations’ processes.

Still related to the conceptual stream of consumer engagement, we highlight the research conducted by Brodie et al. (2011). These authors contribute to the consumer engagement literature offering a wider and meticulous theoretical analysis of this construct, through a conceptual domain and general definition. In fact, these authors have proposed one of the most significant consumer engagement definitions available in the engagement literature. They argue that “*Customer engagement is a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand), in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that co-create value. CE plays a central role in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a multidimensional concept subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural dimensions.*” (Brodie et al., 2011: 260). We claim the relevance of this definition due to its embracing characteristics. In this study, the researchers also highlight the role of interactive consumer experience and co-created value, as the fundamental conceptual foundations of consumer engagement.

Conceptual research has paved the way for the development of empirical research in this field of knowledge. In their noteworthy study, Brodie et al. (2013) showed the consumer engagement construct as an interactive and experiential process, based on individuals' engagement with a focal object (i.e., brands/companies). They also distinguished consumer engagement from other relational concepts, such as involvement or participation. Consumer engagement is revealed as a context-dependent, psychological state with different levels of intensity over time, which may reflect distinct engagement states (Brodie et al., 2013). These authors also show consumer engagement as a multi-dimensional concept that comprises cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions, and advocate several consequences of the consumer engagement process. These authors also highlight that consumer engagement in a virtual brand community “*involves specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community*” (Brodie et al., 2013: 107).

The literature has also shown the significant role of engagement in the consumer-brand relationship interactivity, and its relevance in consumer culture theory, service-dominant



logic, and relationship marketing (Hollebeek et al., 2014). These authors also defend the engagement construct's relation with other marketing constructs, such as consumer brand involvement. Other research also highlights the new empowered role of consumers. In this vein, Gambetti et al. (2016) argue that engagement is a flexible interactive space where consumers are recognised as having a central role in setting consumer-brand encounters. Practitioners should also reverse their position by authentically adopting a logic of co-creation in consumer-brand engagement, instead of dealing with consumers as the separated end recipient of brand initiatives (Gambetti et al., 2016).

#### **2.4.2 Consumer engagement**

A growing line of research continues to contribute to the consumer engagement construct (Bowden, 2009; van Doorn et al., 2010; Kumar, 2013; Vivek et al., 2012), creating a valuable amount of knowledge concerning this topic, but also generating considerably different definitions, concepts and arguments used to define the construct.

However, some concepts appear somewhat constant and coherent throughout the whole literature. One refers to consumer engagement as an attempt to distinguish consumer attitudes and behaviours that go beyond purchase behaviours (van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012), the other defends the consumer's role in this concept, which is taken to be active, involved and cocreational, as opposed to a mere recipient of initiatives from firms (Brodie et al., 2011; Gambetti et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, several research streams have emerged over time. Focusing on an attitudinal perspective, Brodie et al. (2011) discuss the role of interactive consumer experience and co-created value as the basis for this construct, addressing the nature of consumers' interactive engagement experiences across contexts, the value of consumers' dynamic and interactive co-creation role in service fields, and the construct's multidimensional essence through its cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. Thus, the authors have defined consumer engagement as "*a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships*" (Brodie et al., 2011: 260).

In this line, other research also discusses and proposes three dimensions of consumer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014), which correspond to the generic cognitive, emotional and behavioural nature of 'engagement'. In this context, the terms used are cognitive processing (consumer's level of relationship with a brand through processing and elaboration in a particular consumer/brand interaction), affection (degree of positive affective-relation with a brand) and activation (level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand).

Other authors address this construct from a more behavioural perspective. In fact, van Doorn et al. (2010) introduce the consumer engagement behaviour concept, defined as "*the customer's behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers*" (van Doorn et al., 2010: 253). They propose five dimensions for customer engagement behaviour: valence, form of modality, scope, nature of its impact, and customer goals. They argue that in an increasingly networked society where customers can interact easily with other customers and firms through the social network and other new media platforms, the non-transactional behaviour from these becomes more important as time goes by.

This behavioural perspective is in line with Vivek et al. (2012), who show the importance of individuals' interactions and connections with the brand or product, regardless of whether they are in 'buyer-mode' or not. These authors also present a broader vision of multidimensional customer engagement through the cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social dimensions. The cognitive and emotional element incorporates consumers' experiences and feelings, and the behavioural and social elements include consumers' participation in the brand or product. They define customer engagement as "*the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiates*" (Vivek et al, 2012: 133). This research path is being extended as the digital evolution has reinforced the importance of online customer engagement behaviour, as customers become active co-producers or destroyers of value for companies (Beckers et al., 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010; Leeflang et al., 2014; Verhoef et al., 2010).

The research related to customer engagement evolved into several complementary pathways. A focus on how firms can benefit from customer engagement (Pansari and Kumar, 2017), how to measure customer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Calder et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al.,

2014), or even distinct aspects of customer engagement value, such as customer referral value or customer influence value (Kumar et al., 2010, 2013). In fact, in this line of research, attention should be given to identifying four components of customer engagement value: customer purchasing behaviour, customer referral behaviour, customer influencer behaviour, and customer knowledge behaviour (Kumar et al., 2010).

### **2.4.3 Consumer-brand engagement**

As we saw, consumer-brand engagement is a relatively new concept in the marketing literature. This concept originates in the domain of relationship marketing (Palmatier et al., 2006) and, more firmly established, in consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998). Without much doubt, this concept has gained significant importance in the academic and managerial domains in recent years, as several authors have pointed out (e.g., Brodie et al., 2011; Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010b).

Currently, in the theoretical marketing discussion concerning this concept, there is a perceived effort towards the development of a single definition of consumer-brand engagement (Brodie et al., 2011). Nevertheless, a common and inclusive explanation of consumer-brand engagement still needs to be settled. Furthermore, some authors argue that the consumer's viewpoint regarding this issue has been given less importance (Graffigna and Gambetti, 2015) and that this emerging construct appears to be able to represent the brand's effort to get close to the consumer in an expressive and meaningful way.

Different definitions regarding consumer-brand engagement largely comprise engagement as a multidimensional concept, typifying a consumer's interactive state based on cognitive, affective and behavioural components. In fact, we can find among the main contributors to the conceptual definition of consumer-brand engagement several studies stressing these components. Here, we can highlight the definition proposed by Linda Hollebeek, which defines customer-brand engagement as the level of a customer's cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment in specific brand interactions (Hollebeek, 2011a).

In this domain, we can begin by focusing on the cognitive components of consumer-brand engagement, to which several authors have made relevant contributions (see in this regard

Goldsmith et al., (2010) and Wang (2006)). Indeed, Wang (2006) proposes that engagement in the advertising environment may be seen as a measure of contextual relevance, where a brand message is enclosed and presented based on its surrounding context. Other studies underlined the affective component of consumer-brand engagement. Heath (2009) suggests consumer-brand engagement is the amount of subconscious feeling going on when an advertisement is being processed. The author presents an emotional engagement model that highlights how strong brands can be built via emotional creativity rather than using rational messages, and without the high levels of attention that advertising usually needs.

Other authors contribute to this discussion with their perspectives of behavioural dimensions, which appear particularly diversified in their extent. Kumar et al. (2010) have drawn three fundamental behavioural components of customer engagement with a firm: customer's purchase behaviour, customer referral, and customer's influencing behaviour towards other customers. Van Doorn et al. (2010) address 'customer engagement behaviours' that result from motivational drivers including word-of-mouth activity, customer-to-customer interactions (C2C) and/or blogging activity. Verhoef et al. (2010), for their part, have defined customer-brand engagement as a consumer's behavioural manifestation towards a brand or firm that goes beyond transactions.

In a more diversified approach, other authors conceptualise consumer-brand engagement dimensions from a more dynamic viewpoint, underlying the process-based nature of the concept. In this line of research, Bijmolt et al. (2010) suggest that several expressions of customer engagement may be generated in different stages of the customer lifecycle. Then again, Bowden (2009) defines customer engagement as a psychological process that forms the subjacent mechanisms by which customer loyalty is created in new customers, as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repurchase consumers of a service brand; this author also presents a conceptual model of the customer engagement process which highlights the sequential development of loyalty, as customers evolve from being new consumers to become repurchase buyers. However, this research (like many other studies, as we saw earlier) is the result of a conceptual model (deductive approach) based on previous literature, and little empirical research has been conducted to obtain new insights leading to supporting or rejecting this conceptual framework. Nevertheless, this more dynamic

perspective has been important in starting to describe a more realistic conceptual framework of the concept.

A more empirical perspective emerges in the work of Gambetti et al., (2012), These authors carried out research concerning the consumer-brand engagement construct in an exploratory qualitative study. Here, the authors surveyed practitioners to understand how they conceptualise and perform this construct in day-to-day marketing activities. From this first study, they found out that practitioners saw consumer-brand engagement as a dynamic and process-based concept, growing in intensity according to the brand's ability to increasingly understand consumers' desires and expectations, using all possible physical and virtual points of contact between brands and consumers. They also introduce this construct as a comprehensive marketing concept containing several consumer decision-making dimensions, from brand preference to brand purchase.

Related to explaining practitioners' points of view, some other studies have been carried out. Consumer-brand engagement is clearly conceptualised as a multidimensional construct subject to a context of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural dimensions which represents a psychological state that occurs through the features of interactive and co-creative consumer involvement with a specific brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012). The consumer-brand engagement construct is also broadly recognized as a relational process presenting multiple phases, as well as being quite dynamic (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011b), covering physical proximity and based on the progressive value of the brand for its consumers (Gambetti et al., 2012).

More recently, several studies have led academic research on consumer-brand engagement to a new level, leading to unexploited territories. In this domain, we can find the research of Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014), who conceptualise customer-brand engagement as “*a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions*” (Hollebeek et al., 2014: 154). In fact, these authors underline that the consumer-brand engagement construct in itself has relevance in a theoretical, interactive, consumer-brand relationship (which includes consumer culture theory, Service-Dominance (S-D) logic and relationship marketing). They contribute to the development of enhanced insight into consumers' specific cognitions, emotions and

behaviours during brand interactions, which may be used to rethink or redesign the nature of specific consumer/brand interfaces for enhanced effectiveness. They also highlight that this concept appears to be very useful for both scholars and practitioners when looking to predict specific consumer behaviour results and that CBE represents a promising and under-explored concept in the literature.

Other types of contributions concerning this concept also arise. De Villiers (2015) proposes a new perspective on consumer-brand engagement by offering an expanded typology of brand fans or advocates, which includes negatively engaged, disenfranchised or even alienated consumers. In this research, the author presents a scale of CBE to measure a multi-dimensional model of engagement. He suggests a model which contributes with an asymmetrical, configurational view of consumer-brand engagement that considers multiple paths to consumer enmeshment (more confluent to reality). Indeed, this work proposes the development of a more predictive (and at the same time more comprehensive) model, for configuration of the necessary or sufficient antecedent conditions that may cause high levels of consumer-brand engagement (and enmeshment).

The study by Gambetti et al. (2016) finds that much of this issue is being experienced in a conflicting dynamic relationship, with less focus on consumers and far more focus on brands. Indeed, these authors encourage firms and brands to reverse their perspective, adopting a genuine logic of co-creation in the consumer-brand dyad, and replacing the univocal perspective that still exists, which treats consumers as the ultimate static receiver of their initiatives. In this research, the engagement construct is underlined as a flexible interactive space where consumers are recognised as central in the consumer-brand encounter.

Kim et al. (2016) develop the theory and practice of advertising effectiveness through surfacing and decoding brand-consumer engagement over narrative transportation. They argue that consumers from different countries and cultures create similar narrative themes for the same luxury brands, and are just as likely to engage in co-creation of advertisement narratives. Consequently, these authors suggest that powerful messages to consumers are able to provide an effective route for co-creation and brand engagement, mainly if these messages are able to project consumers into the storylines.

Finally, it seems important to underline the relevance of distinguishing between engagement and experience. Thus, we have to keep in mind that these two constructs represent distinct concepts (Lemke et al., 2011). Brakus et al., (2009) argue that engagement is not a motivational relationship concept and does not presume a motivational state, and that brand experience in opposition to consumer-brand engagement is not an emotional relationship concept, representing a positively-valenced perspective on engagement, which is in line with the empirical investigation in the exploratory research by Brodie et al. (2011) and Hollebeek (2011a, 2011b).

#### **2.4.4 Online Engagement**

Engagement means an active and interactive customer connection with a given engagement object. This concept is shared among online engagement, customer engagement and consumer-brand engagement. Baldus et al. (2015) try to conceptualise online brand community engagement as the compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community. They propose a scale, which includes 11 dimensions based on previous studies: Brand influence, Brand passion, Connecting, Helping, Like-minded discussion, Rewards (hedonic), Rewards (utilitarian), Seeking assistance, Self-expression, Up-to-date information and Validation. However, the manifestation of particular cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions depends, extensively, on the engagement actors – engagement subjects/objects – and contexts (Brodie et al., 2011), including media contexts (new online media in contrast to traditional advertising media)(Calder et al., 2009).

Raïes et al., (2015) propose that intensive engagement in the community does not lead directly to behavioural brand loyalty, and that higher levels of commitment combined with strong engagement in the community are sufficient but not necessary for brand-loyal intentions. The commitment patterns of highly brand-loyal newcomers and longstanding members are also distinguished (calculative, affective and normative commitment differ in length of membership), and strong commitment to a consumption community can lead to high behavioural brand loyalty with or without intensive engagement in community activities. Raïes et al., (2015) also highlight the differences between own-brand communities and online brand communities created by consumers.

Other studies underline the interactive experiential process, based on consumers' engagement with specific products or brands, and other brand community members (Brodie et al., 2013). These authors also discuss how members engage in specific online brand communities. Other authors show that consumers engage in higher levels of online brand-related activities as a result of a learning process (Schivinski et al., 2016). They identify the consuming dimension as an antecedent of consumers' engagement in the contribution of brand-related content on social media, and the contributing dimension as an antecedent of user-generated content. For non-communities' online engagement, Hollebeek et al. (2014) devote attention to the social media context. These authors underline the need to re-think or redesign the nature of specific consumer/brand interfaces to increase online engagement and not online brand communities.



## Chapter 3

### Chapter 3: Study 1 – Perceptions and knowledge from consumers

#### 3.1 Qualitative research: focus group

In this study, we employ a qualitative methodology using the focus group technique. With this choice, we target two main goals. Firstly, the researchers seek to test the preliminary findings obtained from the systematic literature review, and confirm or refute them. Secondly, the researchers intend to shape and refine their knowledge of the research topic, and gain usable consumer insights that could be used in the subsequent studies.

The focus group technique is considered ‘group interviewing’, and is commonly used to understand consumers’ attitudes and behaviours (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). This research approach allows us to interview several individuals at the same time concerning a specific subject in order to gain insights and knowledge about their individual opinions (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010; Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Wimmer and Dominick, 2013). One of the advantages of this method is the fact that it produces the alleged ‘group effect’ (Carey, 1994), which is an event that occurs in group interaction where members are ‘stimulated by the ideas and experiences expressed by each other’ (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010). The group effect can reveal information and understandings that would not be available without creating the interactive group setting (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010; Morgan, 1997).

In addition, the option of using focus groups as a research tool is also considered an exploratory method that can be used to obtain preliminary results for future research (Wimmer and Dominick, 2013). As Merton (1987) proposes, focus groups can be a good initial method for researchers to use as a way to help develop the quantitative part of an investigation and can help to develop questionnaire items (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010; Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Wimmer and Dominick, 2013). Creswell and Clark (2007) suggest that researchers can qualitatively explore a research topic with a few participants and then use the findings as a guide to develop items and scales for a quantitative survey instrument. Therefore, we chose to develop in this study two distinct focus groups that may contribute to developing the following studies.

### **3.2 Focus group one: objectives, methodology and procedures**

The choice to develop two focus groups was because we want to narrow down our research. So we start by forming a first focus group to focus on a more general and comprehensive view of the consumer-brand relationship, specifically in the digital environment.

The main goal of the focus group is to obtain perceptions on issues of interest, which could lead to achieving a common conclusion or generate consensus among participants on the issues discussed. As proposed by Malhotra (2010), a focus group is an interview conducted by a trained moderator in a non-structured and natural manner with a small group of respondents.

Malhotra (2010) also underlines that a focus group should generally include 8 to 12 members, last between 1 and 3 hours and be demographically and socio-economically homogeneous, representing a wide spectrum of opinions and personal characteristics. This should provide enough different views to stimulate a discussion, without making each participant compete for time to express their opinions.

The purpose of this first session is to get a better understanding of what customers perceive regarding online brands, as well as to confirm the constructs and dimensions arising from the systematic literature review. Therefore, we engaged a small sample of the target audience in this study, to verify their opinions and validate or reject preliminary findings.

The marketing research literature suggests that focus groups should be characterised by homogeneity, but with sufficient variation among participants to allow contrasting opinions (Krueger and Casey, 2015). In this focus group, we selected the participants reflecting a range of different attitudes (and skill levels) towards online brands, with different academic backgrounds, although all participants were college graduates, aged 31 to 52 years.

To obtain the participant group, we use a convenience sample. A convenience sample is a non-probability sample that selects participants readily available for the study (Henry, 2009; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). The research team obtained the group participants through proximity to them. In qualitative research, this type of sampling is commonly used, specifically in focus groups (Henry, 2009; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). The study was conducted in the capital city of the country, and participants all live in that metropolitan area.

In order to obtain genuine participation and interest, no type of gratification was given to participants (e.g., gift cards, presents, money).

Based on these characteristics, we selected eight participants. The research team was concerned about balancing gender, with four male and four female respondents. The discussion followed a semi-structured path, as the literature reports that for exploratory purposes we should consider less-structured approaches (Morgan et al., 1998), so that the group will reveal more of their perspective on the research topic. Nevertheless, we prepared and used specific guidelines to avoid the discussion following an unreliable course. The researchers recorded the discussion so it could be fully transcribed, allowing participants and their comments to be linked.

### **3.2.1 General group characteristics**

When setting up the group, the researchers decided to give preference to participants with a diversity of characteristics within a standard group. The age range varies between 31 and 52 years, allowing important age diversity.

We aimed for a group with noticeable levels of internet usage and consumption habits. Therefore, the group consists of people with higher education, income above the national average, mainly members of households with children and consuming a wide range of goods, from everyday products to other types of hedonic products or services. When planning the focus groups, we realised it could be relevant to differentiate participants' different levels of internet usage. Therefore, we decided to divide participants into low, moderate or heavy users (Emmanouilides and Hammond, 2000).

With respect to specific group social characteristics, participants were an up-to-date group of customers, in constant contact with technology and the most recent features. In terms of consumption pattern, we are in the presence of a group of customers that use e-commerce platforms with relative ease, seeking not only goods but also cultural products (e.g., books, exhibitions, concerts). The social-demographic characteristics of this group are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 - Sample demographic characteristics: focus group one

Characteristics	Mean\Sample %
N=8	
<b>Age</b>	
M (Range: 31 – 52 years old)	38.8
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	50.0
Female	50.0
<b>Level of Education</b>	
Bachelor's degree	12.5
Licentiate degree	75
Master Degree	12.5
Doctoral Degree	0.0
<b>Internet usage</b>	
Low	12.5
Moderate	50.0
Heavy	37.5

*Source: own elaboration*

We choose to tag each participant with a letter so as to identify each one and their sentences while respecting their privacy. We also choose to provide a summary of the participant's level of internet usage, in order to have a succinct description of their experience and exposure regarding the customer-brand relationship in the digital environment:

- 1A is a moderate user: frequent internet user, mainly social media and e-commerce platforms, on a daily basis;
- 1B is a heavy user: using different service and product suppliers, on a daily basis; makes at least one e-commerce purchase per month.
- 1C is a low user: mainly using news services, on a daily basis; has never purchased online, and does not expect to do so anytime soon.
- 1D is a heavy user: using several services and product suppliers, for both personal and professional purposes, on a daily basis; online purchases more than once per month.
- 1E is a moderate user: for personal and professional purposes such as news services and updated information (concerning legislation and accounting procedures).
- 1F is a heavy user: different types of uses, from service suppliers to social media platforms, or news services; purchases online at least twice a month.

- 1G is a moderate user: daily use of social media platforms and news services; does not purchase online.
- 1H is a moderate user: mainly social media platforms; rarely makes online purchases.

### **3.2.2 Focus group one –the session**

The Focus Group session took place in Lisbon, Portugal on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016. This session lasted around two hours, and 8 participants took part. Although the researchers were in the room, the moderator of this session was chosen from another research team (but also from social sciences), in order to avoid bias (Morgan et al., 1998). The moderator's role is to lead the focus group and to encourage all participants to contribute, besides attempting to develop 'good group feelings' (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010). Participants were asked to fill in a focus group personal data sheet (appendix L) and researchers had elaborated a focus group script for this study in order to conduct the group discussion (appendix N).

All these participants are daily internet users. In fact, they all refer to several types of daily use such as news and meteorology services, or search engine services. In fact, among all participants, one service brand stands out when referring to search engine services: Google. Concerning online shopping experience, all but one mentioned that they had already made at least one online purchase, and several participants said they usually make at least one electronic transaction per month.

When the group was asked the first key question (see appendix N), most participants mentioned security, credibility and third-party recommendation as important features (concerning this point, diverse thoughts were registered during this focus group session concerning word-of-mouth, personal recommendation and social networking recommendation). In fact, participant '1D' says that "*the existence of a physical store positively reinforces the credibility of an online store*" and gave several examples to underline his opinion (e.g., Worten, Continente).

Following this dialogue, '1D' also underlined the importance of having different payment methods. Brands should make this information available to customers, as well as their order

and delivery procedures. In fact, regarding payment methods, all participants stated that they have low confidence when paying with a Visa card. All mentioned they prefer other forms of payment, such as PayPal, Multibanco or bank transfer. Many said that they do not complete a transaction if only Visa Card payment is available.

Participant '1B' pointed out the topic of time limits for providers to deliver ordered products. For this customer, a feature that can influence the purchase and repurchase decision is the supplier's fast delivery. The quality of information available also influences the purchase decision, enhancing the confidence in the product\service, and the supplier. On the other hand, participant 1F mentioned that shipping costs are an important variable. Nevertheless, for this customer, the main differentiating features are ease of use and the website's overall quality.

When the participants were asked to reach a common opinion regarding the three main positive features an online brand should provide to customers, the group underlined price, payment methods and perceived quality. Regarding negative features that can influence customers, the group stressed the lack of payment options, failures in the return policy, and too many advertisements. At this point, the discussion evolved to excessive advertising. The majority of participants pointed out 'YouTube' as a bad example, and participants '1B' and '1D' even argued they felt inclined to close webpages when subjected to too many unsolicited advertisements. Most participants argued that excessive advertising can lead them to reject a provider. They also pointed out that heavily loaded webpages with too much information become unpleasant shopping experiences.

When the moderator asked participants the second key question (see appendix N), participant '1E' suggested overall satisfaction with the first purchase as a key factor influencing repurchase. Participant '1A' argued that a positive feature influencing repurchase is whenever a brand follows up what it has proposed to the customer. Still, most participants agreed they make a price comparison before taking online shopping decisions, even if they have previous positive experiences with a specific online brand. In this connection, webpage usability and customer habit arise. Most participants highlight they often resort to the same online brand supplier, particularly when making comparisons. Participant '1A' attributed this to memory associations between the brand and the product\service while searching. One of the frequent services for all participants are online booking sites. When the mediator asked participants

about which online hotel booking provider they prefer, all but one mentioned 'Booking.com'. Participants highlight habit and accurate information for this loyalty. Only participant '1F' claimed to use another online booking provider, and just chose 'Booking.com' if the offer from the first-choice provider did not match their requirements.

The participant group ends this discussion identifying satisfaction, ease of use (the speed of use and quick procedures) and price as the features from previous shopping experiences that influence positively online repurchase of products or services.

At this stage, and following the Focus Group Script, the moderator raises the engagement issue. Answering the third key question (see appendix N), participant '1A' highlights that the historical interaction between a consumer and a brand conveys confidence, creates trust and engages customers. Other participants did not totally agree, particularly if they had an unpleasant experience in the past. Participant '1F' argued that they cannot positively advocate a brand with which they previously had an unpleasant experience, even if only once among many positive experiences. The focus of the engagement question has moved at this stage to the relationship between consumers and brands, and the recommendation attitude.

Participants discuss at this point how willing they are to positively (or negatively) advocate a brand, and what is the real value of a reference. The moderator introduced the concepts of word-of-mouth (WOM) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). All participants confirmed they rely on positive recommendations from family and friends, but with less confidence if the source is less well known. In this matter, participants '1B', '1E' and '1H' claim they do not give value to WOM recommendation if the source is not familiar, or if they do not recognise the correct knowledge or appropriate skills of that source.

Concerning trust in recommendations, participant '1C' expressed an interesting point of view, saying that "*I gain confidence through word-of-mouth in an intuitive way*". Participant '1F' added that "*the clients' reviews (on travel sites like TripAdvisor or Yelp) have a positive reinforcement on me*". Still, participant '1D' argued that recommendations which appear on social network platforms are not valuable referrals "*Maybe if they appear in specialised blogs. If not, I do not trust them*", he argues. In this connection, many participants also claim they do not trust opinions on social network platforms. Participants '1A' and '1H' argue that

*“everyone considers themselves an expert on a large number of subjects, giving their opinion on different matters on Facebook and other social network platforms”*. Participant ‘1A’ argues that *“it is easy to put a like on a Facebook page, but do customers really like that brand? Or do they do it because someone asked them?”* Most participants agreed that brand recommendation through social network platforms is less reliable.

At this stage, the moderator once more focused the discussion on the features that make participants feel engaged or not engaged with an online brand. Participants highlighted they put value on correct and clear information, and content, besides easy and clear proceedings when seeking information and shopping online. Participants ‘1A’, ‘1F’ and ‘1G’ underlined the importance of these features, and in the debate, privacy fears were mentioned. For participants, this issue is significantly important as privacy is a common concern for all. They also agreed that the way brands manage privacy issues, and if consumers feel their data is secure, is a critical point that reinforces trust.

How these aspects affect each consumer varies. For the participants in this focus group, the most relevant privacy issues are related to credit card payment. Six participants claim they never use a credit card as a payment method if they have security and privacy concerns regarding the website quality.

Summarising, the group identify brand familiarity, ease of use, clear information\content and privacy\security aspects (although privacy and security are perceived by this group as the same variable) as the features that influence them positively and may lead to their positive or negative engagement with an online brand.

### **3.2.3 Focus group one findings**

Preliminary findings from this session reveal participants’ interest in this subject. Participants felt connected with the topic and it was not difficult to obtain their opinion. Nevertheless, we found some differences in terms of gender. Features related to technology appear more relevant for male participants, such as website quality or information\content. On the other hand, female participants pay more attention to usability, interactivity and design-visual appeal. Both genders give considerable importance to security and privacy.



Previous experience emerges as an important dimension for this group. In this regard, participants mention several important features of the consumer decision process. They reveal connections between this dimension and features like credibility, recommendation, security, fast delivery of products or quality of information.

Connected to previous experience is the intention to repurchase. Here, price has an influential role, with several participants claiming they make a price comparison during the buying process even if they had a positive previous experience with a certain brand/firm. Related to price is the availability of different payment methods. Satisfaction and ease of use also appear to influence repurchase intentions positively.

Participants also mentioned trust as an important variable. However, for them, the trust variable can arise in diverse ways. Some participants mentioned previous experience, brand behaviour or personal references as a primary source of trust. Other customers' recommendations (both WOM and eWOM) appear to influence trust. However, participants distinguish between word-of-mouth and social network platforms' recommendation. Participants consensually agree they give more importance to WOM (from familiar recommenders) than from general eWOM recommenders.

Participants also discuss the variables of information, content and clear procedures. They recognise these as very important variables when evaluating the potential trustworthiness of an unknown provider. Finally, group members debate privacy and security issues. Although these variables appear in the literature as independent, participants associate them as a single variable. They point out the privacy disclosure on websites as a reliable form of measuring brands' security concerns, despite recognising they usually do not read them. The majority of participants do not feel properly protected regarding personal information, and do not feel safe enough when performing electronic transactions (security).

### **3.3 Focus group two: objectives, methodology and procedures**

The decision to develop two focus groups is related to the fact that we want to narrow down our research. The first focus group aims to gain a wider comprehension of the consumer-brand

relationship in the digital environment. The second focus group aims to explore the online customer-brand engagement of a set of participants. For this purpose, we decided to emphasize one specific brand and chose TripAdvisor (see appendix R).

TripAdvisor is an American website travel company offering travel reservation services, reviews of travel-related consumer experiences and online travel forums where community members can interact and exchange opinions (Filiari et al., 2015). The diversity of customer experiences among their branded websites (the company owns different websites for each of the forty-nine countries where they operate) was the basis of our decision to use this brand. The fact this company is a major player in the world market and claims to be the world's largest travel site (TripAdvisor, 2017) reinforced this decision. In fact, their numbers are expressive: 500 million reviews and opinions covering 7 million places of accommodation, restaurants and attractions, reaching an average of 390 million unique monthly visitors in forty-nine markets worldwide (comScore Media Metrix, 2016; TripAdvisor, 2017). In fact, the United-States of America website alone ([www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)) is the 257<sup>th</sup> most popular website worldwide (Alexa, 2016).

In this focus group, we follow the same research path as in the previous focus group. The difference lies in its purpose, which is to gain insights regarding customer-brand engagement focused on the digital environment. As stated previously, the purpose of conducting a focus group is to obtain participants' perceptions on the research topic that could lead them to a common conclusion or generate consensus among them (Malhotra, 2010). The focus group is an interview conducted by a trained moderator (we also chose to use a moderator from outside the research team) in a non-structured and natural manner with a small group of respondents (Malhotra, 2010).

In line with what was stated for the first focus group, we follow the group characteristics suggested by the literature (Malhotra, 2010). We considered the size of the focus group (8 to 12 members), the session length (from 1 to 3 hours), and demographic and socio-economic homogeneity (which should cover a wide spectrum of opinions and personal characteristics).

The purpose of this second session is to get a better understanding of what drives customers to engage with a focal object (i.e., a product\brand) in an online environment, as well as to

confirm or refute the findings arising from the systematic literature review. Despite the different purpose, the researchers selected a different sample of participants for this second focus group. With this option, we intend to assess their perceptions, and confirm or reject preliminary findings, without the influence of the first focus group findings.

The literature suggests homogeneity among focus group participants, but with enough variation to allow for contrasting opinions (Krueger and Casey, 2015). For this second set of participants, we select participants who are current users of TripAdvisor website travel company and who spend at least one hour a month on it. They should be able to reflect their engagement towards this specific brand. As in the previous sample, all participants have different academic backgrounds, but all were at least college graduates. In this group, age ranged from 24 to 39 years.

To form this participant group, we also chose to use a convenience sample. A convenience sample is a non-probability sample that picks out participants readily available for the study (Henry, 2009; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). The research team obtained the group of participants through proximity to them. In qualitative research, this type of sampling is frequently used, specifically in focus groups (Henry, 2009; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). The research team also conducted this second study in the capital city of the country, and participants all live in this metropolitan area. As in focus group one, to obtain genuine participation and interest, no type of gratification was given to participants (e.g., gift cards, presents, money).

Based on the features described above, we select a new set of eight participants. The research team was concerned about keeping the genders balanced, with four male and four female participants. The discussion followed a semi-structured path, as the literature reports that for exploratory purposes, we should consider less-structured approaches (Morgan et al., 1998), so that the group can reveal more of its perspective on the research topic. Nevertheless, we prepare and use specific guidelines to avoid the discussion taking an unreliable course. The researchers recorded the discussion so it could be fully transcribed, allowing participants and their comments to be linked.

### 3.3.1 General group characteristics

When setting up this second focus group, the researchers face a new challenge. In fact, in this second focus group, we intend to have consumers' insights concerning engagement with a specific brand. So researchers need to select participants who are active TripAdvisor users, technologically skilled, and consumers of travel products\services. Using the previously mentioned convenience sampling, we obtained a group of people with higher education, with ages ranging between 24 and 39, and equally balanced in terms of gender. Table 11 summarises the demographic characteristics of this second focus group.

*Table 11 - Sample demographic characteristics: focus group two*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Mean\Sample %</b>
N=8	
<b>Age</b>	
M (Range: 24 – 39 years old)	32.125
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	50.0
Female	50.0
<b>Level of Education</b>	
Bachelor's degree	20.0
Licentiate degree	30.0
Master Degree	20.0
Doctoral Degree	10.0
<b>Time as TripAdvisor user</b>	
Years	4.60
<b>Time Spent on TripAdvisor Page per month</b>	
1 to 3 hours	25.0
4 to 6 hours	37.5
7 to 9 hours	25.0
10 to 12 hours	0.0
> 13 hours	12.5
<b>Active member of TripAdvisor travel forums</b>	
Yes	37.5
No	62.5

*Source: own elaboration*

The focus group participants have been TripAdvisor users for around four and half years (on average) and one-third are active members of TripAdvisor travel forums. The most common use participants make of the TripAdvisor site is searching for reviews of travel-related consumer experiences, and taking part in the travel communities' forums. As in focus group one, we decide to identify each participant with a letter so as to recognize each of them and

their sentences, while respecting their privacy. In this case, we also choose to provide a summary of the participant's interaction with TripAdvisor, to have a succinct view of their level of experience and involvement with the brand:

- 2A is a recent user: mainly seeking customer reviews, low monthly hours spent, and a recent user (around two years);
- 2B is a middle-time user: mainly looking for other customers' reviews, with some monthly time spent.
- 2C is a recent user: uses the reservation searching services, and also the customer reviews. Does not spend much monthly time on it.
- 2D is a middle-time user: looking for other customers' reviews, has used TripAdvisor for some years.
- 2E is also a middle-time user: besides the reviews, also uses the reservation searching services, and has done so for a few years.
- 2F is a recent user: looking for other customers' review, and also an active member of some forums.
- 2G is a long-time user: looking mainly for other customers' reviews, and also interacts in some forums.
- 2H is a long-time user: usually searches for other customers' reviews, spends some time each month on this website, mainly in forums of interest.

### **3.3.2 Focus group two – the session**

The Focus Group session took place in Lisbon, Portugal on June 20th, 2016. This session lasted two and half hours, and 8 participants took part. Although the researchers were in the room, the moderator of this session was chosen from another research team (the same as in first session), in order to avoid bias (Morgan et al., 1998). The moderator's role is to lead the focus group and to encourage all participants to contribute, besides trying to develop good group feelings (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010). Participants were also asked to fill in a specific second focus group personal data sheet (appendix M), and the researchers elaborated a focus group script for this study to conduct the group discussion (appendix O). The focus group session was also recorded so that researchers could fully transcribe the session and correctly attribute the phrases to each participant (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996).

The researchers designed the script for this session aiming to understand consumers' experience and involvement with TripAdvisor. Specifically, questions focused on how consumers interact and participate with the brand, how consumers interact with, and take part in the different website features, the feelings of time and space while on the TripAdvisor website, engagement towards the brand, and what engagement means to participants. Examples of questions are: "Do you get involved in TripAdvisor online community forums?", or "How do you feel in relation to time spent, information, and rewards when you are on online community forums?".

Interview scripts are suitable for use when conducting focus groups as they provide structure and formality, and also allow follow-up enquiries as appropriate to clarify remarks or to ask for elaboration (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010). In addition, each participant filled in a personal datasheet (appendix M), which provided basic demographic information and general information about use and experience of TripAdvisor.

The moderator questioned participants about their relationship with TripAdvisor, namely concerning the length of the relationship, time spent on the website per month, or what they pursue and receive by using it. The majority of participants use TripAdvisor when searching for and planning new holidays, either for the decision-making process (e.g., which hotel to stay in), or to collect information about other venues nearby. Nevertheless, some participants said they also use the company website to give feedback concerning their own experiences. Additionally, participants use TripAdvisor as a referral concerning possible holiday destinations, something we can define as 'shopping for destinations'. Most participants recognise the company's up-to-date information on travel issues.

Consequently, participant '2H' said that he loves "*being in the know*", especially regarding new venues or destinations. Additionally, some participants claimed they have searched for holiday destinations solely using TripAdvisor. However, if the information related to a specific issue is ambiguous or contradictory, most participants say they search in other sources of information. Participant '2B' mentioned that if the information about a destination, hotel or other type of venue is "intriguing or interesting" she feels motivated to use that venue's official webpage or social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Instagram).

Several participants agreed that they go from TripAdvisor directly to brands/firms' Facebook pages. Participant '2E' describes a time when he passed directly from the TripAdvisor webpage to a hotel's Facebook page looking for more information, pictures and prices. Other participants agreed that they also go from the TripAdvisor webpage to a hotel's official website or social media account because they are looking for specific information about check-in or check-out times, location, other venues nearby, or availability. Some participants claim they navigate to hotels' Facebook pages because they like pictures that other consumers uploaded on TripAdvisor. Several participants recognised that they spent some time looking at pictures uploaded by other users. Participant '2G' says he usually submits his own pictures of his holiday destinations to TripAdvisor.

When the moderator asked the group about the community forums on TripAdvisor, several participants agreed that they value the up-to-date information available. Participant '2A' stated it was common to find useful information on community forums. Furthermore, the majority of participants said that taking part in the TripAdvisor community forums is fun. When asked about the interaction with other users (e.g., posting comments, reading other users' posts, or answering other users' questions), participants say that they usually feel more motivated to interact if they experience some type of reward from it. Several participants said they value the like-minded discussion, the self-expression, and the ability to help others.

Participants also said they appreciate users' interactions with the broader community. Participant '2H' stated that "*it is very rewarding that consumers are available to help each other*". At this stage, participants varied in their responses concerning their level of interaction with other users on TripAdvisor community forums, which ranged from simply reading their posts to commenting on their posts.

Attempting to explore the concept of presence, as it relates to the engagement construct, the moderator questioned participants about their feelings regarding the time spent online (e.g., if they forget they were in a mediated space, or if they became absorbed by the page). Some participants claimed they had never lost their sense of time or space while on the TripAdvisor webpage, but they realise that they usually spend more time on TripAdvisor than initially planned. However, other participants did mention that they have lost a sense of time and space, especially if they were looking around other users' pictures. Additionally, participants said that if they were

reading posts on communities' forums and they found the posts entertaining and informative, they would continue to explore the forum by reading other posts from the same user.

The moderator then asked participants to describe their feelings of engagement towards the TripAdvisor brand. Almost all participants agreed that they had a somewhat engaged relationship with the brand, but as they start to be more involved in the communities' forums they increase their loyalty and engagement. Many participants stated that they felt more engaged with the brand as their knowledge about it increased, namely understanding the company goals, and how the brand may help consumers around the world to make better travel choices. Participant '2F' described his feelings of engagement towards the brand saying that *"After learning the purpose behind TripAdvisor and understanding its goals, it made me loyal, and makes me want to come back"*.

Lastly, the moderator asked participants if they had anything to add that could help researchers with the topic studied. Most of the participants said they engage for positive emotions such as fun, enjoyment, entertainment, a friendly environment and through developing strong ties with the community. Other participants mentioned that as soon as they are more engaged with a certain brand they start to recommend it to friends and family, and to talk positively about the brand on social media platforms and in online communities.

### **3.3.3 Focus group two findings**

To be able to properly analyse the information from this second focus group, we decided to categorise the available data. Categorization is a technique that allows researchers to divide and group together available data according to existing concepts, themes or other similar clusters (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010). Furthermore, combining data into categories enables researchers to identify a unit of data as belonging to, representing, or being an example of some more general phenomenon (Spiggle, 1994). Categories that arise from the inductive approach were the participant's motivations to be a TripAdvisor user, the webpage features, involvement, presence, loyalty and brand advocacy intentions.

Besides categories, researchers also develop a coding scheme to manage and infer from the focus group data. A coding scheme serves as a data management tool to label, separate,



compile and organise the available data (Bowen, 2006). The purpose of using this technique is to mark the units of data as they relate meaningfully to categories, taking the researcher's suggested categories and linking them together (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010).

In this study, the coding scheme divided the data grouped into categories in more specific clusters. This technique allows researchers to narrow down the data related to TripAdvisor characteristics into more specific markers of information quality, enjoyment and interactivity. Therefore, the coding scheme helped to narrow the data concerning its relationship with specific groups, such as cognitive processing, affection, activation or time and space presence. The process of finding categories and developing a coding scheme greatly helps researchers when looking for and deciding which validated scales to use in subsequent studies (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010). In fact, by identifying categories and developing a coding scheme, researchers aim to find relevant insights from the focus group dataset, which could lead to carrying out subsequent studies (namely the questionnaire items for the second study). According to Malhotra (2010), the categories and themes identified in the exploratory qualitative research can be used to develop items for the subsequent quantitative research.

At this stage, we defined several goals for this experimental research. One of these is to gain insights into antecedents of the engagement construct, namely the website quality, the available information\content, and consumer involvement, as well as to explore other antecedents of online consumer-brand engagement. Based on this second focus group results, the mentioned antecedents of online consumer-brand engagement have been highlighted. Furthermore, two dimensions that emerge are added to the available set: interactivity and previous experience.

Another goal of the focus group is to explore the dimensions of consumer-brand engagement. Based on the focus group results, the researchers infer the presence of cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of consumer-brand engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014). This finding revealed the need for more exploratory efforts, which should clarify the relationship between these three dimensions and the antecedents and consequences of the construct. So the researchers decided to use the Hollebeek et al., (2014) consumer-brand engagement scale in the questionnaire of this second study.

One of the researchers' final goals for this first study is to improve understanding of the presence and consumer recommendation behaviour (namely e-WOM and brand advocacy). Results reveal that consumers spend more time on TripAdvisor webpage than previously predicted. This may relate to users becoming absorbed in webpage contents, which increase their involvement in the different consumer experiences available. Most participants revealed a propensity towards a positive recommendation, which increases as they become involved and engaged with the environment (i.e., company\brand webspace). In fact, the researchers found positive recommendation behaviours by participants (either for brand advocacy and e-word-of-mouth), which deserves observation in greater detail.

### **3.4 First study conclusions and insights**

Overall, this first study provides the researchers with valuable insights. The main aim of both focus groups is to test the preliminary findings from the systematic literature review and to confirm or refute the initial findings. Moreover, there is a clear intention to gain useful insights that could be used in subsequent studies of this thesis. While the first focus group is developed in order to gain a more general view of the consumer-brand relationship in the digital environment (*'latosensu'*), the second focus group aims to explore online customer-brand engagement towards a specific brand.

From the first focus group, we gain insights concerning previous experience, namely important features for consumers like credibility, recommendation, security or information\content quality. Valuable information about customers' purchase intentions also emerges. As mentioned in the literature, satisfaction (Brodie et al., 2013; Sashi, 2012) and ease of use (Loureiro, 2015) appear as positive influences in this construct. Some practical dimensions also emerge concerning previous price experience and price comparison.

In this first study, we are also able to obtain insights into trust. This construct appears connected to different dimensions such as previous positive experience, brand behaviour or third-party recommendation. These perceptions are in line with the literature, which mentions previous experience as an antecedent of trust (Vivek et al., 2012), and also the connection between brand behaviour, or positive word-of-mouth, and customers' brand trust (Hur et al., 2011). The importance of clear and relevant information and content emerges, in part related

to the evaluation of potential trust in unknown providers. These insights are also in line with some authors who defend the importance of information and content, related to the quality of informative features (Han et al., 2006) and to online consumers' willingness to use (Park et al., 2007).

From the second focus group, we aim to gain insights into online customer-brand engagement towards a specific brand, and we chose TripAdvisor. Here, some insights similar to the first session arise, such as involvement or previous experience. We also infer about the relevance of dimensions such as website quality, the level of available information, and the quality of contents. Additionally, interactivity emerges. These findings end up reinforcing the results of the first focus group.

An important insight that also emerges concerns the relation between the online consumer brand engagement construct and both cognitive and emotional dimensions. This is somewhat related to the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of consumer-brand engagement suggested by Hollebeek et al., (2014). This finding provides researchers with a path for deeper exploration efforts. Therefore, we decide to use the validated scale of Hollebeek et al., (2014) in the questionnaire for the forthcoming study. We intend to clarify the relationship between these dimensions and the antecedents and consequences of consumer-brand engagement.

In this second focus group we obtain additional relevant insights. The relationship between presence and some dimensions of consumer-brand engagement arises. The results reveal that consumers spend more time than expected interacting online with a certain brand. Users' absorption in content and involvement in the distinct consumer experiences available may explain this. Nevertheless, research should devote further attention to this question. A final insight emerges from our inductive approach related to participants' motivations to undertake recommendation behaviours and brand advocacy intentions (namely e-WOM). Most participants say they contribute with positive references, behaviour that increases as they get more involved and engaged with a specific environment (in this case, an online environment). The researchers also conclude that further detailed observation is required to achieve deep knowledge about these questions.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Chapter 4: Study 2 – The role of consumer-brand engagement in brand advocacy**

#### **4.1 Quantitative research**

This chapter will present the quantitative study of this dissertation. To do so, we choose to conduct self-administered online questionnaires with a sample of respondents that fit the general population under study. Questionnaires are useful instruments to collect data from a sample group of the population. This method is in line with research practices in this area (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Malhotra, 2010). Researchers can use this technique to understand behaviour in a variety of contexts (Bostrom, 1998), as they make use of a formal set of questions to estimate the distribution of characteristics in a sample (Dillman, 2000). In this second study, we employed a questionnaire in order to map engagement in the consumer-brand dyad.

To research this social phenomenon properly, we need to understand the online customer's behaviour. Several authors argue that when searching for products and making purchases, consumers use reviews and all the information they can collect from webpages, blogs and online brand communities (e.g., Filieri, 2015; Loureiro, 2015). According to a study led by The Nielsen Company, 83 percent of consumers worldwide claim to trust recommendations from friends and family (Nielsen, 2015). Regarding the digital environment, 66 percent of global online consumers trust online reviews. In fact, for this public, these are the second most trusted source of brand information (Nielsen, 2015).

This type of phenomenon leads us to lay emphasis on the drivers of consumer behaviour, and specifically regarding the customer engagement construct. As previously mentioned in the literature review section, several authors have devoted research efforts to conceptualising the customer engagement construct and proposing measurement scales (e.g., Bijmolt et al., 2010; Bolton, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011; van Doorn et al., 2010; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Still, these studies suggest the need for more research into the drivers and outcomes of online customer engagement. In fact, some questions are still not completely answered: what drives consumers to be online engaged? And what are the outcomes of being online engaged? Taking this type

of question as a starting point, our goal in the current study is to contribute to filling this gap in the literature, analysing which online stimuli of experience with websites have more effect on the three dimensions of online engagement, and which of these dimensions has a greater influence on brand advocacy.

Previous studies have considered and suggested several drivers as being related to customer engagement. Customer involvement (Hollebeek et al., 2014), tourist motivations (Kim et al., 2016) or employee engagement in the offline context (Kumar and Pansari, 2016) have been highlighted. Besides these, several other drivers have been emphasised, such as the customer purchase process, incentivized referrals (Pansari and Kumar, 2017), social influence and knowledge-sharing (Hollebeek et al., 2016), i.e., when others are encouraged to take part and exchange information. We can therefore say that engagement occurs through an interactive and co-creative customer experience with the focal agent (Brodie et al., 2011; Park and Allen, 2013).

Indeed, the stimuli of the experience using websites to search for information and purchase products, such as consumer-generated media (CGM), may be a driver of customer engagement. The Web 2.0 has enabled a new generation of interaction between brands and consumers that allows consumers to interact when submitting, reviewing and responding to online information (Burgess et al., 2015), creating phenomena such as CGM, or social media platforms. Websites offering consumer-generated content, such as online consumer reviews (e.g., Booking.com; TripAdvisor.com), allow consumers to search for and identify different options (e.g., hotels, restaurants or attractions) that best match their interests, influencing their decisions (Filieri, 2015; Sparks et al., 2013).

This study has also considered three stimuli of online experience that could influence customer engagement: information/content, interactive features and design-visual appeal. These website features will generate in consumers certain stimuli which may or may not contribute to creating engagement and improving CGM. The literature suggests there is no standard method for evaluating websites (Loureiro, 2015), arguing that researchers should choose the most appropriate approach considering their research aims (Law et al., 2010). Therefore, in this study, we choose to accept information/content, interactive features and design-visual appeal

as suitable for consumer-generated media, following the suggestions in the literature (Han et al., 2006; Loureiro, 2015).

Customer engagement has also been associated with several other dimensions. Emerging as relevant for our study are brand recommendations (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Sawhney et al., 2005), willingness to use again through self-brand connection and brand usage intent (Hollebeek et al., 2014), firm performance (Pansari and Kumar, 2016) and enhanced consumer contributions to collaborative product development processes or co-creation experiences (Hsieh and Chang, 2016; Storbacka et al., 2016).

Therefore, for this study, we suggest that when customers are engaged with an online brand, they will not only be self-connected to the website or platform and wish to use it again, but will also recommend it to other users, and are able to forgive the brand if something goes wrong (brand advocacy).

## **4.2 Theoretical background and hypothesis**

### **4.2.1 Customer experience**

The scientific literature has studied experience in many different contexts and fields (e.g., Grewal et al., 2009; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Loureiro, 2010, 2015; Roschk et al., 2017; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Regarding customer experience, authors have described it as a package of sensory memorabilia which engage the customer's five senses and succeed in delivering a sensory feeling (e.g., Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). In fact, the literature has underlined that when customers purchase goods or a service, they pay in order to be associated not only with the tangible features but also with a series of memorable events (Joy and Sherry, 2003; O'Sullivan and Spangler, 1998). Similarly, a company will succeed in presenting a product or a service if it delivers events that engage customers in a memorable way for a lasting period (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

However, other authors argue that experiences are individual and occur by stimulation. In this sense, it can be an outcome of direct observation and/or participation in events, but every brand-customer exchange may lead to an experience, regardless of its form or nature (Schmitt et al., 2015), and can emerge from events in real or virtual environments. Overall, customer

experience has been observed as the culmination of a customer's interaction with other actors in a broader ecosystem, while recognising the customer's role in co-construction of the experience (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

According to several authors, we can find the online environment as a setting for different types of experiences (e.g., Khalifa and Liu, 2007; Loureiro, 2015; Middleton, 2011). Customers search for information and buy online directly from the company/brand webpages. As an example, we have traveller customers, who are increasingly searching for holidays, hotels, restaurants or other venues for entertainment and recreation online (Loureiro, 2015; Roschk et al., 2017; Sreejesh and Ponnampalath, 2017). These customers increasingly resort to aggregator search engines such as TripAdvisor.com or booking service providers such as Booking.com, which collect market information about accommodation and other travel-related issues. The process of searching, selecting and purchasing is embedded in the holistic conceptualization of an experience (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). The online environment offers different stimuli in some features, such as aesthetics/design, information and interaction (Loureiro, 2015; Park et al., 2007).

Online stimuli create the experience affecting travel customers in a cognitive and emotional way (Sreejesh and Ponnampalath, 2017). When the experience provides the opportunity for self-fulfilment or achievement, customers as individuals will feel more motivated to continue the task, use and interact with the website, and become more involved (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016; Uysal and Hagan, 1993). Indeed, a strong sense of motivation, involvement and a positive response to online stimuli may generate online engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016).

#### **4.2.2 Online engagement**

Engagement reflects an active and interactive customer connection with a given object. Some authors define customer engagement as a psychological state that occurs through interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a given object (e.g., a brand) in specific service relationships (Brodie et al., 2011). Other authors also mention the intensity of individual customer participation and connection with a certain company/brand (Vivek et al., 2012). These authors' viewpoint is in line with van Doorn et al., (2010), who define engagement as

the customer's behavioural manifestation towards a company or a brand that goes beyond purchase behaviours, and which results from motivational drivers. Overall, the online engagement construct goes far beyond purchasing behaviour, is stimulated by motivational drivers (such as involvement, external stimuli operationalized as the atmospheric cues in stores, customer-generated media or other online contexts), and is supported by interaction, the exchange of information and messages.

Extensive research has been carried out aiming to conceptualise consumer-brand engagement. Hollebeek et al., (2014) define this construct as a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions. Although these authors' concept was based on previous definitions in the literature, their intention was to take a broader view containing the CGM and social media context. Three dimensions have emerged from these authors' research: cognitive processing (processing and elaboration in a particular consumer-brand interaction), affection (positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer-brand interaction) and activation (energy, effort and time spent on a brand in a particular consumer/brand interaction)(Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Still regarding online engagement, Baldus et al., (2015) make their first attempt to conceptualise online brand community engagement. These authors define it as the compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community. They develop a scale with eleven dimensions: brand influence, brand passion, connecting, helping, like-minded discussion, rewards (hedonic), rewards (utilitarian), seeking assistance, self-expression, up-to-date information and validation. In fact, the manifestation of a particular cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimension depends to a great extent on the engagement actors – engagement subjects/objects and contexts (Brodie et al., 2011), including media contexts (new online media in contrast to traditional advertising media) (Calder et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the scale developed by Hollebeek et al. (2014) appears as more appropriate for the current study, as it is dedicated to the CGM context, and not only to online brand communities.

Experience and engagement must be differentiated. Indeed, we are in the presence of two distinct concepts (Lemke et al., 2011), in which engagement is not a motivational relationship concept and does not presume a motivational state (Brakus et al., 2009). However, the



experience process may contribute to creating a motivational and emotional state which, in turn, increases the customer's involvement with CGM.

The uses and gratification theory can explain these assumptions (e.g., Blumler, 1985; Ruggiero, 2000; Swanson, 1987). Considering this theory, we may argue that online customers use CGM for searching and purchasing behaviours that increase their knowledge (information) and their social interaction. The use of CGM may generate gratification during the experience process that can involve and engage customers.

### **4.2.3 Stimuli of experience**

The previous literature has not yet found a standard and commonly accepted method for evaluating website features or attributes of the stimuli of website experience, namely regarding CGM or social media platforms. Therefore, the researchers could choose the path that seemed most appropriate for this study (Ip et al., 2011; Law et al., 2010; Loureiro, 2015). However, three core attributes regarding customers' stimuli of experience are more used than others to evaluate website features and are considered appropriate: information/content, interactive features and design-visual appeal (Han et al., 2006; Law et al., 2010; Loureiro, 2015).

Regarding information/content, we can underline the importance of accurate information and content to seduce customers, leading them to be involved in CGM behaviours. Several studies have pointed out that comprehensiveness, uniqueness, accuracy and entertainment value, as well as the timeliness of information/content, will increase customers' involvement with the shopping experience (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002; Kaynama and Black, 2000). Thus, the information/content dimension can be defined as the extent to which customers think the information/contents are useful, updated and reliable (Loureiro, 2015; Park et al., 2007). Customers who read these contents and find them useful and up-to-date can develop a gratification during this experience process, which may generate a motivational impulse that engages them as CGM creators. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Information/content has a positive relationship with CGM engagement, i.e., Cognitive processing (H1a), Affection (H1b) and Activation (H1c).

CGM interactive features are items that trigger a responsive behaviour from online consumers such as creating CGM, or searching and planning through CGM. These items allow consumers to engage in a certain way with the website after the design-visual appeal has captured their attention and the information/content has increased their interest (Han et al., 2006). Thus, we hypothesise the following:

H2: Interactive features have a positive relationship with CGM engagement, i.e., Cognitive processing (H2a), Affection (H2b) and Activation (H2c).

Regarding the design-visual appeal dimension, the existing literature has already highlighted the influence between webpage design and aesthetics, and the perceived attractiveness of an online brand/company (Donthu, 2001; Schaik et al., 2005; Shchiglik and Barnes, 2004). Features such as colour combinations, the type and size of fonts, animation, sound effects, and the clarity and readability of texts make a website both visually attractive and user-friendly. An important measure for online brands is to consider online consumers' experience, as well as goal-directed behaviours and consumers' flow process when deciding on the style and visual interest of the website. The design-visual appeal dimension appears connected to the correct use of colours, graphics, images and animations. In other words, the way CGM is organised and presented (Park et al., 2007). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Design-visual appeal has a positive relationship with CGM engagement, i.e., Cognitive processing (H3a), Affection (H3b) and Activation (H3c).

#### **4.2.4 Brand advocacy**

The existing literature has underlined the influence of customer engagement on firm performance and profitability (Kumar et al., 2013; Kumar and Pansari, 2016), and value creation (Kumar et al., 2010). Notwithstanding, engagement can also influence customers by supporting and promoting a brand/company (advocacy), leading to the use/visit/buy again intentions (enhancing customers' loyalty), and to WOM or e-WOM behaviours (Kim et al., 2016).

The intention to use/visit/buy again, as well as the intention to spread positive recommendations (e.g., word-of-mouth), emerges as an outcome of engagement in the online context (Baldus et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Still, brand advocacy represents a step further in the intention to recommend a brand, as it deals with forgiveness and customers willing to give the engagement object/subject another chance when something goes wrong (Badrinarayanan and Laverie, 2013; Pai et al., 2013). Therefore, we can perceive brand advocacy as the extent to which an individual actively recommends and supports a brand, while ignoring other brands within a product category (Badrinarayanan and Laverie, 2013). We can also understand this construct as the consumer's behaviour in intending to try new products from the brand, spreading favourable word-of-mouth and resisting negative information or other issues (Pai et al., 2013). When consumers are deeply engaged and connected with a brand they are willing to advocate and promote that brand. This engagement could work on three levels, cognitive processing (when customers are focused on social media), affection (when customers are emotionally connected and proud to use social media), and activation (when customers spend time and effort using social media). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: The cognitive processing dimension of CGM engagement has a positive relationship with brand advocacy

H5: The affection dimension of CGM engagement has a positive relationship with brand advocacy

H6: The activation dimension of CGM engagement has a positive relationship with brand advocacy

#### **4.2.5 Online engagement acting as a mediator**

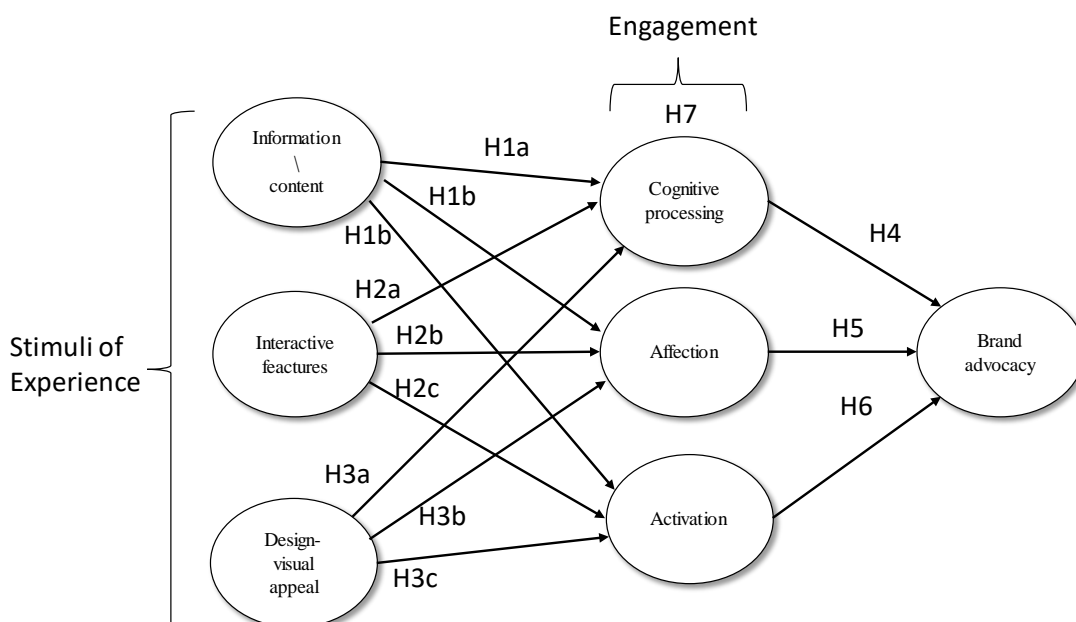
We claim that online engagement may mediate the relationship between online stimuli of experience and brand advocacy. A more intense online stimuli perception is expected to be related to a higher level of online engagement from customers, as the experience of using CGM for information and the purchasing process together with the stimuli provided by the CGM features may stimulate customers to be more involved and interactive, leading to greater

engagement. Additionally, we also argue that online engagement can increase brand advocacy. In this sense, customers' more positively valenced social media brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during the online interactions will result in greater willingness to spread favourable word-of-mouth messages (online/offline), and remain resilient when faced with negative issues that could emerge from the CGM.

Although experience through CGM stimuli is generally considered to have a positive effect on word-of-mouth, positive attitude and loyalty (Loureiro, 2015; Park et al., 2007), and that influence could be enhanced through positive emotions, we consider more than positive emotions are necessary to be actively willing to spread the word about a certain brand and advocate in its favour when something goes wrong. Customers should be positively engaged with the CGM experience and obtain the gratification of being not only emotionally, but also cognitively and actively involved, and interacting. Indeed, when a consumer is willing to advocate in favour of a brand, this action is more demanding than just recommending it to others or continuing to use the brand. Hence, we hypothesise that (see Figure 1):

H7: CGM engagement (cognitive processing, affection and activation) mediates the effects of stimuli of experience on brand advocacy

Figure 8 - Proposed model for study 2



Source: Own elaboration

## **4.3 Methodology**

### **4.3.1 Data collection**

The questionnaire (see appendix P) is developed based on the literature review and all items used to measure the constructs are adapted from existing instruments. The questionnaire was first written in English (because all items were originally in English), translated to Portuguese and then back-translated into English (with the help of native linguists) in order to assure that the Portuguese version communicated the same content as the English version (Sekaran, 1983).

To avoid common method bias, the authors considered several structural aspects. First, we prepare the items to avoid ambiguity, keeping the items simple and concise, without unfamiliar terms and complex syntax (Tourangeau et al., 2000). Second, we measure all items using a Likert-type scale to preserve the content of the original instruments with the same response scale. Changing the response format could cast doubt on the content validity (Mackenzie et al., 2011). Third, not all items of the same construct are placed next to each other, i.e., a physical distance is kept between the items of the same construct. This procedure assures that respondents answer the questionnaire properly, rather than simply repeating the same value on the scale used for the previous or subsequent item (Weijters et al., 2009).

We used a pilot sample of 27 consumers to test the content of items about wording, meaning and understandability, and very few adjustments were made. The questionnaire also includes a socio-demographic section. To carry out this research, we chose a suitable CGM brand. In this regard, we had previously decided to consider existing long-life online brands with global impact. We selected 'Booking.com' (see appendix S) based on several aspects: it is the 92<sup>nd</sup> most popular website globally (Alexa, 2017), an e-commerce giant (Forbes, 2017), and claims to be the number one online hotel reservation service in the world with over 1,200,000 room nights reserved each day (Booking.com, 2017).

To collect data and test the hypotheses, we contacted the administration of an online travel forum (Portal das Viagens) devoted to discussing travel and tourism topics and asked for permission to distribute the questionnaire (from December 2016 to January 2017). This travel forum does not provide any type of booking services and does not publish official information

about hotels or other tourist activities. We intended not to use Booking.com to collect data because we use the questionnaire thinking about this brand. Collecting data directly from there could create bias due to participants being less open in expressing their perceptions.

We distributed 200 questionnaires among randomly selected forum members who use booking.com to search for, select and book hotel rooms, and gathered a total of 183 fully completed and usable responses (after excluding those with missing values, inconsistent responses or extreme multivariate outliers), corresponding to a response rate of 92%. The outliers were deleted using the graphical method, with a residual scatter plot in the range of  $\pm 3$  standard deviation (Hair et al., 2010).

#### **4.3.2 Variables and measurements**

This research assesses information content using four questions, and the design-visual appeal was measured using five items, both adapted from Park et al., (2007) and Loureiro, (2015). This study evaluates interactive features using a five-item scale based on Han and Mills, (2006). Regarding online engagement, cognitive processing was measured using three items, affection was assessed using four items and activation was evaluated using three items; all of these items were based on Hollebeek et al., (2014).

Lastly, we capture brand advocacy using three items: intention to try new products from the brand (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003), favourable word-of-mouth (Aaker, 1996; Zeithaml et al., 1996) and resilience to negative information (Klein and Dawar, 2004; Pelozo, 2006). All items were rated using a 7-point Likert-type scale (from 1 – Strongly disagree to 7 – Strongly agree).

#### **4.3.3 Data analysis**

A structural equation model approach using PLS was employed to test the proposed model. PLS is based on an iterative combination of principal component analysis and regression; it aims to explain the variance of the constructs in the model. In terms of analytical advantages, PLS has been found to be an effective analytical tool to test interactions by reducing Type II errors (Chin et al., 2003). By creating a latent construct that represents an interaction term, a

PLS approach significantly reduces this problem by accounting for error related to the measures (Echambadi et al., 2006).

#### 4.3.4 Sample profile

Regarding the sample profile, this is shown in Table 12. The sample is 62% female with 9.8% of respondents aged less than 25 years, 33.9% of respondents aged between 25 and 34, and 33.2% of respondents aged between 35 and 44. Respondents were well educated, with 64.5% having a university degree. This sample structure has general demographic characteristics of online platform users who book travel and hotels: younger (between twenty and thirty years old), and better-educated respondents (Rada and Domínguez-Álvarez, 2014). Moreover, regarding the brand chosen and the respondents' demographic profile, it is important to note that gender distribution is in line with 'Booking.com' physiognomies. Indeed, relatively to the general internet population females are over-represented at 'Booking.com' website (Alexa, 2017), as in this study.

*Table 12 - Respondents' Demographic profile*

Gender	Age (years)	Education	N° of times (on average) participants book hotel rooms in the period of one year (using Booking.com)
Female: 62.3%	18-24: 9.8%	Preparatory school: 1.1%	1 to 2: 59.0%
Male: 37.7%	25-34: 33.9%	High school: 16.9%	2 to 5: 32.8%
	35-44: 37.2%	Technical school: 4.9%	6 to 9: 4.4%
	45-54: 14.2%	College: 12.6%	10 or more: 3.8%
	>54: 4.9%	Bachelor degree: 36.1%	
		Master degree: 25.1%	
		PhD degree: 3.3 %	

*Source: Own elaboration*

All participants use Booking.com to search for information and book hotel rooms. On average, they search with the intention to book five times a year. Most participants use Booking.com to book hotel rooms (the effective process) one to five times a year.

## **4.4 Second study results and findings**

### **4.4.1 Measurement results**

The proposed model is analysed and interpreted using PLS 2.0 software. The first step in implementing this approach is to analyse the suitability of the measurements assessed by evaluating the reliability of the individual measures and the discriminant validity of the constructs. Then the structural model is appraised.

As we can see in Table 13, all items show loadings equal to or above 0.747 and were therefore accepted. Composite reliability is used to analyse the reliability of the constructs as this has been considered a more accurate measurement than Cronbach's alpha (Roldán and Sánchez-Franco, 2005). Table 13 also indicates that all constructs demonstrate acceptable composite reliability with values over 0.7.

The measures showed adequate convergent validity as the average variance of manifest variables extracted by constructs (AVE) was at least 0.5, showing that more variance was explained than unexplained in the variables associated with each construct.



Table 13 - Measurement model

Construct	LV Mean	Item loading	AVE	Composite reliability	CA
<b>Information\content</b>	5.6		0.807	0.944	0.920
At 'Booking.com' I have the full information at hand		0.919			
'Booking.com' provides in-depth information		0.915			
'Booking.com' gives me enough information, so I can identify what I want to the same degree as if I am in personal contact with someone from a tour operator		0.861			
'Booking.com' is a very good source of information.		0.899			
<b>Interactive features</b>	4.4		0.857	0.968	0.958
'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to hotel\accommodation in destination		0.836			
'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to local attractions		0.942			
'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to local restaurants		0.963			
'Booking.com' presents links or contact information on events and festival reservations		0.932			
'Booking.com' presents maps of major attractions		0.951			
<b>Design-visual appeal</b>	4.8		0.893	0.977	0.970
'Booking.com' webpage looks attractive		0.956			
'Booking.com' webpage looks organized		0.945			
'Booking.com' webpage uses multimedia features properly		0.933			
'Booking.com' webpage uses colours properly		0.944			
'Booking.com' webpage uses fonts properly		0.946			
<b>Cognitive processing</b>	4.5		0.801	0.923	0.876
Using Booking.com gets me to think about Booking.com		0.906			
I think about Booking.com a lot when I'm using it		0.881			
Using Booking.com stimulates my interest to learn more about Booking.com		0.897			
<b>Affection</b>	5.0		0.794	0.939	0.914
I feel very positive when I use Booking.com		0.882			
Using Booking.com makes me happy		0.905			
I feel good when I use Booking.com		0.893			
I'm proud to use Booking.com		0.885			
<b>Activation</b>	5.4		0.785	0.916	0.862
I spend a lot of time using Booking.com, compared to other Booking service providers		0.835			
Whenever I'm using booking service providers, I usually use Booking.com		0.920			
Booking.com is one of the brands I usually use when I use booking service providers		0.901			
<b>Brand Advocacy</b>	5.5		0.647	0.844	0.725
I would like to try new services introduced by 'Booking.com'		0.835			
I talk favourably about 'Booking.com' to friends and family		0.908			
If the 'Booking.com' did something I didn't like, I would be willing to give it another chance		0.747			

Note: AVE-Average Variance Extracted; CA-Cronbach's Alpha

Source: Own elaboration

Fornell and Larcker, (1981) propose the criteria used to assess discriminant validity. This suggests that the square root of AVE should be greater than the correlation between the two constructs in the model. In this study, all latent variables met that criterion, demonstrating discriminant validity (Table 14). The second criterion for discriminant validity is that no item should load more highly on another construct than it does on the construct it intends to

measure. An examination of the matrix loadings and cross-loadings (gathered from PLS software) reveals that all items passed the second criterion for discriminant validity.

Table 14 - Discriminant validity

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
AVE <sup>1/2</sup>	0.898	0.926	0.945	0.895	0.891	0.886	0.804
1. Information\content	1.000						
2. Interactive features	0.469	1.000					
3. Design-visual appeal	0.566	0.684	1.000				
4. Cognitive processing	0.557	0.437	0.524	1.000			
5. Affection	0.619	0.558	0.605	0.621	1.000		
6. Activation	0.616	0.317	0.555	0.623	0.663	1.000	
7. Brand Advocacy	0.608	0.363	0.552	0.636	0.623	0.638	1.000

Source: own elaboration

#### 4.4.2 Structural results

This current study employed a non-parametric approach known as Bootstrap to estimate the precision of the PLS estimates and the strength of the pathways (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Globally, almost all path coefficients are found to be significant at the 0.001 or 0.01 levels. Only H2a and H4 are not significant (Table 15).

Table 15 - Structural results

Path	Standardized coefficient direct effect	Standard Error	t-value	Test-result
Information\content → Cognitive processing	0.372***	0.048	7.826	H1a: supported
Information\content → Affection	0.531***	0.043	12.316	H1b: supported
Information\content → Activation	0.467***	0.063	7.356	H1c: supported
Interactive features → Cognitive processing	0.091 ns	0.058	1.569	H2a: not supported
Interactive features → Affection	0.189***	0.048	3.960	H2b: supported
Interactive features → Activation	-0.190***	0.049	3.858	H2c: supported
Design-visual appeal → Cognitive processing	0.251***	0.063	4.010	H3a: supported
Design-visual appeal → Affection	0.175**	0.055	3.173	H3b: supported
Design-visual appeal → Activation	0.421***	0.065	6.474	H3c: supported
Cognitive processing → Brand advocacy	0.020 ns	0.059	0.342	H4: not supported
Affection → Brand advocacy	0.402***	0.065	6.138	H5: supported
Activation → Brand advocacy	0.459***	0.041	11.335	H6: supported
R <sup>2</sup> Cognitive processing	0.378	Q <sup>2</sup> Cognitive processing		0.299
R <sup>2</sup> Affection	0.594	Q <sup>2</sup> Affection		0.460
R <sup>2</sup> Activation	0.461	Q <sup>2</sup> Activation		0.359
R <sup>2</sup> Brand advocacy	0.642	Q <sup>2</sup> Brand advocacy		0.396

Note: ns-not significant; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

As models yielding significant bootstrap statistics may still be invalid in a predictive sense (Chin, 1995), measures of predictive validity (such as  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$ ) for focal endogenous constructs can be employed. All values of  $Q^2$  are positive, so the relations in the model have predictive relevance (Fornell and Cha, 1994). The model also shows a good level of predictive power ( $R^2$ ) as the modelled constructs explain 64.2 percent of the variance in Brand Advocacy, 59.4 percent of the variance in Affection, 46.1 percent of the variance in Activation, and 37.8 percent of the variance in Cognitive Processing. A GoF statistic (overall goodness of fit) of 0.64 and the high level of predictive power ( $R^2$ ) suggest an acceptable overall fit of the structural model.

The results found in the current study are summarised as follows. The experience using consumer-generated media (CGM) creates stimuli which could generate online customer engagement, except in the case of the interactive features → cognitive processing relationship. Considering the affection dimension of engagement, this is mostly influenced by information\content ( $\beta=0.531$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Information\content is also the most significant stimulus of cognitive processing ( $\beta=0.372$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). It is noticeable that interactive features do not significantly influence cognitive processing. Information\content ( $\beta=0.467$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and design-visual appeal ( $\beta=0.421$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) have a significant effect on activation. However, interactive features have a negative effect on activation ( $\beta=-0.190$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Regarding the relationship between online engagement and brand advocacy, only the dimensions of affection ( $\beta=0.402$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and activation ( $\beta=0.459$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) significantly influence brand advocacy.

These findings call for further discussion. First, information\content emerges as the most important stimulus of website experience for online engagement. Customers give significant importance to reliable, relevant and up-to-date information to be engaged, meaning a consumer's "positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions", as suggested by Hollebeek et al., (2014). Second, interactive features or the presence of links and interactions to other webpages (Loureiro, 2015) do not stimulate consumers to think about the consumer-generated media they are using. The links to other websites seem to be a distraction factor leading consumers to navigate to other places. Third, the negative relationship between interactive features and activation reinforces the idea that the presence of links and interaction with other websites does not allow consumers to spend a lot of time using CGM. Fourth, the ties with CGM in a

way that consumers advocate in favour of the website (even when something in the relationship goes wrong) only occur if the consumer feels happy with, and proud of using the website, as well as using it often. Moreover, the consumer's level of energy, effort, and time spent on the website (activation) together with the degree of positive brand-related affect (affection) determine the willingness to try new services provided by the CGM, talk favourably about it, and give another chance if something goes wrong. Finally, following previous research (e.g., Han and Mills, 2006; Park et al., 2007; Loureiro, 2015;), the three dimensions to measure the stimuli of the experience using the CGM are viewed as appropriate to involve the consumer in a way that generates engagement.

#### **4.4.3 Mediation results**

Following Chin (2010), a two-step procedure was employed within the PLS approach (bootstrapping procedure to test for indirect effects). We implemented the models first without, and then with the mediators (500 bootstrap re-samplings). The significance of the indirect effects was estimated using percentile bootstrap, which generated a 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect paths (Williams and MacKinnon, 2008). If the interval for an indirect path does not contain zero, it means that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero with 95% confidence. As we can see in Table 16, the intervals do not contain zero in any case, rendering cognitive processing, affection and activation (the three dimensions of online engagement) as mediators.

The direct effects of each component of experience stimuli (information/content, interactive features and design-visual appeal) on brand advocacy are significant without the mediators. When introducing the mediators, the direct effects lose importance and the indirect effects become significant indicating that engagement mediates the stimuli of experience → brand advocacy. The variance accounted for (VAF) provides a measure of the degree of partial mediation and is normed between 0% and 100% (Helm et al., 2010). Regarding the indirect effects (see Table 16), the VAF values are higher in the case of the interactive features particularly for activation acting as a mediator - followed by the design-visual appeal.

Table 16 - Mediation results

	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	VAF	Percentile 95% CI		Explained variance
					Lower	Upper	
Information/content→ B. advocacy	0.716***	-	0.716***	-	-	-	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =51.3%
Information/content→ B. advocacy Cognitive processing mediator	0.517*** (t=10.883)	0.196*	0.713***	27.5% partial mediation	0.190	0.202	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Cognitive</sub> =31.1% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =59.3%
Information/content→ B. advocacy Affection mediator	0.395**	0.319**	0.713***	44.7% partial mediation	0.312	0.325	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Affection</sub> =51.9% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =60.3%
Information/content→ B. advocacy Activation mediator	0.412***	0.299**	0.711***	41.1% partial mediation	0.293	0.305	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Activation</sub> =38.0% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =65.1%
Interactive feature→ B. advocacy	0.392***	-	0.392***	-	-	-	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =15.4%
Interactive feature→ B. advocacy Cognitive processing mediator	0.098 ns	0.261**	0.359***	72.6% partial mediation	0.254	0.267	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Cognitive</sub> =19.3% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =41.3%
Interactive feature→ B. advocacy Affection mediator	0.057 ns	0.421** *	0.478***	88.0% partial mediation	0.415	0.427	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Affection</sub> =31.2% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =52.4%
Interactive feature→ B. advocacy Activation mediator	0.144 ns	0.224**	0.368***	60.9% total mediation	0.218	0.230	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Activation</sub> =10.5% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =56.3%
Design-visual appeal→ B. advocacy	0.556***	-	0.556***	-	-	-	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =31.0%
Design-visual appeal→ B. advocacy Cognitive processing mediator	0.300***	0.251*	0.551***	45.5% partial mediation	0.245	0.277	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Cognitive</sub> =27.4% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =54.6%
Design-visual appeal→ B. advocacy Affection mediator	0.184* (t=3.546)	0.371** *	0.555***	66.9% partial mediation	0.365	0.378	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Affection</sub> =36.6% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =52.4%
Design-visual appeal→ B. advocacy Activation mediator	0.205*	0.346** *	0.552***	62.7% partial mediation	0.340	0.352	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Activation</sub> =30.9% R <sup>2</sup> <sub>B.advocacy</sub> =57.3%

Note: \*p<0.015; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001; ns not significant

Source: Own elaboration

Considering the mediation effect, affection seems to have a stronger indirect influence on the information/content→ brand advocacy relationship than the other dimensions of engagement. Affection is also more effective as a mediator in the case of the design-visual appeal→ brand advocacy relationship. However, regarding interactive features, cognitive processing has a particularly important role as a mediator. Although cognitive processing was revealed to be important as a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy, the effects of activation and affection as mediators seem to be stronger for both information/content and design-visual appeal. Overall, these findings reflect the favourable effect of engagement as a mediator, and therefore H7 is supported.

Based on the above considerations and in light of uses and gratification theory (e.g., Blumler, 1985; Ruggiero, 2000; Swanson, 1987), we may say that consumers seem to be more gratified when feeling happy and proud to use CGM than cognitive processing or activation, which in turn, leads customers to be more engaged in advocating in favour of the website brand. Even so, they tend to be more cognitively engaged, that is, they think about the CGM and are more interested in it when the CGM creates enthusiasm through its maps, links and relevant information. Although the more affective component of engagement reveals its strong importance as a mediator when we add the effect of activation and cognitive processing, the willingness to be in favour of the brand increases.

#### **4.5 Second study conclusions and implications**

The results of the current study lead us to express several theoretical contributions and managerial implications. This study contributes to the core research on online engagement, analysing how the stimuli provided by CGM are drivers of online engagement. This is also the first attempt to study brand advocacy as an outcome of online engagement.

However, the results should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations of the study. First, the sample used was not very large. Even though the participants represent individuals who search for information and book online, future study should use a larger sample, and diverse communities and CGM brands to capture different cultural contexts. Second, future studies could analyse the effect of experience stimuli and online engagement on other variables such as brand equity or the willingness to sacrifice in favour of the brand. Third, the present study did not include moderating variables in the model, but the strength of engagement on brand advocacy may be greater under a positive attitude valence. Socio-demographic variables may also strengthen or alter the relationship between constructs in the model.

From a managerial point of view, brand managers and firms in general should bear in mind that valid, useful and relevant content for users creates a greater connection and brand advocacy than other stimuli. This means that brand managers increasingly need to focus on valid content generation and content management.

The fact that we are dealing with consumer-generated media content leads us to another managerial concern: how to organise consumer-generated content that amplifies and advocates brands? As revealed, the level of online consumer engagement through Affection (positive brand-related affect) and Activation (consumer's level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand) can affect the level of CGM, and thereby the intensity of brand advocacy. Major attention should be devoted to these dimensions by marketers and firms when managing brands. Finally, our study suggests that the number of links and possibilities to interact and exchange the information and material present on the website constitutes the stimulus whose influence could contribute most to engaging customers.

## Chapter 5

### **Chapter 5: Study 3 – The role of engagement in consumers’ online review endeavour: a text mining approach**

#### **5.1 Text-mining research**

Elizabeth, 36, is enjoying a night out alone with her husband, Phillip, 42, in Manhattan, New York City. Since they had kids, it is no longer frequent to go out and have dinner at a sophisticated, trendy restaurant, as they usually did in the past. Caroline, 23, and Emmett, 26, are visiting Mobile, Alabama, for the first time in their lives. Although they live in Georgia, they had never visited Mobile and are yet to discover the city. Charlotte, 31, and Harry, 32, are returning to London, UK, to visit their former graduate colleagues. Since they finished their studies in London several years ago, it is the first time they have been back. Although these people do not know each other, they have something in common. They do not have any idea where to have dinner and have used ‘Yelp’ (see appendix T) to find a restaurant. They searched for several places that would fulfil their expectations by reading other consumers’ reviews, and finally decided.

These examples illustrate the importance of being on social media for companies. Indeed, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Cantalops and Salvi, 2014; Tang and Guo, 2015; Xu and Li, 2016) is a powerful communication tool for any company wanting to succeed in the cluttered and competitive environment of hospitality and tourism. The use of online reviews as part of the decision-making process is increasingly popular among consumers searching for services or products, boosted by the fast growth of information technology (European Commission, 2016; European Parliamentary Research Service, 2015; Smith and Anderson, 2016).

Electronic word of mouth can be defined as all the informal communication directed at consumers through internet-based technology that is related to the usage or characteristics of special products and services or their providers (Litvin et al., 2008). Other authors have described eWOM as a positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former consumers about a product/service or a company, which is available to a large set of people through the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Compared to WOM, this electronic form



presents a broader influence and interaction, which can have a greater effect on influencing demand (Cantallops and Salvi, 2014). Indeed, there is a good chance that all the users mentioned above have also contributed with their own reviews on ‘Yelp’ after their experience that evening.

Consumers’ opinions on social network platforms are known to influence peer behaviour (Bai, 2011; Eirinaki et al., 2012). This is particularly significant in the online context, since today’s consumers are looking for recommendations as part of their decision-making process, especially when they are buying something that is difficult to evaluate without trying out (Jacobsen and Munar, 2012; Sparks and Browning, 2011). Consumers are also known to be more engaged in sharing their experiences by writing online reviews and recommendations that may be useful to others (Cantallops and Salvi, 2014; Tang and Guo, 2015; Xu and Li, 2016).

Due to the growth of online reviews (Statista, 2016), companies are frequently faced with the daunting task of having to read and make a holistic interpretation of all the valuable opinions written about their companies and about the competition. For instance, a consumer-specific claim about an issue using a certain type of sentiment can be perceived by others as a statement, and mislead them (Kim and Hovy, 2004). On the other hand, the sentimental nature of people’s opinions can make them easily understandable by others, which can contribute to the decision-making process. Therefore, extensive information data extracted from social network platforms are extremely valuable as a large set of opinions on a certain issue are very unlikely to be biased (Montoyo et al., 2012). Thus, user-generated content (UGC) on social network platforms has emerged as an important source for understanding and managing consumers’ expectations, particularly using automated and semi-automated knowledge extraction techniques from text such as text mining and sentiment analysis (Zhang et al., 2009).

Previous studies provided initial evidence about the validity and utility of text mining, and recent studies show that consumers’ online opinions often predict attitudes towards a product or service (Tang and Guo, 2015). Therefore, some authors have begun to predict consumers attitudes such as consumer satisfaction from online reviews by comparing satisfied and unsatisfied consumers (Berezina et al., 2016; Xu and Li, 2016), or by predicting trust towards user-generated content and its influence on consumer recommendations (Filieri et al., 2015).

Online reviews, namely the sentiment polarity of the textual content is also known to influence digital engagement (Craig et al., 2015). The current study intends to explore the global sentiment trends (positive, negative, neutral) regarding restaurants, hotels and nightlife entertainment in consumers' online reviews, and the latent topic sentiments of engagement and associated concepts in these reviews.

The present study aims to fill this gap by analysing consumers' sentiments towards restaurant, hotel and nightlife entertainment reviews on Yelp.com through (i) a global sentiment analysis using positive, neutral and negative sentiments and (ii) a topic-sentiment analysis to capture latent topics in online reviews. However, such terms will emerge from a dictionary set using known dimensions of engagement, experience, emotions and brand advocacy. The dictionary is extended using the WordNet 2.1 lexical database. Thus, we aim to give insights into the dimensions of online consumer engagement and associated concepts in consumers' reviews. The findings will help social network managers to reinforce their platforms.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. In the next section, we present the literature review. The following section describes the methodology, detailing the text mining tool, the sample and the dictionary development. The subsequent section is devoted to reporting the findings and their discussion. Finally, we present the conclusions, implications, limitations and suggestions for further research.

## **5.2 Theoretical background**

### **5.2.1 Online consumer reviews**

The increasing availability of technology makes it easier for consumers to use social media platforms such as TripAdvisor, Yelp or others to gather information during the consumer-decision process. Therefore, reviews and recommendations from other consumers end up working as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)(Constantinides and Fountain, 2008), which is related to any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former consumers about a product/service or a company, and is available to a large set of people through the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The existing literature discussing reviewers has primarily focused on the motivation of consumers who write reviews (e.g., Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), on the influence of consumer reviews on other consumers' purchasing decisions

(Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2012; Senecal and Nantel, 2004; Smith et al., 2005), and how sales of goods are affected by consumer reviews (Cui et al., 2012; Dellarocas et al., 2007; Zhu and Zhang, 2010).

Following this path, several types of research have emerged discussing the impact of reviewers on the hospitality and tourism industry. In this sector, companies/brands that are affected by positive reviewers increase demand and profit, while others affected by negative reviewers see a decrease in demand and profit (Cantalops and Salvi, 2014). Other studies also provide evidence that online consumer reviews influence hotel room sales (e.g., Ye et al., 2009), consumers' travel destination intentions (Arsal et al., 2008) and booking behaviours (Filiéri and McLeay, 2014; Sparks and Browning, 2011). Online consumer reviews have also been found to be important as information providers to other potential consumers (Inversini et al., 2009), as they increasingly trust in online reviews to make their decisions concerning restaurants and what to order (Hicks et al., 2012) or other situations when consumers make decisions. Thus, research has pointed out the determinants of consumers' attitudes and intentions while using online consumer reviews in planning travel (Ayeh et al., 2013), but also their impact on the credibility of companies/brands (e.g., hotels, restaurants, night-life entertainment) (Sparks and Browning, 2011) and how this reduces consumers' perceptions of risk when booking accommodation (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008).

The willingness to write reviews (positive or negative) demonstrates a more proactive interaction with the firm/brand (Kannan and Li, 2017). Consumers not only express their recommendations to their peers, but participate more proactively with the firm/brand by giving suggestions to improve the goods/service, co-create new products and interact with the firm, that is, become more engaged (Brodie et al., 2013). These online comments also expose the consumers' emotional states and thoughts when they think about the firm/brand (Calheiros et al., 2017).

Online consumer reviews create a large amount of unstructured text with meaningful information for managers, who need to translate it into actionable knowledge (Fan et al., 2006). One of the embodiments of this type of procedure may be using automated and semi-automated knowledge extraction techniques from text such as text mining and sentiment analysis (Zhang et al., 2009).

### **5.2.2 Text mining and sentiment analysis**

In the past few years, we have noticed an increasing number of studies dealing with the text mining and sentiment analysis approach. Technological development is closely related to this phenomenon. In fact, this type of approach benefits from the progress made by machine learning methods in natural language processing (Manning et al., 2014; Manning and Schütze, 1999), and by the increasing availability of large information datasets (Das and Chen, 2007; Tong and Koller, 2002).

Text mining is a technique that analyses and processes a large amount of unstructured text with the purpose of extracting meaningful information that can be translated into actionable knowledge (Fan et al., 2006). This unstructured text may consist of documents, comments, reviews or any other type of information. This technique usually includes text categorization, text clustering and sentiment analysis, among others (Srivastava and Sahami, 2009).

Regarding sentiment analysis, researchers use this technique to gain insights into consumers' overall attitudes, opinions and emotions about a product or a service. This analysis is performed based on published online reviews and comments (Költringer and Dickinger, 2015) and can be made through the computational detection and study of sentiments in the text (Li and Wu, 2010). The goal is to extract the content from consumer reviews for a certain type of product or service, and to classify this into positive or negative opinions, according to the polarity of the review (Cambria et al., 2013; Casaló et al., 2015). Based on this technique, researchers and practitioners can infer which features of their products or services influence their consumers' satisfaction, and which can help to create or change the focus of companies/brands' strategies (Berezina et al., 2016; Xu and Li, 2016). Existing research commonly divides this technique into two different but consecutive steps, namely (i) detecting topics and dimensions through text classification and text segmentation, and (ii) distinguishing the polarity and strength of the sentiment of each opinion/review (Medhat et al., 2014; Pang and Lee, 2004).

In current scientific research, text mining and sentiment analysis techniques are being employed in several scientific domains, such as medicine and health informatics (Martínez et al., 2016; Rodrigues et al., 2016), psychology (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Liu, 2015), psychology and human-computer interaction (Giatsoglou et al., 2017; Ortigosa et al., 2014),

marketing (Ghose et al., 2012; Guerreiro et al., 2016) or tourism and hospitality management (Calheiros et al., 2017; Godnov and Redek, 2016; Moro et al., 2017; Xu and Li, 2016), among others.

### **5.2.3 Text mining tools**

With the development of text mining and sentiment analysis techniques, a variety of text mining tools became available to researchers. Although these different tools provide the same elementary information, they often present different types of technical and methodological features. Therefore, researchers need to adapt their strategies and needs to the best available text mining tool (Spinakis and Chatzimakri, 2005).

Kaur and Chopra (2016) have carried out a study exploring the available text mining tools. This study identified 55 popular text mining tools and their features. Also according to these authors, text mining tools can be divided into Proprietary Text Mining Tools, Open Source Text Mining Tools, and Online Text Mining Tools (Kaur and Chopra, 2016).

Among the most important companies and/or systems dealing with text mining, sentiment analysis and opinions we can highlight Lexalytics/Semantria ([www.lexalytics.com](http://www.lexalytics.com)), IBM Watson AlchemyAPI ([www.ibm.com/watson/alchemy-api.html](http://www.ibm.com/watson/alchemy-api.html)), SAS Text Miner ([www.sas.com/en\\_us/software/text-miner.html](http://www.sas.com/en_us/software/text-miner.html)), RapidMiner Text Mining (<https://rapidminer.com>), MeaningCloud ([www.meaningcloud.com](http://www.meaningcloud.com)) and Leximancer ([www.leximancer.com](http://www.leximancer.com)).

## **5.3 Methodology**

### **5.3.1 MeaningCloud**

In this study, MeaningCloud (see appendix U), previously known as Textalytics, was used as a text mining tool. This text mining tool lets researchers and practitioners identify text sentimental polarity, the target of the sentiment, text theme and classification, and text clustering, among others.

MeaningCloud can be used with different programming languages, such as Java, PHP, Python or Visual Basic, and has a Microsoft Excel extension that enables text semantic analysis through spreadsheets. We have performed our research in English, but this tool supports different languages (e.g., English, Spanish or French). MeaningCloud performs text analysis at the sentence level. It first identifies the polarities of a certain sentence, and with those polarities it determines the global sentiment of the text. The sentiment polarities vary from P+ (very positive), P (positive), NEU (neutral), N (negative) to N+ (very negative).

MeaningCloud uses Natural Language Processing techniques (NLP) to discover the relationship between sentiments and entities that appear in the text. This tool also allows users to define the polarity of entities and concepts in the study, which makes it suitable for any type of research (Manning et al., 2014; Mostafa, 2013). In fact, recent research has used MeaningCloud to perform studies on knowledge extraction from unstructured data (Martínez et al., 2016; Segura-Bedmar et al., 2015).

### **5.3.2 Data collection and preparation**

The YELP Dataset (Yelp, 2017) is used in the current study as the source for user reviews and local business information. Yelp is a review-centric geosocial network platform that provides information about venues and users (Parikh et al., 2014). Each user has their own account and can write reviews, interact with other users, report locations and search for venues of interest. User reviews have a star rating system, ranging from 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest ranking). Each venue has its own average rating star (rounded to the nearest half star) based on the ratings of all the posted reviews. Several studies have been conducted based on the Yelp Dataset (e.g., McAuley and Leskovec, 2013; Passos et al., 2010; Rahman et al., 2015).

The Yelp Dataset has around 4.1 million reviews created and made available to the community by 1 million users about 144 thousand small businesses (neighbourhood business) from distinct activity sectors. The most representative sectors are restaurants, hotels and nightlife entertainment (although there is information available about other sectors such as hair stylists, manicures, flowers, golf, or legal consultations). The information also includes 1.1M business attributes (e.g., hours, parking availability, ambience), and around 200 thousand pictures from the included businesses. Although Yelp is present in thirty-two countries and more than 219

cities, this dataset only covers four countries (The United Kingdom, USA, Germany and Canada) and 11 cities (Edinburgh, Karlsruhe, Montreal, Waterloo, Pittsburgh, Charlotte, Urbana-Champaign, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Madison and Cleveland).

Although the Yelp Dataset does not correspond to the general term of big data, we are facing a large amount of data that needs to be processed. This dataset has almost ten gigabytes of unstructured information, being so large and complex that traditional data processing application software proves to be unsuitable. In order to deal with this amount of information, we have made several unpacking procedures, and then resort to IBM SPSS Modeler to extract our random sample.

### 5.3.3 Sample

A random sample of 15 000 unique reviews was extracted from the original dataset. The sample size seems adequate, because at a certain point when the dataset is large enough improvement may be not achieved only by increasing the size of the data employed (Pak and Paroubek, 2010). The sample matches several defined characteristics such as country of origin of business, type of sector, and time range among others. We can verify the criteria in Table 17.

*Table 17 - Sample size and characteristics*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sample size and characteristics</b></p> <p>N=15000 reviews</p> <p><b>Country</b> USA</p> <p><b>Cities</b> Pittsburgh, Charlotte, Urbana-Champaign, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Madison, Cleveland</p> <p><b>Sample Time-Range</b> From 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016</p> <p><b>Activity sectors</b> Restaurants Hotels Nightlife entertainment</p> <p><b>Users typology</b> Contributed at least 10 reviews on YELP Only users rating 3.5 stars or above</p>
---

*Source: Own elaboration*

We chose to analyse only the USA to avoid cultural biases (Si and Cullen, 1998) and because it is the most represented country in this dataset. We chose to employ all the cities available for this country, as we could gain different insights from different types of users and businesses. In order to avoid seasonal phenomena (Butler, 1998; Litvin et al., 2008), we use the most recent full year available (2016) from 1<sup>st</sup> of January to 31<sup>st</sup> of December. Regarding activity sectors, we focus on the most representative businesses included, as this could provide a more comprehensive sample: restaurants, hotels and nightlife entertainment. The selected user profile was defined as (i) those who have contributed at least 10 reviews to the platform, and (ii) entities that have been rated with at least 3.5 stars, as Yelp defines 3 stars as the neutral point in their ranking system.

In this type of approach, we are not able to have a common demographic characterization as in other empirical studies. The profile characteristics for text mining studies could reveal misfit as profiles may not present users' real demographic characteristics (Al Hasib, 2009). Therefore, for the current sample, we decide to analyse how long users have been Yelping (been an active user) (Table 18), and the number of reviews made by each user (Table 19).

*Table 18 - Yelping since (year each user started being an active user of Yelp)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of users</b>	<b>%</b>
2004	3	0.02%
2005	9	0.06%
2006	81	0.54%
2007	188	1.25%
2008	426	2.84%
2009	903	6.02%
2010	1389	9.26%
2011	2265	15.10%
2012	2189	14.59%
2013	2260	15.07%
2014	2190	14.60%
2015	2055	13.70%
2016	1042	6.95%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15000</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Source: own elaboration*



*Table 19 - Number of reviews per user*

<b>Number of reviews</b>	<b>Users</b>
> 7.000	9
Between 2.000 and 6.999	61
Between 1.000 and 1.999	160
Between 700 and 999	170
Between 500 and 699	281
Between 300 and 499	564
Between 200 and 299	714
Between 100 and 199	1 851
Between 50 and 99	2 452
Between 30 and 49	2520
Between 10 and 29	6 218
Total	15 000

*Source: Own elaboration*

### **5.3.4 Dictionary and thesaurus**

Text mining and sentiment analysis are techniques that allow researchers to discover and analyse the implicit structure of the text (e.g. grammar structure). Text mining usually uses Natural Language Processing – NLP techniques to extract meaningful information that can be translated into actionable knowledge (Fan et al., 2006; Mostafa, 2013). However, without a guide to reveal the most important information in textual information, text mining techniques present researchers with all the frequent terms and topics available in text, however relevant they may be for a particular study. Therefore, to conduct a proper analysis in a specific field, text mining should use a literature-based dictionary of terms to guide the analysis in a top-down approach rather than only using a bottom-up approach. Researchers need to summarise text, group text into co-occurring terms to form clusters and later find the most relevant terms and topics using ontologies and dictionaries (Kaur and Chopra, 2016; Mostafa, 2013; Tang and Guo, 2015).

The creation of a dictionary should respect some limiting rules, so that researchers can ensure the text answers the research questions. They can be generated automatically using an algorithm to find significant seed words to analyse the ideas present in the text (Kaur and Chopra, 2016; Martínez et al., 2016). But manual intervention is critical to ensure a highly accurate dictionary of relevant terms and topics. Although it should be as systematised as possible (Godbole et al., 2010), the dictionary can be organised in collaboration with a domain

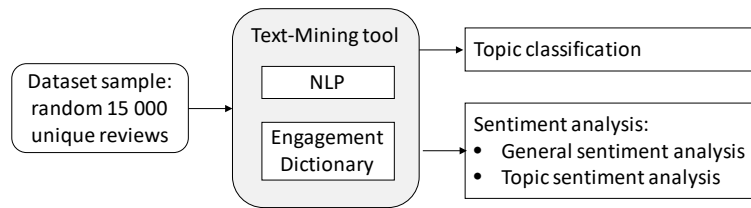
expert to suit the current demands of the study in hand (Godbole et al., 2010; Martínez et al., 2016), and should be adapted to the consumer research context (Tang and Guo, 2015).

We systematise the creation of our engagement dictionary (see appendix Q) based on several assumptions. First, we build the dictionary based on validated scales. To do so, we chose to capture experience through hedonism (four items) and novelty (four items) (Kim et al., 2012), and involvement (ten items) based on Zaichkowsky (1994). We measure emotions through pleasure (two items), arousal (three items) and dominance (three items) (Loureiro, 2015; Mazaheri et al., 2011), and assess brand advocacy using three items: intention to try new products from the brand (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003), favourable word-of-mouth (Aaker, 1996; Zeithaml et al., 1996) and resilience to negative information (Klein and Dawar, 2004; Pelozo, 2006). Regarding online consumer engagement, we assess this by cognitive processing (three items), affection (four items) and activation (three items), all based on Hollebeek et al., (2014).

Secondly, for these thirty-nine items, we develop a thesaurus based on WordNet 2.1. WordNet® is a popular resource organising general purpose concepts and entities for the English language, which originated in the Princeton University Department of Psychology, and is currently held by the Department of Computer Science at the same University. WordNet is a large lexical database of English. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are grouped into sets of cognitive synonyms, each expressing a distinct concept (Miller, 1995). This leads us to a thesaurus with 268 synonyms, which was uploaded to the MeaningCloud text mining tool. This process results in an aggregate dictionary that combines the already available NLP dictionary of terms from the tool with the newly created and uploaded engagement dictionary.

A final step was taken to ensure manual validation of the engagement dictionary developed for the current study by using the help of two experts in the domain of the study. Figure 9 presents the methodological framework for this research.

Figure 9 - Methodological framework for Study 3



Source: Own elaboration

### 5.4 Third study findings

This section presents the results of the text mining and sentiment analysis procedures. The results from text mining techniques may vary from simple approaches (e.g., arithmetic averages), to those with intermediate complexity (e.g., linear regression, clustering and decision trees), or highly complicated approaches such as neural networks (Spinakis and Chatzimakri, 2005). In this study, we employ statistical inferences based on the results of topic extraction, text classification and a sentiment analysis.

We began to perform a topic classification of our 15 000 sample reviews. MeaningCloud identified 59 latent topics that were discussed 321 594 times in the online reviews. From those broader topics, 10 topics are selected according to our engagement dictionary. Those 10 topics were discussed 53 391 times in online reviews. We can perform this identification by using the engagement dictionary, which relates the constructs/dimensions with the existing topics, as seen in Table 20. These first data confirm that we have available information about our research field among the sample reviews.

Table 20 - Sample reviews topic frequency

<b>Construct/Dimension</b>	<b>Topic Frequency</b>
Brand Advocacy	4 299
Emotions>Arousal	739
Emotions>Dominance	1 000
Emotions>Pleasure	3 068
Engagement>Activation	13 811
Engagement>Affection	14 324
Engagement>Cognitive Processing	8 397
Experience>Hedonism	4 112
Experience>Novelty	2 897
Involvement	744
<b>Total</b>	<b>53 391</b>

Source: own elaboration

The second step consists of performing a text classification. With this step, we categorise the available text into labels and their relevance, as the text mining tool assigns one label and a relevance classification to each review. MeaningCloud performs the text classification through a model classification (tool default settings) designed for social media. Of the 15 000 reviews available in our sample, the text mining tool was not able to classify 2 458 reviews. We obtain 12 542 reviews correctly classified according to the text classification model for social media. As seen in Table 21, 47.50% reviews are labelled as lifestyle and leisure, and 76.62% of the reviews are labelled in the top five classifications (lifestyle and leisure, economy and finance, social issues, art and culture and tourism, travel and commuting).

*Table 21 - Text classification labels*

<b>Label</b>	<b>Sum</b>
lifestyle and leisure	5 957
economy and finance	1 001
social issues	967
art and culture	896
tourism, travel and commuting	789
labour	571
health	502
environment, weather and energy	426
sport	325
crime, law and justice	277
science and technology	252
politics	231
disaster and accident	107
unrest, conflicts and war	107
education	77
greetings and thanks	33
religion and belief	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>12542</b>

*Source: own elaboration*

As the system provided a text relevance classification based on the social media model, we can also analyse the relevance of the reviews with respect to their label. Table 22 shows that text related to the lifestyle and leisure label is the most relevant, followed by tourism, travel and commuting, and social issues.

*Table 22 - Sum of text relevance by label*

<b>Label</b>	<b>Sum of relevance</b>
lifestyle and leisure	10 958.42
tourism, travel and commuting	2 213.40
social issues	1 984.36
economy and finance	1 482.25
art and culture	1 420.61
labour	625.34
health	491.64
environment, weather and energy	385.02
sport	347.56
crime, law and justice	274.85
science and technology	266.36
disaster and accident	253.83
politics	153.99
education	92.61
unrest, conflicts and war	56.55
religion and belief	14.88
greetings and thanks	7.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>21029</b>

*Source: own elaboration*

With the procedures of (i) analysis of reviews' topic frequency, (ii) analysis of text classification labels, and (iii) relevance of text by labels, we intend to demonstrate that the data obtained from our online review sample is relevant to our research topic (see Table 20), and in line with our research field, i.e., restaurants, hotels and nightlife entertainment (see Table 21 and Table 22).

The third step was to perform the sentiment analysis of the 10 topics of the engagement dictionary. We divided this procedure in two sequential parts, (i) a global sentiment analysis, and (ii) a topic-sentiment analysis, as we know that each review can hold more than one relevant research topic. As mentioned, MeaningCloud assigns a sentiment polarity classification (P+, P, Neu, N, N+) to each review/topic. To perform some statistical analyses, we convert the letter scale into a numeric scale (+2, +1, 0, -1, -2), as seen in Table 23.

Table 23 - Polarity scale convert

Polarity	
Letter	Numerical
P+	+2
P	+1
Neu	0
N	-1
N+	-2

Source: own elaboration

Concerning the global sentiment analysis (Table 24), we find that most of the users' recommendations are positive. In fact, 80.09% of the reviews analysed reveal a positive sentiment, 9.68% of the reviews reveal a negative sentiment, and only 0.71% of the reviews are very negative.

Table 24 - Reviews' polarity scale (positive to negative)

Polarity scale	Sum	%	P-N %
2	2 232	14.88%	80.09%
1	9 781	65.21%	
0	1 429	9.53%	9.53%
-1	1 452	9.68%	10.39%
-2	106	0.71%	
Total	15 000	100.00%	100.00%

Note: P-N % refers to positive review group and negative review group %

Source: own elaboration

We also analysed confidence in the results by assigning to each sentiment review a confidence value, ranging 0 to 100. Results show a confidence in polarity classification of 91.58, with a standard deviation of 6.28 (Table 25).

Table 25 - Confidence values for global sentiment analysis

Confidence		
Mean	SD	Var [x]
91.58	6.28	39.42

Source: own elaboration

Regarding the general type of sentiments expressed by users in our sample reviews, we can analyse (i) users' ironic statements, (ii) the level of objectivity/subjectivity, and (iii) the stated level of agreement/disagreement. Table 26 shows that users rarely use ironic statements, are

deeply subjective in their opinions, and tend to express some type of disagreement during their review with something or some feature concerning the engaged object, i.e., the local business.

*Table 26 - General sentiment analysis*

Sentiment analysis					
Ironic	915	6,10%	Objective	747	4,98%
Non-ironic	14 085	93,90%	Subjective	14 253	95,02%
			Agreement	5 329	35,53%
			Disagreement	9 671	64,47%

*Source: own elaboration*

After conducting the general sentiment analysis, we classified the sentiment score of the 10 topics found using the engagement dictionary. Each user can reveal in their respective reviews several distinct categories of sentiments, which may even be antagonistic. From our 15 000 sample reviews, 280 251 sentiment categories are highlighted in our 59 latent topics, and of those, 41 694 are related to our 10 topics selected according to our engagement dictionary.

*Table 27 - Sentiment analysis polarity for engagement constructs*

Engagement dimensions	Mean	SD	Var [x]
Engagement>Cognitive Processing	1.784	0.598	0.358
Engagement>Affection	1.072	1.016	1.033
Experience>Hedonism	1.070	1.033	1.066
Emotions>Pleasure	0.969	0.636	0.405
Engagement>Activation	0.861	0.750	0.563
Experience>Novelty	0.786	0.872	0.760
Emotions>Dominance	0.721	0.665	0.442
Brand Advocacy	0.600	1.034	1.069
Involvement	0.306	0.831	0.691
Emotions>Arousal	0.137	0.600	0.360
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.015</b>	<b>0.940</b>	<b>0.883</b>

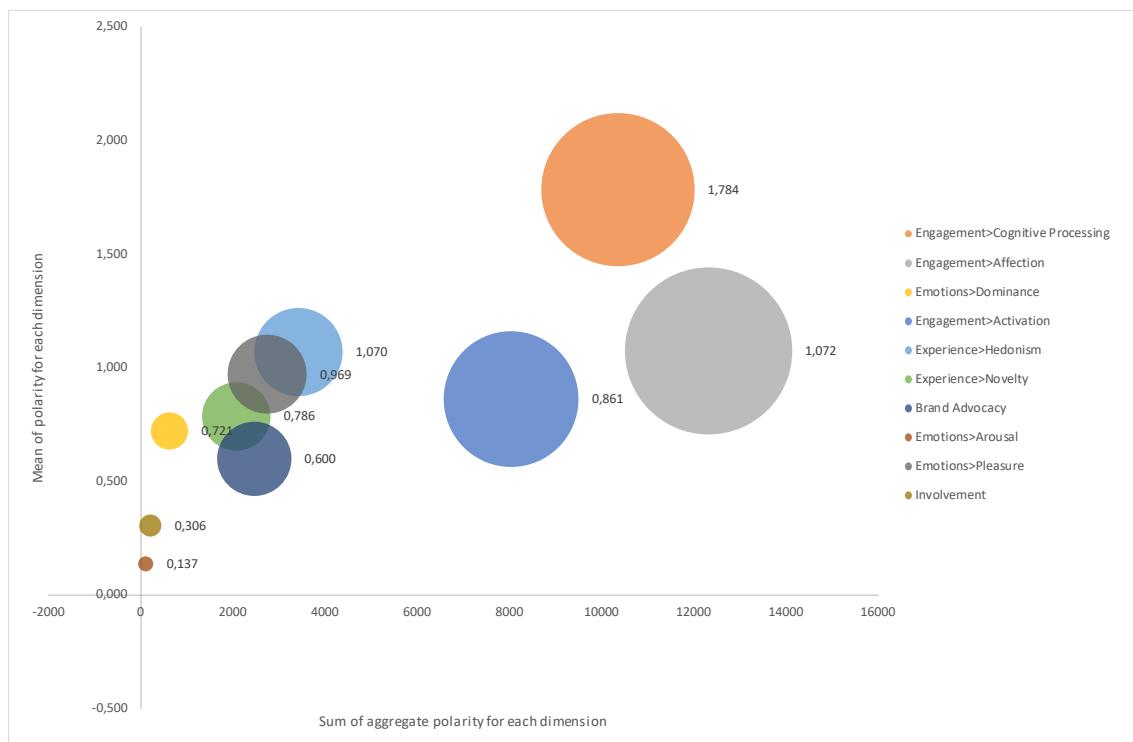
*Note: SD – Standard deviation; Var [x] - variance*

*Source: own elaboration*

As shown in Table 27, the topic with the highest positive discussion is cognitive processing ( $\bar{x}$ =1.784; SD =0.598) (Hollebeek et al., 2014), which is related to the individual's level of perceived instrumental and experiential value (Brodie et al., 2013). This dimension is ranked with a very high positive polarity, which may reveal positive customer perception of its recommendation value to others. On the other hand, involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1994) presents a low average value in terms of sentiment polarity ( $\bar{x}$ =0.306; SD =0.831). Although the mean value of involvement is positive, it is very close to the neutral point, which shows a

neutral feeling of clients in expressing their opinion and recommendations when it comes to involvement. Experience, and particularly hedonic experience ( $\bar{x}=1.070$ ;  $SD =1.033$ ) (Kim et al., 2012), emerges positively in customers' contributions. It is also important to underline the role of emotions (Loureiro, 2015; Mazaheri et al., 2011), as the three dimensions performed differently. While dominance ( $\bar{x}=0.721$ ;  $SD =0.665$ ) and pleasure ( $\bar{x}=0.969$ ;  $SD =0.636$ ) have positive values, discussions that cover topics around arousal ( $\bar{x}=0.137$ ;  $SD =0.600$ ) terms appear to have neutral values. One last remark is the fact that none of the constructs/dimensions presents a negative sentimental polarity value. Figure 10 shows the relevance of each construct/dimension. The chart shows topics ordered by mean of sentiment polarity (Y axis) and by the sum of the polarities in each topic (X axis). The size of the bubble represents the sum of the aggregate polarity of each dimension.

*Figure 10 - Construct/dimensions relevance by polarity (mean/aggregate sum)*



*Source: own elaboration*

We can assess in Table 28 the sentimental analysis polarity for each construct/dimension in use, measured by the performance of their individual items, allowing us to understand the influence of each on the final results. A few dimensions present average sentimental polarity values of 0, which means they can be understood as neutral. Only one item is not assessed due to lack of information (i.e., experience/novelty/once-in-a-lifetime experience).



Table 28 - Sentiment analysis polarity for engagement constructs/dimension items

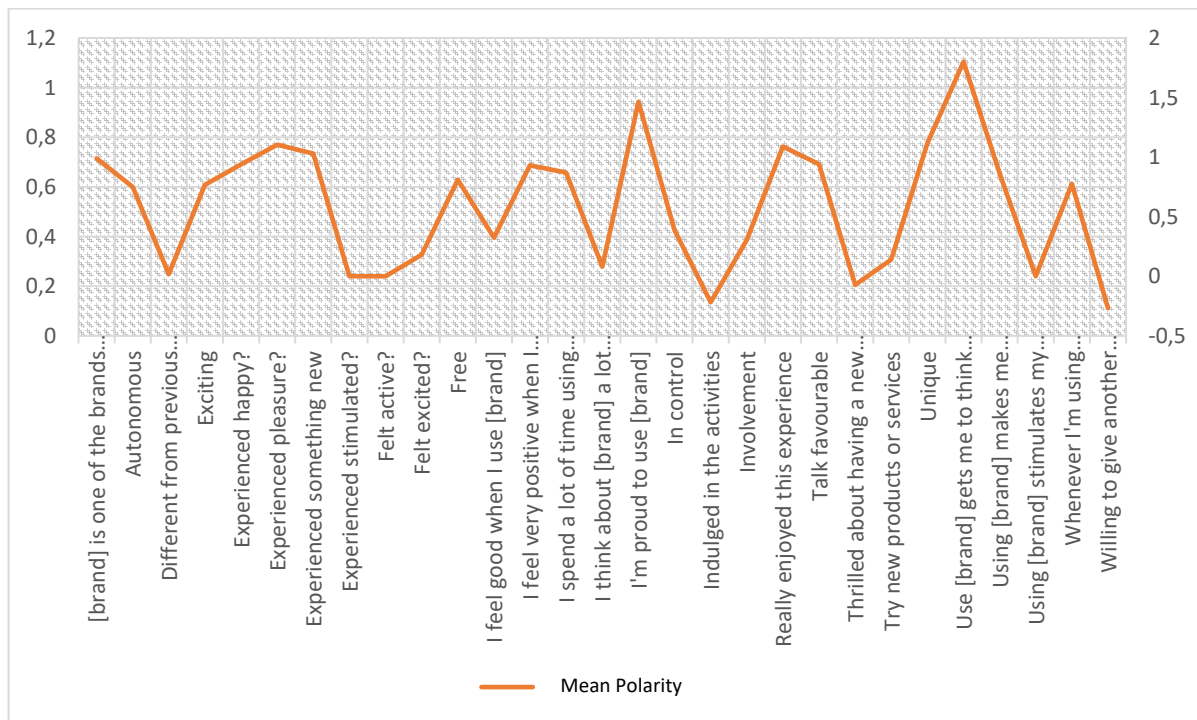
Items	Mean	SD	Var [x]
<b>Pleasure</b>			
Experienced happiness?	0.940	0.550	0.302
Experienced pleasure?	1.105	0.930	0.864
<b>Arousal</b>			
Felt active?	0.000	0.632	0.400
Felt excited?	0.181	0.610	0.372
Felt stimulated?	0.000	0.544	0.295
<b>Dominance</b>			
In control	0.387	0.687	0.472
Autonomous	0.750	0.500	0.250
Free	0.810	0.632	0.399
<b>Brand advocacy</b>			
Try new products or services	0.140	0.639	0.409
Talk favourably	0.940	0.947	0.896
Willing to give another chance?	-0.267	0.699	0.489
<b>Cognitive processing</b>			
Using [brand] gets me to think about [brand]	1.800	0.575	0.331
I think about [brand] a lot when I'm using it	0.081	0.433	0.188
Using [brand] stimulates my interest to learn more about [brand]	0.000	0.354	0.125
<b>Affection</b>			
I feel very positive when I use [brand]	0.931	0.779	0.607
Using [brand] makes me happy	0.861	1.368	1.872
I feel good when I use [brand]	0.324	1.236	1.527
I'm proud to use [brand]	1.464	0.726	0.527
<b>Activation</b>			
I spend a lot of time using [brand] compared to other [category] brands	0.870	0.808	0.654
Whenever I'm using [category], I usually use [brand]	0.775	0.581	0.338
[brand] is one of the brands I usually use when I use [category]	0.989	0.373	0.139
<b>Experience – Hedonism</b>			
Thrilled about having a new experience	-0.071	0.917	0.841
Indulged in the activities	-0.217	0.795	0.632
Really enjoyed this tourism experience	1.089	1.023	1.046
Exciting	0.767	1.212	1.468
<b>Experience – Novelty</b>			
Once-in-a lifetime experience	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Unique	1.117	0.634	0.402
Different from previous experiences	0.018	0.941	0.886
Experienced something new	1.029	0.681	0.464
<b>Involvement</b>			
	0.306	0.831	0.691
<b>Total</b>	1.015	0.940	0.883

Note: SD – Standard deviation; Var[x] - variance

Source: own elaboration

Table 28 shows the items that most influence each construct/dimensions. ‘Using [brand] gets me to think about [brand]’ is revealed as the most important item for cognitive processing ( $\bar{x}=1.8$ ;  $SD =0.575$ ), and ‘Using [brand] stimulates my interest to learn more about [brand]’ emerges on the opposite side as a very neutral item ( $\bar{x}=0.0$ ;  $SD =0.353$ ). Regarding affection, ‘I’m proud to use [brand]’ ( $\bar{x}=1.464$ ;  $SD =0.725$ ) stands out, and concerning activation, we verify that all items are balanced. For the brand advocacy construct, ‘Talk favourably’ emerges as the relevant item ( $\bar{x}=0.940$ ;  $SD =0.946$ ), ‘Try new products or services’ as neutral, and ‘Willing to give another chance’ present a negative result ( $\bar{x}= -0.267$ ;  $SD =0.699$ ). Regarding experience, relevant are ‘Really enjoyed this experience’ [Hedonism] ( $\bar{x}=1.088$ ;  $SD =1.022$ ), ‘Unique’ [Novelty] ( $\bar{x}= 1.116$ ;  $SD =0.634$ ) and ‘Experienced something new’ [Novelty] ( $\bar{x}= 1.029$ ;  $SD =0.681$ ). An integrative perspective of each item construct/dimension in terms of relevance by mean polarity can be consulted in Figure 11.

Figure 11 - Items’ relevance by mean polarity



Source: own elaboration

## 5.5 Third study conclusions and implications

### 5.5.1 Theoretical contributions

The results of the current study allow us to make several theoretical contributions. Online consumer reviews have recently received increasing attention from both researchers and

practitioners (Cantalops and Salvi, 2014; Schuckert et al., 2015). This research can be included in one of the five clusters of online review studies proposed by Schuckert et al., (2015), in the cluster of opinion mining/sentiment analysis. The other four proposed clusters are the role of reviews, online reviews and online buying, satisfaction and management, and motivation.

Our aim is to advance knowledge about the sentimental and emotional drivers of consumer engagement that lead to referral behaviours and to understand what drives consumers to contribute their review beyond company/brand features. Therefore, we employ an analysis of recommendations/reviews on a review-centric geosocial network platform (YELP).

The previous literature has followed several paths in this field of research. Some authors have focused on text aggregation to predict sentiment (Zhang et al., 2009), creating tools that automatically analyse posts or reviews (Rodrigues et al., 2016), or even mining sentiments, opinions and emotions (Liu, 2015). Xu and Li, (2016) underline that each type of object (e.g., hotel) has different types of determinants of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, while other authors focus on measuring customers' attitudes towards brands (Mostafa, 2013). Calheiros et al., (2017) discuss sentiment classification towards the features of an object (e.g., hotel), gathering relevant topics that influence reviews and customers' positive and negative sentiments.

The results of the current study allow us to make several theoretical contributions. We perform two types of sentiment analysis, (i) a global customer sentiment analysis, and (ii) topic-sentiment analysis. In the global sentiment analysis, we tend to find more positive than negative sentiments towards the object in reviews, as negative and very negative sentiments are less represented. Customers seem to be more engaged in positively advocating a company/brand than the contrary. We also underline that customers tend to be more serious (non-ironic) and subjective in their opinions and recommendations. As the literature has pointed out (Groeger et al., 2016; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014), they may dislike or be unsatisfied with some features of the focal object (e.g., product, service, brand, local business), but are still willing to contribute positively to development of the company/brand and to inform others about the engaged object.

From the topic-sentiment analysis, the cognitive processing dimension emerges as having the highest positive sentiment score, which is in line with the previous literature (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014). From this phenomenon, we claim that consumers are aware of the importance of their reviews to others, which highlights a trigger for consumers' recommendation endeavours. Also appearing as significant for referral behaviours is the positive brand-related affect toward the focal object (affection dimension). On the other hand, the activation dimension is less positive among the engagement dimensions. Based on these findings, we claim that customers are more driven by cognitive processing and affective engagement to help and be useful to other customers than through activation engagement.

The positive sentiment score of hedonic experiences also seems to impact on customers' contributions. In fact, the literature already suggests that hedonic products/services tend to be more loved (Loureiro et al., 2012). We state that customers are driven in their referral behaviours by satisfaction with activities, and if they really enjoyed and became excited about their tourism experience. In turn, involvement emerges as the most neutral of the dimensions assessed. This finding reveals that reviews using involvement-related sentiments tend to be more neutral in influencing customers' opinions and recommendations.

We can also point out the role of emotions, which reveal different performances. Dominance (felt in control and autonomous) and pleasure (experienced pleasure or happiness) appear to have a higher influence on customers' review endeavours than arousal (felt active and stimulated), which emerges with a more neutral sentiment polarity for customers to provide recommendations or opinions. Brand advocacy, as an output of customer engagement, is not shown to be an influential dimension. In fact, we conclude that although customers positively feel compelled to talk favourably (see Table 28), they do not feel the same about willingness to give another chance to the focal object or try new products/services.

### **5.5.2 Managerial implications**

This study also provides implications for both brand managers and social network managers.

Social network managers are interested in reinforcing their online platform, which is achieved either by increasing users' recommendation efforts or through increasing the number of users

seeking information. Users will increase their referral efforts if they perceive they are helpful to others. Creating and maintaining a ranking system for contributors may create in users the helpful feeling they need.

For managers, it is of great importance to realize which types of online reviews are most likely to benefit their business (e.g., product, brand or company). This study provides a structured view of positive, neutral or negative types of sentimental polarity that emerge in online reviews regarding consumer engagement and brand advocacy. Through these results, managers may assess to what extent these constructs and their dimensions are being discussed online by their clients, and what it may represent for their business.

Finally, in this study, we have noticed that for customers who write reviews, disengagement does not appear as relevant and does not play a role. Nevertheless, further research must be undertaken to assess this research note properly.

### **5.5.3 Limitations and future research**

This research gives insights into the drivers of engagement in customers' online review endeavours. Nevertheless, the results need to be interpreted with caution due to the limitations of the study. First, we are dealing with a vast amount of data that can be processed through different approaches and tools. We chose to use MeaningCloud, which has its strengths but also weaknesses. Therefore, to allow generalisation of the results found, researchers should undertake further research efforts, namely testing data with different text mining tools, with the same sample, to infer from differences and similarities in the results. As this is a recent field of research, the comparison method could be valuable to test not only the results but also the tools used. Furthermore, a larger sample can be employed, as a large amount of data is available

Finally, future research can make efforts to compare the role of customers' perceptions and expectations in their recommendations, and also the role of negative emotions. As positive emotions trigger recommendation more easily than negative ones, it could be relevant to understand what drives customers to contribute when experiencing negative emotions. Still

regarding negative sentiments, further research could try to measure the role of negative engagement in customers' reviews and their recommendations/warnings.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Chapter 6: Discussion, implications and conclusion**

The research on consumer engagement (connected to marketing and tourism), like every innovative research field, is still in its development stage and scholars continue to propose diverse research streams (Graffigna and Gambetti, 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2016), with convergent or divergent perspectives. This chapter offers our overview and the contributions of this thesis to this research field, discussing the theoretical and managerial implications, the limitations of this research and suggestions for future study.

#### **6.1 Discussion and implications**

##### **6.1.1 Theoretical contributions**

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore the consumer-brand engagement construct, its conceptualizations, drivers and outcomes. In fact, the aims of this thesis are to understand what are the core perspectives and conceptualizations of engagement, which are the relevant stimuli of experience that act as antecedents of engagement, to highlight if brand advocacy is an outcome of online engagement, if engagement may act as a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy, which consumer engagement dimensions influence brand advocacy most, and what drives consumers to contribute to their referential endeavour (e.g., recommendation, reviews) to advocate a focal object (e.g., product/brand) beyond its features?

Regarding the core perspectives and conceptualizations of engagement, we may start by noting that the literature has different points-of-view about the dimensionality of the engagement construct. From a unidimensional perspective, we have a research stream that considers engagement as a simple consumer behaviour towards a brand, mainly as a consequence of referral behaviours such as word-of-mouth, recommendations or reviews, among others (van Doorn et al., 2010). Additional research also argues in this stream, viewing engagement as a behavioural construct that can be measured through the strength of consumers' connection to brand activities (Verhoef et al., 2010).

However, several studies start to acknowledge engagement as a more complex construct, with multidimensional engagement perspectives emerging. Several authors started to show the cognitive dimension of engagement, underlining the consumer's cognitive state that generates either attraction or repulsion towards a focal object (i.e., product/brand) (Higgins and Scholer, 2009; Pham and Avnet, 2009). Others have proposed engagement as an antecedent of loyalty, arguing that engagement is a cognitive and affective process responsible for creating consumer loyalty (Bowden, 2009).

Additionally, scholars start to highlight engagement with a cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimension. Patterson et al. (2006) consider engagement to include the four dimensions of absorption (cognitive), dedication (affective), vigour (cognitive and affective) and interaction (behavioural). Other authors start to explain engagement as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Taking our studies as the basis of our arguments, we can claim that the construct of engagement is indeed multidimensional. We find out that not only is engagement a complex multidimensional construct, but also that the various dimensions are inter-related. As we can see in our second study, the dimensions of engagement may be regarded as a second-order construct and operate on brand advocacy. Our findings are in line with the multidimensional perspective, claiming that engagement is a construct that comprises cognitive, affective and activation dimensions.

Indeed, regarding the core perspectives and conceptualizations of engagement, we emphasise the role of online engagement. As seen, the literature has framed this concept as the compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand (Balduš et al., 2015), which goes beyond behavioural brand loyalty and presents high levels of commitment (Raies et al., 2015), leading consumers to engage in higher levels of online brand-related activities (Schivinski et al., 2016).

Based on our studies, we can argue that the engagement goes beyond the dyadic relationship between consumer and brand. As we have seen, some consumer behaviours are triggered by sentiments of fulfilment (from a rewarding perspective), as well as by interaction and share of



knowledge with other consumers (from a helping perspective). This leads us to argue that consumers' referral behaviours on online social platforms can be associated with these perspectives and that the online environment ends up being a catalyst for the consumer engagement construct.

Concerning the relevant stimuli of experience that act as antecedents of engagement, the literature already contains some contributions on this matter. Even so, past research has highlighted the role of interactive consumer experience in the conceptual foundations of consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2011), or discussed how delivering notable consumer experience and creating an emotional connection may result in different stages of engagement with consumers (Grewal et al., 2017). These drivers emerge with other motivational drivers that include word-of-mouth activity, consumer-to-consumer (C2C) interactions, and/or blogging activities (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Based on the results of our studies, experience emerges as an important antecedent of engagement. In this domain, we can highlight key features for consumers like credibility, recommendation, security or information\content. Moreover, we can point out several antecedents of engagement, such as website quality, the available information/content quality, involvement and interactivity.

We are also able to say that stimuli of experience through consumer-generated content create incentives that can generate online consumer engagement. Concerning the distinct types of stimuli of experience, information/content emerges as the most important stimulus of website experience for online engagement. This inference confirms that consumers give significant importance to reliable, relevant and up-to-date information to be engaged. We are also able to show that interactive features do not significantly influence cognitive processing, and also have a negative effect on activation. Our findings reveal that the negative relationship between interactive features and activation reinforces the idea that the presence of links and interaction with other websites does not allow consumers to devote more time to the focal object of engagement (i.e., company/brand).

Another of our aims was to analyse if brand advocacy is an outcome of online engagement. In fact, as far as we know, this is the first attempt to test brand advocacy as an outcome of online

consumer engagement. The literature has already addressed brand advocacy, framing the construct. We can define brand advocacy as the extent to which an individual actively recommends and supports a brand, while ignoring other brands within a product category (Badrinarayanan and Laverie, 2013). Scholars also define brand advocacy as the consumer's behavioural intention to try new products/services of a certain brand, spreading favourable word-of-mouth, and being resilient to negative information or other issues concerning that brand (Pai et al., 2013).

Considering the results of our studies, we can claim that brand advocacy is, in fact, an outcome of online engagement. Our studies suggest that brand advocacy emerges as a consequence of stimuli of experience mediated by consumer engagement. We argue that consumers' level of energy, effort and time spent within the brand environment (engagement activation dimension) together with the degree of positive brand-related affect (engagement affection dimension) influence the willingness to try new products/services, talk favourably about them, and give the brand another chance if something goes wrong. Moreover, we argue that the ties leading consumers to advocate in favour of a brand only occur if they feel happy with the brand and proud of using it, as well as using it often. This behaviour occurs even when something in the relationship between the consumer and the brand goes wrong.

We also show that consumers are more positively compelled to talk favourably than to give the brand another chance, or try new products/services if something goes wrong. If we take into consideration all the results from the three studies of this thesis, we can say that consumers are more willing to help and be useful to others than to companies/brands.

Concerning whether engagement can act as a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy, the literature had not discussed this question so far. However, some authors have proposed some antecedents and consequences of engagement. For instance, research has already highlighted consumers' engagement behaviours as a consequence of motivational drivers including word-of-mouth activity, consumer-to-consumer (C2C) interactions, and/or blogging activities (van Doorn et al., 2010). In a different line, Kumar et al. (2010) have drawn three fundamental behavioural outcomes of consumer engagement with a company: consumers' purchase behaviour, consumer referral, and consumers' influencing behaviour towards other consumers. Other authors underline the relational process that presents

consumer-brand engagement as a construct of multiple phases, as well as a dynamic process (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011b), covering a physical proximity and based on the progressive value of the brand for its consumers (Gambetti et al., 2012). Other authors propose a new perspective on consumer-brand engagement by offering an expanded typology of brand fans or advocates, in which negative engagement, and disenfranchised or even alienated consumers are included (de Villiers, 2015).

In fact, new theoretical implications arise in this thesis regarding engagement as a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy. Our research provides evidence that engagement is, in fact, a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy. Firstly, we have highlighted interactivity and experience as an antecedent of engagement, and that the propensity for positive recommendation increases as consumers get involved and engaged with a brand. In this topic, stimuli of experience (interactive features, information/content, and design-visual appeal) create incentives that can generate online consumer engagement, except in the relationship between interactive features and cognitive processing.

Secondly, we are also able to prove that information/content influences the affection and cognitive processing dimensions of engagement, and that information/content and design-visual appeal have a significant effect on activation. From this, we could infer that information/content emerges as the most important stimulus of website experience for online engagement and that consumers give significant importance to reliable, relevant and up-to-date information to be engaged.

Thirdly, we also reveal that consumers positively engage with a brand inasmuch as they advocate in its favour if they feel happy with it, proud of using it, and if they use it often. Furthermore, the consumer's level of energy, effort and time spent on the focal object (e.g., product/brand) (activation dimension of engagement) together with the degree of positive brand-related affect (affection dimension of engagement) influence consumers' willingness to try new products/services offered by the brand, to talk favourably about it, and to give another chance if something goes wrong.

As already mentioned, we also intend to show which of the consumer engagement dimensions most influence brand advocacy. For this analysis, we depart from previous literature outcomes,

namely the three dimensions of engagement proposed by Hollebeek et al. (2014). These consumer engagement dimensions correspond to the generic cognitive, emotional and behavioural nature of engagement (Hollebeek, 2011a). Therefore, the terms of cognitive processing, affection, and activation were used (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

We claim that affection and activation act as mediators between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy. We also found that cognitive processing does not have significant relevance as a moderator. Our studies show that the direct effects of each component of experience stimuli (information/content, interactive features and design-visual appeal) on brand advocacy are significant without the mediators. When introducing the mediators, the direct effects lose importance and the indirect effects become significant, which reveals that engagement mediates the stimuli of experience towards brand advocacy. Concerning this mediation effect, we claim that affection has a stronger indirect influence between information/content and brand advocacy than the other dimensions of engagement. Regarding affection, we argue that this dimension is more effective as a mediator between design-visual appeal and brand advocacy. About the cognitive processing dimension, its relevance only presents some mediator significance regarding interactive features. Although cognitive processing was revealed to be important as a mediator between stimuli of experience and brand advocacy, its effects for both information/content and design-visual appeal seem to be weaker than other dimensions. Summarising, we can claim that although the affective dimension of engagement reveals its strong importance as a mediator, when we add the effect of activation and cognitive processing, the willingness to be in favour of the brand increases.

In our last aim, we propose to understand what drives consumers to contribute to their referential endeavour (e.g., recommendation, reviews) to advocate a focal object (e.g., product/brand) beyond its features. The literature has already pointed out several findings concerning referral behaviours. Several studies (e.g., Cantallops and Salvi, 2014) have discussed the impact of eWOM, revealing that brands that are affected by positive eWOM increase demand and profit, while others affected by negative eWOM find that demand and profit decrease. Other studies also provide evidence that online consumers' referral behaviours are important as information providers to other potential consumers (Inversini et al., 2009), and that consumers increasingly trust online reviews to make their decisions (Hicks et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, our aim goes further, as we intend to assess what drives consumers to advocate a brand beyond its features. We claim that consumers tend to contribute if they have positive sentiments towards the object, which may lead us to deduce that consumers are more engaged in positively advocating a company/brand than the contrary. We may also say that, as pointed out in the literature (Groeger et al., 2016; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014), consumers may disagree with some brand features but they are still willing to contribute positively to the development of the company/brand and to inform others about the brand.

Moreover, the third study allows us to understand that consumers have perceived knowledge of the value of their opinion (e.g., review/recommendation) to other consumers, which highlights a possible trigger for consumers' recommendation efforts. The affection dimension also emerges as a significant driver of consumers' referral endeavour, as consumer interaction and involvement with the brand positively influence the consumer and lead to recommendation/review efforts. Less relevant in influencing consumers' referral behaviours are the consumer's energy, effort and time spent in a particular consumer/brand interaction.

### **6.1.2 Managerial contributions**

The research developed in this thesis also provides several managerial implications that can be useful for marketing practitioners and managers. In fact, companies' interest in this topic is exponential. Companies/brands are strategically resorting to social media platforms to create brand awareness and to communicate with their audiences. Moreover, consumers increasingly communicate with the brand and/or other consumers through these media channels, and in many cases through platforms that brands do not control (e.g., TripAdvisor, Booking, Yelp). Therefore, marketers and managers seek new insights concerning consumer behaviour in this new digital marketing era. Why are consumers interested and why do they use social media platforms in their relationships with brands? What incentives create consumer engagement and what are their consequences?

First, we can say that the online environment (i.e., social media platforms, online brand communities) presents suitable instruments for setting up relations between consumers and brands. As we have shown, consumers use, interact, and seek information through these diverse types of platforms. Their experience in this environment, concerning website quality,

information/content, or design-visual appeal, and also the emotions that arise from this relationship, such as pleasure, arousal or dominance, motivate consumers to engage with a focal object (e.g., product/brand). This process leads consumers to be willing to engage in the next phase, referral behaviour. Engaged consumers will be more willing to become brand advocates, to contribute with their opinion and recommendation, which may influence other consumers, but may also be a contribution to brands for their product or service development and improvement.

The studies undertaken in this thesis show that engaged consumers tend to interact and influence brands, and that consumer experience and emotions precede influence. In fact, the diverse stimuli of experience from brand activities that directly engage consumers have desirable consequences at different stages, and managers need to value those activities. In addition to obvious consequences, such as the intention to buy (influenced by the conventional relationship), an engaged consumer develops connections and long-term goodwill with the brand. As this thesis shows, consumers are motivated by both extrinsic and intrinsic values in their relationships with brands in social media. Therefore, brands should develop and implement strategies and activities that focus not only on one of these values, but on a set of values that offer consumers the opportunity to obtain the desirable benefit, whether it is self-expression, brand passion, compensation, information, sense of belonging or value for money, among others.

Managers should increase their knowledge about how the diverse set of experiences, together with emotions, social influences, or stimuli of experiences interact to enhance their consumers' engagement, and shape the relationship between consumers and their brand. As seen in the third study based on YELP, managers need to keep in mind that besides business features, consumers' perceptions influence recommendation/review creation and consumers' expressed sentiment. The business product/service quality influences consumers' perceptions and their reaction. Ideally, consumers' expectations should meet their perceptions, which will influence positive word of mouth, and develop reputation and trust. Thus, a deeper knowledge of consumer engagement can be valuable for managers to build brands' relational programs, such as loyalty programs or relationship management programs.

Additionally, the results of this thesis should encourage managers to involve their consumers in the co-creational process. Managers will gain added value if they can incorporate consumer opinion in their product development. To do so, they must involve them in co-creative actions and activities (e.g., opinions on innovative product features or service improvements) through an effortless process where they can give their opinion concerning current features, and what they expect in new products/services.

One of the challenges for managers has always been the creation of products/services that offer a response to consumers' needs. Often, we come across products/services that should be a success and end up being a fiasco. By including consumers in co-creation efforts, managers may limit development risk. As we have seen from the results of the studies in this thesis, consumers are willing to give their opinion either to their peers (i.e., other consumers) or to brands. There is a natural impulse to help improve products/services from a brand, even if the consumer has a negative opinion of that brand. Managers should strategically create a type of workflow that recognises consumers' opinions and facilitates their participation, and be able to offer consumers benefits from this process. This process would lead to positive consumer-brand engagement effects, with positive consequences such as positive referral behaviours, i.e., positive brand advocacy.

The findings of this thesis should also encourage marketing practitioners and managers to take full advantage of social media platforms. In fact, the digital environment can be an excellent tool for consumer-brand engagement. The results of our studies reveal that brands have the possibility of engaging consumers in an intentional, emotional, cognitive and behavioural way through the online environment. Different brand stimuli seem to induce different consumer-brand engagement processes among consumers, and we encourage managers to resort to experience, involvement and emotions to create positive consumer engagement. We recommend that managers should apply engagement-oriented brand activities that promote positive cognitive consumer-brand engagement, such as clear information, appealing visual effects, or interactive features. This positive engagement may reveal that brand efforts can lead to increased brand awareness and brand advocacy in the digital environment, creating positive consumer-oriented activities and positive content generation towards the brand.

In this regard, we would like to highlight the role of negative engagement, or disengagement. In fact, marketing practitioners need to consider how to manage negative consumer engagement. Much attention is paid to positive behaviours, but managers should pay close attention to negative behaviours. Instead of understanding this behaviour as criticism or complaint, our research reveals that unengaged consumers still seek hedonic rewards such as influencing the brand or helping the brand to improve. Managers should take advantage of negative opinions not only to correct possible failures in their business, but also to demonstrate to consumers that they care about them and their opinions, which can be a driver of future positive engagement.

Concerning engagement, managers should also pay close attention to consumers' relationship with other competing brands. In fact, consumers do not only build connections and engage with one brand in a certain category, but can create similar connections and engagement with competing brands. Therefore, we recommend developing strategies and creating connections that can place their brand near the top of consumers' favourite brands. Brands with high favourable engagement tend to be paid more attention and be more recalled, and consumers tend to be less price and time sensitive when assessing them. Managers should not only create conditions for the development of this preference but also consider how to discourage consumers from engaging with competing brands.

A final remark to highlight that the phenomenon of consumer engagement is not limited to the online digital environment. If managers make efforts to offer engaging experiences to their consumers through their products and services, they not only engage consumers online but can also engage them offline.

## **6.2 Limitations and future research**

### **6.2.1 Limitations**

This thesis reveals several theoretical and managerial contributions, but we should exercise caution when interpreting the results due to the limitations of the studies.

Regarding the qualitative research using two focus groups, we use a convenience sample to reach both group quorums. Although the focus group is an exploratory technique by nature,



we should analyse these results carefully. The group's composition may bias the results as the sample may not be representative of the general population. The use of different sample groups in different cultural contexts may generate different outcomes.

Concerning the quantitative study based on self-administered questionnaires, we can point out several limitations that should lead us to interpret the results with caution. One limitation arises from the sample used, which was not very large. Although the participants represent individuals who search for information and book online, future study should use a larger sample, different communities' forums, and diverse types of focal objects of engagement (i.e., companies/brands) to capture different contexts. In fact, the socio-demographic variables of samples may also strengthen or alter the relationship between constructs in the conceptual model. Also, the study did not include moderating variables in the model, but the strength of engagement on brand advocacy may be greater in a positive attitude valence.

As for using a text-mining approach, we must point out that we are dealing with a vast amount of data, which can be processed through different approaches and tools. Our choice was to use only one text-mining tool, which has its strengths but also weaknesses. To allow generalisation of the results, researchers should undertake further research efforts, namely testing data with different text-mining tools, with the same sample, to infer from differences and similarities in the results. Second, as this is a recent field of research, the comparison method could be valuable to test not only the results but also the tools used. Another limitation arises from the sample used, which refers to only one country (United States of America). Further research should compare different cultural scenarios to reveal differences and similarities. Finally, a larger sample can also be employed, as a large amount of data is available.

### **6.2.2 Future research**

This thesis explores a new and exciting field of research, which represents a great opportunity for scholars to develop new frameworks and discover new insights that can lead to effective consumer engagement strategies. Moreover, many questions are still unanswered, which reinforces the need for further developments in this area, based on innovative research and intensive discussion.

From our studies, we suggest exploring engagement in different types of business activities. In this thesis, we have focused mostly on service-dominated businesses. Thus, research focusing on different types of companies/brands (product-based logic) to test our results would be valuable. Particularly, future studies should test our insights into consumer-brand engagement as a mediator between stimuli and brand advocacy for companies/brands that sell products (e.g., online retail businesses including clothing, perfumes or luxury fashion, among others).

Moreover, this thesis paves the way for new questions about the existence of moderating variables for the engagement construct, which needs further empirical studies. As we propose, engagement acts as a mediating variable, but some moderating variables may arise. Therefore, we highlight the need for future research to empirically test new moderators, such as subjective well-being or attitude valence.

Marketing research also needs to gain new insights and developments concerning co-creation knowledge. Some authors had already pointed out the relevance of co-creation in the engagement construct (Groeger et al., 2016; Hsieh and Chang, 2016; de Villiers, 2015), discussing new insights concerning the co-creation effects. In fact, there is some preliminary debate in the literature about the dimensions that interact to affect the brand co-creation experience. We suggest that co-creation may arise as an outcome of engagement, but further empirical research is needed.

As previously mentioned in this chapter, negative engagement also deserves further research. As we have stated, the literature devotes considerable attention to the positive views of brand-related constructs. However, consumers can also have negative emotional states towards a brand. Researchers should address this topic not only to gain new insights concerning the unengaged consumer but also to contribute with tools and frameworks that managers can use.

Finally, future research can expand our text-mining study, either by resizing it or reshaping it. In fact, concerning the text-mining study, new research can be developed, with new business sectors or new target populations and also in terms of the size of the study. This type of large data approach provides researchers with the ability to carry out studies with the scope and dimensions allowed by text-mining tools, technology and scientific advancements.



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## **Appendices**

This appendix presents material supporting the studies reported in the thesis. All the tables and figures in this appendix are mentioned in the text.

**Appendix A: Systematic literature review term search #A**

Search #A: “Consumer brand engagement”, final group of 5 selected papers.

*Figure 12 - SLR search #A flow chart*



*Source: own elaboration*

**Appendix B: Systematic literature review term search #B**

Search #B: “Consumer engagement”, final group of 7 selected papers.

*Figure 13 - SLR search #B flow chart*



*Source: own elaboration*

**Appendix C: Systematic literature review term search #C**

Search #C: “Consumer engagement”, final group of 12 selected papers.

*Figure 14 - SLR search #C flow chart*



*Source: own elaboration*

**Appendix D: Systematic literature review term search #D**

Search #D: “Brand engagement”, final group of 1 selected paper.

*Figure 15 - SLR search #D flow chart*



*Source: Own elaboration*



**Appendix E: Systematic literature review term search #E**

Search #E: “Online engagement”, final group of 0 selected papers.

*Figure 16 - SLR search #E flow chart*



*Source: own elaboration*

**Appendix F: Systematic literature review term search #A1**

Search #A1: “Consumer brand engagement”, final group of 2 selected papers.

*Figure 17 - SLR search #A1 flow chart*



*Source: Own elaboration*

**Appendix G: Systematic literature review term search #B1**

Search #B1: “Consumer engagement”, final group of 2 selected papers.

*Figure 18 - SLR search #B1 flow chart*



*Source: Own elaboration*

**Appendix H: Systematic literature review term search #C1**

Search #C1: “Consumer engagement”, final group of 0 selected papers.

*Figure 19 - SLR search #C1 flow chart*



*Source: Own elaboration*

**Appendix I: Systematic literature review term search #D1**

Search #D1: “Brand engagement”, final group of 0 selected papers.

*Figure 20 - SLR search #D1 flow chart*



*Source: Own elaboration*

**Appendix J: Systematic literature review term search #E1**

Search #E1: “Online engagement”, final group of 1 selected paper.

*Figure 21 - SLR search #E1 flow chart*



*Source: Own elaboration*

**Appendix K: Full list of authors by affiliation with research included in the systematic literature review**

<i>Authors</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Country</i>
Aihwa Chang	Tunghai University	Taiwan
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Werner J. Reinartz	University of Cologne	Germany



**Appendix L: Focus group 1 personal data sheet**

*Personal data sheet*

Focus Group N. ° _____	Participant Letter: _____	Date: __ / __ / ____
------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------

Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

City where you live: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree or level  
of school you have completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Field of Study (academic): \_\_\_\_\_

Current occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been an Internet user: \_\_\_\_\_

How much time do you spend on the internet daily: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you very much for your participation!*

**Appendix M: Focus group 2 personal data sheet**

*Personal data sheet*

Focus Group N. ° _____	Participant Letter: _____	Date: __ / __ / ____
------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------

Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

City where you live: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree or level  
of school you have completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Field of Study (academic): \_\_\_\_\_

Current occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a Trip Advisor user? \_\_\_\_\_

How much time (in hours) do you spend on  
TripAdvisor monthly? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you an active member of TripAdvisor travel forums? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

*Thank you very much for your participation!*

**Appendix N: Focus group 1 script**

---

Introduction	Description of what a Focus Group is. Introduction to the subject of study (consumer relationship towards brands and engagement, in the online context). Brief explanation of 'brands in online context' definition to participants.
Opening	Please tell us your name, age, degree, academic background and level of internet use.
Transition	Are you a frequent internet user? Do you use internet services, such as news services, meteorology services or search engine services? Do you usually make online purchases? How often?

---

Key-question No.1	Which features of an online supplier\brand do you consider most important when deciding to make a purchase (either service or product)? Consider both positive and negative features.
Group Discussion	Can you reach a group consensus for the three most important features (both positive and negative) among those you have previously mentioned?
Key-question No.2	When carrying out an online repurchase (product or service), which characteristics from previous shopping experiences influenced you most?
Group Discussion	Can you reach a group consensus for the three main characteristics among those you have previously mentioned?
Key-question No.3	Which are the aspects that make you engaged\unengaged with an online brand?
Group Discussion	Can you reach a group consensus for the three main characteristics among those you have previously mentioned?

---

Conclusion	We are currently researching the key features for consumer-brand engagement in a digitalized world. Do you consider adding anything that could help us?
------------	---

## Appendix O: Focus group 2 script

---

Introduction	Explanation of what a Focus Group is. Introduction to the subject of study (consumer-brand engagement in the online context). Brief explanation of 'brands in online context' definition to participants.
Opening	Please tell us your name, age, degree and academic background.
Transition	Are you a frequent TripAdvisor user? For how long have you been using TripAdvisor? What type of features do you use the most while on the TripAdvisor webpage?

---

Key-questions No.1: a) How long have you been a TripAdvisor user?  
b) How much time do you typically spend on TripAdvisor monthly?  
c) What are you looking for when using the TripAdvisor website?  
d) What benefits do you receive from using TripAdvisor?

Key-questions No.2: e) What is your opinion of the reviews and comments you read?  
f) After reading the reviews, do you visit the supplier page (e.g., hotel\restaurant)?

Key-questions No. 3: g) Do you access community forums on TripAdvisor?  
h) What do you do when accessing community forums?  
i) Do you get involved in the TripAdvisor online community forums?  
*[note to moderator: probe for participation; do they interact with other fans? (e.g. read their posts, answer questions, post comments)]*

Key-questions No. 4: j) How do you feel in relation to time spent, information and rewards when you are on online community forums?  
*[note to moderator: probe for presence (e.g. lose track of time, absorbed in the page, forget that it is a mediated space)]*  
k) How do you assess the available information quality, the enjoyment of being part of that community, and your interaction?

Key-question No. 5: 1) Do you consider yourself an engaged consumer of the TripAdvisor brand? Describe what you mean by being engaged.

---

Conclusion                    We are currently researching the key features for

of consumer-brand engagement in a digitalized world. Do you consider adding anything that could help us?

**Appendix P: Self-administered online questionnaire for study 2**

**Online booking services for hotel rooms - 'Booking.com' consumers**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important survey measuring engagement between consumers who book hotel rooms online and online booking brands. Your thoughts and opinions will be used for academic research.

This survey should only take 3-4 minutes to complete. Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

\*Mandatory

1. Please mark the main online booking providers you usually use.\*

*Mark as applicable.*

- Booking.com
- Hoteis.com
- Destinia.com
- 71deas.com
- Amorna.com
- Agoda.com
- Expedia.com
- Trivago.com
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Considering 'Booking.com', please state how many times you have searched for hotel rooms in this provider in the past year? \*

*Choose only one.*

- 1 to 2
- 3 to 5
- 6 to 9
- + 10

3. Considering 'Booking.com', please state how many times you have booked one or more nights in a hotel room in this provider in the past year? \*

*Choose only one.*

- 0
- 1 to 2
- 3 to 5
- 6 to 9
- + 10

### **'Booking.com' consumer experience**

This part intends to assess your experience when using 'Booking.com'.

4. At 'Booking.com' I have the full information at hand. \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

5. 'Booking.com' gives me enough information, so I can identify what I want to the same degree as if I am in personal contact with someone from a tour operator.\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

6. 'Booking.com' is a very good source of information.\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

7. 'Booking.com' provides in-depth information.\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

8. Booking.com is one of the brands I usually use when I use booking service providers\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

9. I'm proud to use Booking.com \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

10. Using Booking.com gets me to think about Booking.com \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

11. Using Booking.com stimulates my interest to learn more about Booking.com \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

12. I think about Booking.com a lot when I'm using it \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

13. I feel very positive when I use Booking.com \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

14. Using Booking.com makes me happy \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree



15. I feel good when I use Booking.com \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

16. I spend a lot of time using Booking.com, compared to other booking service providers\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

17. Whenever I'm using booking service providers, I usually use Booking.com \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

18. 'Booking.com' webpage looks attractive: \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

19. 'Booking.com' webpage looks organized: \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

20. 'Booking.com' webpage uses multimedia features properly? \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

21. 'Booking.com' webpage uses colours properly? \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

22. 'Booking.com' webpage uses fonts properly? \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

23. 'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to hotel\accommodation in destination: \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

24. 'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to local attractions:\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

25. 'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to local restaurants:\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

26. 'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to events and festival reservations:\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

27. 'Booking.com' presents links or contact information to maps of major attractions:\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

28. I would like to try new services introduced by 'Booking.com' \*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Completely disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Completely agree

29. I talk favourably about 'Booking.com' to friends and family.\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Completely disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Completely agree

30. If the 'Booking.com' did something I didn't like, I would be willing to give it another chance.\*

*Choose only one.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Completely disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Completely agree

## Demographics

To finish, some questions about you. Anonymity will always be maintained.

31. Country of residence? \*

---

32. Gender? \*

*Choose only one.*

- Female
- Male

33. Age \*

*Choose only one.*

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- > 65

34. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? \*

*Choose only one.*

- Preparatory School
- High School

- Vocational/technical School
- College
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

**Appendix Q: Text mining dictionary for study 3**

Emotions	Pleasure	Experienced happiness?
		Experienced pleasure?
	Arousal	felt active?
		felt excited?
		felt stimulated?
	Dominance	In control
		autonomous
		free

Brand advocacy	Try new products or services
	Talk favourably
	Willing to give another chance?

Engagement	Cognitive processing	Using [brand] gets me to think about [brand]
		I think about [brand] a lot when I'm using it
		Using [brand] stimulates my interest to learn more about [brand]
	Affection	I feel very positive when I use [brand]
		Using [brand] makes me happy
		I feel good when I use [brand]
		I'm proud to use [brand]
	Activation	I spend a lot of time using [brand] compared to other [category] brands
		Whenever I'm using [category], I usually use [brand]
		[brand] is one of the brands I usually use when I use [category]

Experience	Hedonism	Thrilled about having a new experience
		Indulged in the activities
		Really enjoyed this tourism experience
		Exciting
	Novelty	Once-in-a lifetime experience
		Unique
		Different from previous experiences
		Experienced something new

Involvement	unimportant	important
	boring	interesting
	irrelevant	relevant
	unexciting	exciting

The role of consumer-brand engagement in a digital marketing era

	means nothing	means a lot to me
	unappealing	appealing
	mundane	fascinating
	worthless	valuable
	uninvolving	involving
	not needed	needed

## Appendix R: TripAdvisor home page

The screenshot displays the TripAdvisor homepage. At the top, the navigation menu includes 'Hotels', 'Vacation Rentals', 'Restaurants', 'Things to do', and 'Flights'. A 'JOIN' button and a search icon are also visible. The main search bar is prominently featured with the text 'Find the lowest price on the right hotel for you'. Below this, there are input fields for 'City or hotel name', 'Check In', 'Check Out', and '1 room, 2 guests', followed by a 'Find hotels' button. A promotional banner below the search bar reads 'Know better. Book better. Go better.' and mentions comparing prices from 200+ sites. To the right, a green banner promotes the mobile app with the text 'Latest reviews and lowest hotel prices: It's all here.' Below these, a section titled 'Travelers' Choice: Top hotels' features four hotel listings, each with a photo, name, and review count.

**Find the lowest price on the right hotel for you**

City or hotel name    Check In    Check Out    1 room, 2 guests    **Find hotels**

**Know better. Book better. Go better.**

See the latest reviews and compare the lowest hotel prices from 200+ hotel booking sites to help you make the most of your trip

**Latest reviews and lowest hotel prices: It's all here.**

**Learn more**

**Travelers' Choice: Top hotels**    See all

Hotel Name	Location	Reviews
Aria Hotel Budapest by Library Hot...	Budapest, Hungary	944 Reviews
Mandapa, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve	Ubud, Indonesia	607 Reviews
Hotel The Serras	Barcelona, Spain	747 Reviews
Turin Palace Hotel	Turin, Italy	1,331 Reviews

## Appendix S: Booking.com home page

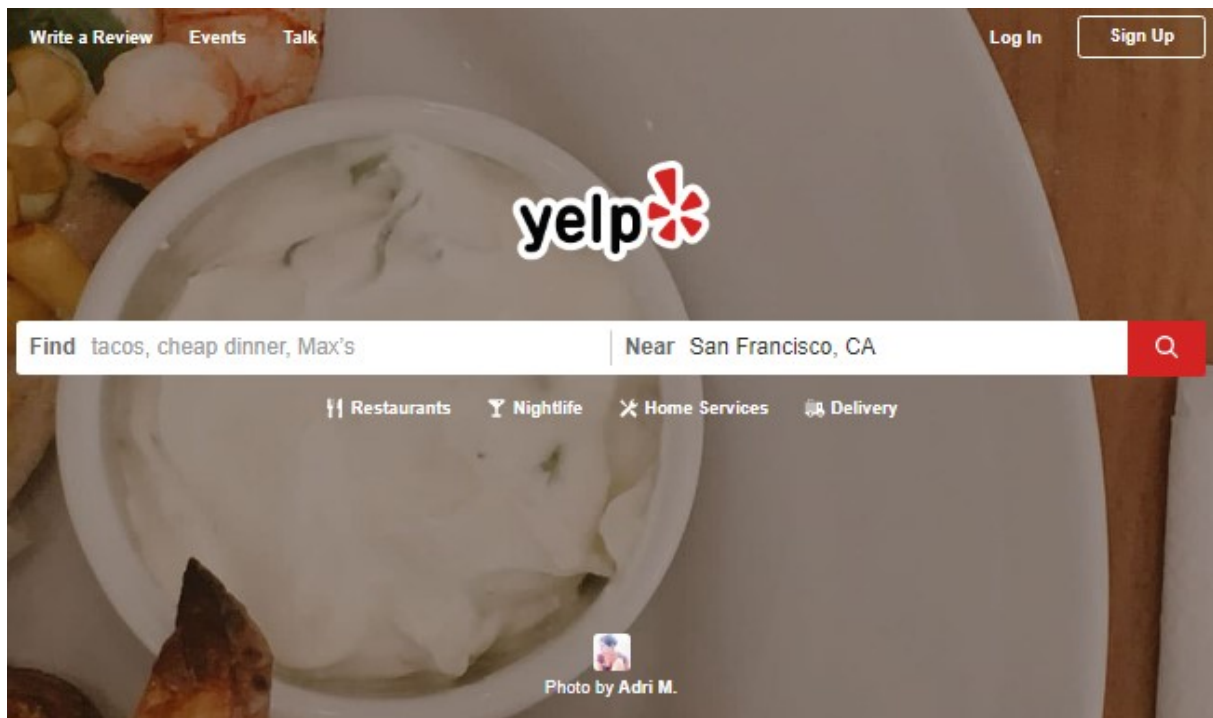
The image shows the Booking.com homepage with a dark blue header. The header includes the Booking.com logo, a currency selector (€), language (English (UK)), and user options (My lists, Invite and earn, Travel guides, List your property, Register, Sign in). Below the header is a navigation bar with icons for Accommodation, Restaurants, Rental cars, and Flights. A secondary navigation bar lists links for Find deals, Travel guides, How was your stay?, Holiday rentals, Booking.com for Business, and Booking.com for iPhone, iPad and Android.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Search Section (Yellow background):** Features a search bar with the text "Find your next weekend getaway" and "From cosy country homes to funky city flats". Below the search bar is a form with fields for "Destination, property name or address:", "Check-in" (with a calendar icon and "Check-in date" dropdown), "Check-out" (with a calendar icon and "Check-out date" dropdown), "Are you travelling for work?" (radio buttons for Yes/No), and "Rooms" (1), "Adults" (2), and "Children" (0) dropdowns. A blue "Search" button is at the bottom right.
- Subscription Section (Light Yellow background):** A banner with a bell icon and text: "Subscribe to see Secret Deals. Prices drop the moment you sign up!".
- Deals Section (Green background):** A banner with a calendar icon and text: "New deals listed daily – for every budget! No booking fees • Save money! • [We Price Match](#)".
- Properties Section (Blue background):** A banner with a globe icon and text: "1,358,116 properties worldwide. Including 737,219 holiday rentals in 115,350 destinations in 224 countries and territories • [List your property](#)".
- Referral Program (Light Blue background):** A banner with a smartphone icon and text: "Refer a friend to Booking.com, and you both earn a cash reward! [Begin earning!](#)".
- Weekend in London (Image background):** A banner with a photo of London and text: "Weekend in London . Check out last-minute deals! -13% TODAY!".
- Lisbon (Image background):** A banner with a photo of Lisbon and text: "Lisbon . Top reasons to visit: city walks, Old Town exploring, sightseeing. Average price € 147.13. [Hotels, apartments and more in Lisbon >](#)".
- Porto (Image background):** A banner with a photo of Porto and text: "Porto ".



## Appendix T: YELP home page











This banner is titled "Help the Community" and features an icon of a storefront with a red and white striped awning and a speech bubble containing five stars. The text below the icon reads "Find Yelp reviews helpful? Start helping others by sharing your experience." and includes a red button labeled "Start Your First Review".

### Yelp San Francisco

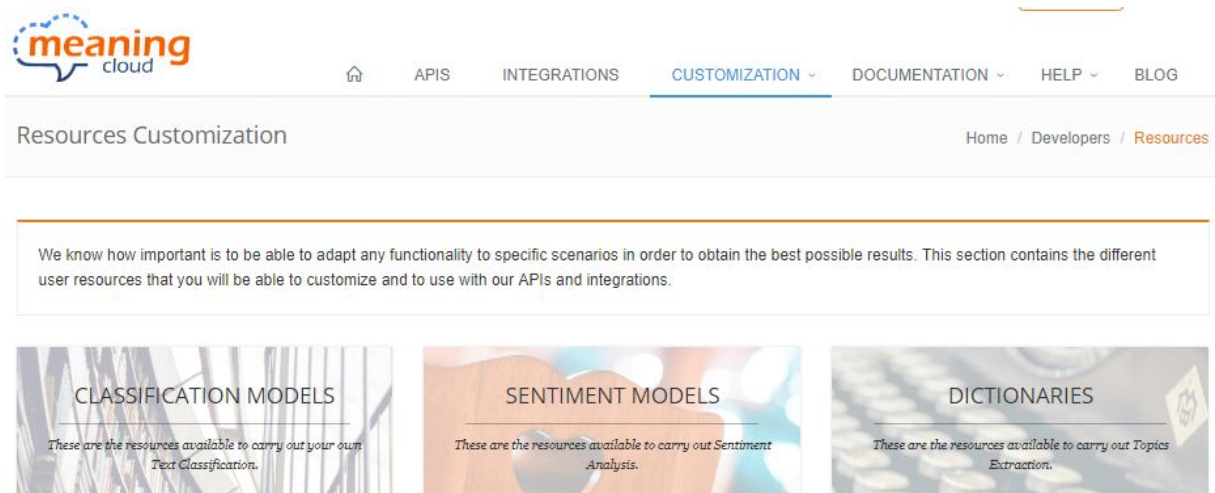
Lisboa New York San Jose Los Angeles Chicago Palo Alto [More Cities](#)

### Browse Businesses by Category

 Restaurants	 Shopping	 Nightlife	 Active Life
 Beauty & Spas	 Automotive	 Home Services	 More Categories

## Appendix U: MeaningCloud text mining tool

### A) Customization panel



### B) Analysis panel

