

The intention to share a sustainability communication about a tourism destination

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to analyse the determinants of the intention to share a post about an environmental issue posted by a tourism destination on Facebook. The authors use the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model as a theoretical framework and consider cognitive variables (destination social responsibility, tourist social responsibility and three types of congruence) as antecedents of emotions and of the tourists' response (intention to share). Specific factors related to the social platform (attachment and active use of social media) are also included.

Design/methodology/approach – The model was tested for two destinations with different positioning (green tourism versus sun and beach). For the sampling strategy, the authors conducted an online poll targeting Facebook users who had undertaken at least one trip in the previous year. The sample consisted of 1,001 individuals.

Findings – The empirical evidence obtained indicates that consumer–cause congruence is the most important variable for explaining the intention to share the post for both destinations, with the destination–cause congruence being non-significant. The authors also observed that active participation on the social network stimulated the intention to share this specific content.

Originality/value – Unlike prior research, this paper examined consumer motivators for engaging with online corporate social responsibility content for tourism destinations, specifically focusing on destination social responsibility in sustainable tourism. The model also incorporates three types of congruence, revealing variations in their impact on explaining the intention to share sustainability-related posts.

Keywords SOR theory, Sustainability, Tourism destination, Sustainable tourism, Facebook, Congruence

Paper type Research paper

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Resumen

Objetivo – Este trabajo analiza los determinantes de la intención de compartir una publicación sobre un tema ambiental publicada por un destino turístico en Facebook. Utilizamos el modelo estímulo-organismo-respuesta (SOR, por sus siglas en inglés) como marco teórico y consideramos variables cognitivas (responsabilidad social del destino, responsabilidad social del turista y tres tipos de congruencia) como antecedentes de las emociones y de la respuesta de los turistas (intención de compartir). También se incluyen factores específicos relacionados con la plataforma social (apego y uso activo de las redes sociales).

Diseño/metodología/enfoque – El modelo se probó para dos destinos con diferentes posicionamientos (turismo verde versus sol y playa). Para la estrategia de muestreo, realizamos una encuesta en línea dirigida a usuarios de Facebook que habían realizado al menos un viaje en el año anterior. La muestra consistió en 1.001 individuos.

Resultados – La evidencia empírica obtenida indica que la congruencia consumidor-causa es la variable más importante para explicar la intención de compartir la publicación en ambos destinos, mientras que la congruencia destino-causa no fue significativa. También observamos que la participación activa en la red social estimuló la intención de compartir este contenido específico.

Originalidad – A diferencia de investigaciones previas, este artículo examinó los motivadores del consumidor para interactuar con contenido de responsabilidad social corporativa en línea de destinos turísticos, enfocándose específicamente en la responsabilidad social del destino en el turismo sostenible. El modelo también incorpora tres tipos de congruencia, revelando variaciones en su impacto en la explicación de la intención de compartir publicaciones relacionadas con la sostenibilidad.

Palabras clave Teoría SOR, Sostenibilidad, Destino turístico, Turismo sostenible, Facebook, Congruencia

Tipo de artículo Trabajo de investigación

分享旅游目的地可持续性传播信息的意图

摘要

研究目的 – 本研究分析了在Facebook上分享旅游目的地发布的环保问题帖子的意图决定因素。我们使用刺激-有机体-反应 (SOR) 模型作为理论框架, 并考虑了认知变量 (目的地社会责任、游客社会责任和三种类型的一致性) 作为情绪和游客反应 (分享意图) 的前因。此外, 还包括与社交平台相关的特定因素 (社交媒体的依赖度和活跃使用)。

设计/方法论/研究方法 – 该模型针对两个具有不同定位 (绿色旅游与阳光沙滩) 的目的地进行了测试。我们通过在线问卷调查了过去一年内至少进行一次旅行的Facebook用户, 最终样本量为1,001人。

研究发现 – 研究结果表明, 对于两个目的地, 消费者与环保事业一致性是解释分享帖子的意图的最重要变量, 而目的地与环保事业的一致性并不显著。我们还发现, 社交网络的活跃参与能激发用户分享此类特定内容的意图。

原创性 – 与以往研究不同, 本文探讨了消费者参与在线企业社会责任内容的动机, 特别关注于可持续旅游中的目的地社会责任。该模型还引入了三种类型的一致性, 并揭示了它们在解释分享可持续性相关帖子意图中的影响差异。

关键词 SOR理论, 可持续性, 旅游目的地, 可持续旅游, Facebook, 一致性

文章类型 研究型论文

1. Introduction

Many tourism companies make continuous efforts to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development and enhance their competitiveness (Martínez *et al.*, 2022). More recently, sustainability has extended to tourism destinations, and there is increasing pressure for destination management organisations (DMOs) to be seen incorporating social practices into their policies, as well as properly managing future tourism and its economic, social and environmental impacts (Font *et al.*, 2021; Mathew, 2022). In this context, the concept of destination social responsibility (DSR), which is related to the efforts of destination stakeholders to conduct socially responsible activities, has emerged as a new paradigm with great potential for growth (Agapito *et al.*, 2023; Su *et al.*, 2023).

Sustainability can form an integral part of a destination's brand identity and can enhance its competitiveness through unique associations that reinforce tourist engagement (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2020). Embracing this evolving paradigm, destinations, much like other businesses, are expected to communicate and justify their commitments in this realm. Social networking sites have emerged as crucial channels for such communications (Mercadé-Melé *et al.*, 2017; Chu and Chen, 2019; García de los Salmones *et al.*, 2021).

The integration of social media has significantly influenced information seeking and destination selection (Yamagishi *et al.*, 2023; Abbasi *et al.*, 2024). Social platforms can facilitate communication of CSR initiatives by enabling brand storytelling (Su *et al.*, 2015; Lund *et al.*, 2018) and fostering ongoing user interaction (Leung *et al.*, 2015). According to Clark *et al.* (2023), the use of social media to communicate sustainability efforts would increase intentions to stay and expand electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the young market segment. Despite growing attention, sustainability communication in tourism, particularly through social networks, remains an under-researched and emerging topic, with still inconsistent findings (Zizka, 2017; Tölkes, 2018; Dedeoğlu *et al.*, 2020; Okazaki *et al.*, 2020). Considering these antecedents, the general objective of the research was to analyse the variables explaining the intention to share a post about an environmental issue posted by a tourism destination. The contribution of the paper relates to the following issues.

Firstly, and to the best of the authors' knowledge, no studies have yet explored consumer motivators linked to reactions to online CSR content in the realm of tourism destinations. Tamaki (2021) and Bonilla-Quijada *et al.* (2021) carried out content analysis of the text and images of posts by a tourism destination. According to Tamaki (2021), future research should examine causal relationships through a direct survey and experiments with posts and users. Bonilla-Quijada *et al.* (2021) established that "new realities" had to be incorporated into the analysis, such as aspects related to safety or health conditions. García de los Salmones *et al.* (2021) and Martínez *et al.* (2022) analysed the CSR communication of a hospitality business on Facebook.

CSR in the field of organisational behaviour is not, however, entirely applicable to the destination context (Su *et al.*, 2018). The CSR literature has traditionally focused only on the responsibility of a company as an independent entity, while neglecting the collective influence of socially responsible behaviours that take place among interrelated entities, as occurs in a tourism destination (Su and Swanson, 2017). In these cases, the role of tourists could be very influential, because tourists engage directly in territories and communities (Chilufya *et al.*, 2019). Tourists play a crucial role in sustaining environmental beauties (Luu, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2024), and they have been considered co-creators of green values together with companies (Tan *et al.*, 2014). This may explain the possible differences in the perception of sustainability messages posted by a tourism destination versus those posted by a company.

Secondly, we designed a research model following stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory (Jacoby, 2002). More specifically, we studied the intention to share (response) a socially responsible post by a tourism destination on Facebook (stimulus), considering internal factors (organism) such as perceptions about the source, the message and the characteristics of the receiver. We also included variables related to user behaviour in the social platform (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Among the internal factors related to the perceptions about the message, we highlight the inclusion of different types of congruence, such as that between company and cause, consumer and company and consumer and cause (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Bigné *et al.*, 2010, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2012; Goldsmith and Yimin, 2014; García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2017). Here, destination-cause congruence refers to the alignment between social responsibility actions and the perceived destination image; consumer-cause congruence gauges how well the sustainability message aligns with

consumer interests; and consumer–destination congruence measures the fit between destination values and consumer perceptions.

Most research has focused on the individual impact of these types of congruence. Exceptions can be found in the studies by Goldsmith and Yimin (2014) and Albert *et al.* (2017), although they focus on different contexts (cause-related marketing and communication with celebrities, respectively). These studies revealed differences in the influence of the three congruences, which prompted the authors to suggest further research to consider different types of products, sectors or alternative alliances. Our study therefore has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the existing literature in this field.

Thirdly, we also considered the emotional reactions to the post. Affective responses (emotions) should complement the cognitive variables, which are more commonly used in CSR communication research (Du *et al.*, 2010). This shift involves moving from cognitive models to those that also incorporate an emotional element (Batra and Ray, 1986). However, emotions have traditionally been overlooked in previous CSR research (García de los Salmones and Perez, 2018), thus representing a new contribution of our work.

Finally, the research proposal has been empirically tested in relation to two destinations with different positioning and tourist models (green tourism versus sun and beach). Each model may lead to different perceptions regarding the destination concerned, checking the soundness of the proposal using two alternatives was of great interest.

The conceptual model and hypotheses are presented in the next section. The subsequent section presents the methodology, including how the variables were measured, how the data were collected and the main characteristics of the sample. The findings are then discussed together with their theoretical and managerial implications, limits and potential future study directions.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical framework

The SOR model has been effectively used in tourism to explain the connections among stimuli, processes and responses (Jani and Han, 2015). It has successfully predicted consumer behaviour on social networks (Martínez *et al.*, 2022; Bai *et al.*, 2023; Yamagishi *et al.*, 2023), virtual reality tourism (Kim *et al.*, 2020) and in DSR (Su and Swanson, 2017; Qiu *et al.*, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2024) (see Table 1). SOR theory suggests that external influences, such as elements of the marketing mix or other factors (Bagozzi, 1983) (stimulus), affect individuals' internal states, which comprise emotional and cognitive aspects (organism). These states result in approach or avoidance actions (response) (Jacoby, 2002). On social networks, the response is mainly tied to user-to-content interaction, such as sharing information or generating personal content to influence others (Chu and Kim, 2011).

2.2 Development of hypotheses

2.2.1 Stimulus. Stimuli in the online environment are the visual and auditory cues presented to the user (Eroglu *et al.*, 2001), which include brand publications on social networks (Kim and Johnson, 2016; Casalo *et al.*, 2021). Facebook, with 1.88 billion daily active users (Omnicores, 2022), was chosen as the platform for this study due to its extensive reach. Focusing on the stimulus, most sustainability communication articles in tourism have analysed the environmental dimension rather than the triple bottom line approach – encompassing economic, ecological and social aspects (Tölkes, 2018). Hence, we chose to focus the post content on the environmental dimension.

2.2.2 Organism: cognitive states. Exposure to a stimulus activates internal cognitive processes, which encompass beliefs, attention, comprehension, memory and knowledge, thus shaping how users perceive and interpret information about the stimulus (Eroglu *et al.*,

Table 1. S-O-R Models

Authors	Stimulus	Organism	Behaviour
Jani and Han (2015) Su and Swanson (2017)	Hotel ambience Perceived responsible actions associated with a particular destination	Guests' emotional responses Tourist destination identification Positive emotions Negative emotions Customers' engagement	Loyalty Environmentally responsible behaviour
Islam and Rahman (2017)	Characteristics (information quality, system quality, virtual interactivity and rewards) of an Online brand community		Brand loyalty
Kim <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Authentic experience	Cognitive response Affective response	Attachment to virtual reality Visit intention Intention to share
Martínez <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Post published by a tourist destination on Facebook	Users' attitudes towards sharing firms' Content Environmental consciousness Homophily Expressive information sharing	
Bai <i>et al.</i> (2023)	User-generated travel short videos (visual effect, musical effect, culture and activity effect, pop effect)	Familiarity Involvement with destinations	Intention to visit a destination
Qiu <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Destination source credibility	Affective image Cognitive image Place attachment	Tourist environmentally responsible behaviour Visit intention
Yamagishi <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Emotional user Generated content Factual user-generated content	Trust in user Generated content Destination image	
Wang <i>et al.</i> (2024)	Co-creation of experience	Satisfaction with the experience	Environmentally responsible behaviour

2001). Research on CSR has emphasised perceived congruence as a crucial cognitive variable influencing consumer responses (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Bigné *et al.*, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2012; Mercadé-Melé *et al.*, 2017).

Firstly, company–cause congruence refers to the alignment between a company's internal CSR practices and its external CSR statements (Ginder *et al.*, 2021). Extending this concept to a tourism destination, when consumers encounter a message about an environmental issue from a tourism destination, they will perceive either high or low destination–cause congruence – that is, alignment between the initiative and the destination – depending on the previous image of the destination as a responsible place.

This argument finds support in schema theory, which posits that individuals use schemas to organise information in memory to guide perception and thinking (Elving, 2013). When confronted with new information, individuals compare it with existing schemas to assess congruence (Goldsmith and Yimin, 2014). Consumers possess a pre-existing schema for

DSR that influences how they process novel information. In this context, DSR refers to tourists' perception of the overall social responsibilities fulfilled by the destination, involving stakeholders in activities that benefit social, environmental and economic interests (Su and Swanson, 2017; Su *et al.*, 2018). If the new information aligns with the consumer's existing schema, it demonstrates consistency with past experiences (Stojanovic *et al.*, 2018), thus resulting in high congruence – that is:

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- H1.* The greater the degree of perceived DSR, the higher the destination–cause congruence.

A second form of congruence is consumer–cause congruence. Darley and Lim (1992) refer to personal relevance, which they defined as the intrinsic importance of an issue. Consumers' values and lifestyle may thus influence their acceptance of CSR communication (Lass and Hart, 2004). Individuals should not be considered as “outsiders” (Albert *et al.*, 2017), which emphasises the importance of adopting a consumer-centred focus (Lee *et al.*, 2012). Delving further into this perspective, we analysed the extent to which the sustainability issue aligns with the interests of consumers, who are influenced by their own sense of social responsibility.

Generally speaking, individuals engaging in sustainable behaviour undertake actions to embody a particular lifestyle (Robinot *et al.*, 2021). They express their values of respect towards nature through positive attitudes towards purchasing eco-friendly products, recycling and participating in activities that promote environmental protection (Hojnik *et al.*, 2020). The term “tourist social responsibility” has been coined in the realm of tourism (Chilufya *et al.*, 2019) to signify the adoption of practices to preserve the environmental, socio-cultural and economic heritage of the places visited (Del Chiappa *et al.*, 2018).

It is accepted that socially responsible people are more predisposed to accept CSR communication and consider the content of the message more thoroughly (Du *et al.*, 2010). This is especially important in the online environment, where there is abundant information and people might have a greater intention to react only as long as they find the information useful, interesting or relevant (Almgren and Olsson, 2015; García de los Salmones *et al.*, 2021). We therefore expected that socially responsible tourists would connect to a greater extent with an environmental message, because it would fit with their values. Therefore, we propose that:

- H2.* The higher the level of tourist social responsibility, the higher the consumer–cause value congruence.

Finally, we examined consumer–company congruence, which refers to the perceived alignment between the company's character and an individual's own character (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Currás-Pérez *et al.*, 2009). Some authors refer to this as self–corporate connection (Moon *et al.*, 2015); it involves the alignment between the customer's unique self and how the values and behaviours of the brand resonate with that unique self. Building upon these concepts, we investigated consumer–destination congruence to gauge the extent to which consumers perceive the destination's values fit with their own.

People identify with organisations that share common traits and provide them with a sense of self-enhancement (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). CSR associations can, in this sense, mirror the company's standing in the social system; similarly, consumers' social self reflects their perceived association, as observed by others, and how they wish to be perceived (Moon *et al.*, 2015). Thus, the perception of CSR positively affects consumer–company congruence (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 2004; Goldsmith and Yimin, 2014). CSR associations activate consumers' social dimension and may affect the connection between their social self-concept and the company (Choi and Park, 2011). Moon *et al.* (2015) and Jeon *et al.*

(2020) identified an effect of consumers' perceived CSR on the self-connection to the brand. Considering these findings, we propose that: Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC

H3. The better the DSR is perceived to be, the higher the consumer–destination congruence.

2.2.3 Organism: affective states. Following the SOR model, consumer emotions towards a stimulus develop only after processing information (Bagozzi, 1983). Emotion is one particular form of affect that manifests in subjective feelings or moods evoked by a communication message (Batra and Ray, 1986). In the context of social networks, Kim and Johnson (2016) considered the dimensions of pleasure and arousal as affective states, and Casaló *et al.* (2021) found that users can experience feelings such as happiness, excitement or joy due to publications.

In the context of destination–cause congruence, perceived fit reduces cognitive effort in interpreting information, thus lowering the likelihood of suspicions arising about the brand's motivations for its relationship with the social cause (García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2017). More specifically, Bigné *et al.* (2009, 2010) and Mercadé-Melé *et al.* (2017) found that company–cause congruence has a direct and positive impact on affective variables, such as honesty and sincerity. According to Yoon *et al.* (2006), if congruence is positive, the CSR message will be credible. In these cases, positive emotions can emerge in the audience (García de los Salmones and Perez, 2018). We therefore expect that:

H4. Destination–cause congruence arouses positive emotions in consumers.

Previous studies have demonstrated positive rewards for companies aligned with consumer values (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). However, some proposals have suggested that in a natural social context, consumers rely more on signals than simple cognitive categorisation to decide their behaviour (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999). Individuals' affective states towards a brand should therefore be included in the models (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 2004; Currás-Pérez *et al.*, 2009). Lichtenstein *et al.* (2004) found that this congruence influences the sense of warmth and happiness, while according to Currás-Pérez *et al.* (2009), consumer–company congruence influences affective variables, such as perceptions of whether a brand is good/bad or pleasant/unpleasant. These arguments lead us to propose that:

H5. Consumer–destination congruence arouses positive emotions in consumers.

Finally, the greater the consumer–cause congruence, the more positive the effect of CSR initiatives have on consumer perception (Lee *et al.*, 2012). When messages on social media platforms align with users' interests, are relevant or interesting, there is a positive relationship with user sharing behaviour (Chang *et al.*, 2015; Martínez *et al.*, 2022). When processing information, individuals are drawn to messages that are relevant to them. Consequently, they are more likely to invest cognitive effort in scrutinising the message content and carefully considering all presented arguments, ultimately favouring a positive response (Petty *et al.*, 1983). In line with this, Darley and Lim (1992) found that, in advertising, the personal relevance of the cause conveyed in the campaign significantly affects emotional reactions towards the message. We therefore propose that:

H6. Consumer–cause congruence arouses positive emotions in consumers.

2.2.4 Response: intention to share. The SOR model culminates with decision-making processes, such as behavioural intention (Jacoby, 2002). In this context, positive emotions have been recognised as antecedents to consumer responses in prior studies on users'

experiences on social networks (Kim and Johnson, 2016; Casaló *et al.*, 2021). We therefore propose that the emotions evoked by the different types of congruence, rather than cognitions *per se*, can enhance the intention to share the post:

- H7. Consumers' emotions influence their intention to share a message about an environmental issue posted by a tourism destination

2.2.5 Influence of user behaviour in social networks. Contextual factors related to the online platform can also influence the adoption of eWOM (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). It is therefore important to analyse new variables specific to the social networks, such as prior social media experience (Lee and Ma, 2012; Li, 2016) and attachment to the social network (VanMeter *et al.*, 2015; Hinson *et al.*, 2019; Nam *et al.*, 2020; Casaló *et al.*, 2021), to extend and complement the research model.

Firstly, the intensity of social media use is an explanatory variable for engagement and the intention to share (Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015). Some individuals are more active in content creation, whereas others are passive users or spectators (Li, 2016), who visit social media sites to view others' activity but only engage with it infrequently beyond that (Hart *et al.*, 2015). Users displaying high usage intensity maintain regular contact with brands, thereby affecting word-of-mouth (Jahn and Kunz, 2012); they are more likely to respond with likes, shares or comments (Pletikosa and Michahelles, 2013; De Vries and Carlson, 2014). In the context of the tourism sector, it has been observed that prior social media use of a tourism destination influences the intention to engage in eWOM by improving brand equity (Stojanovic *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, we expect that:

- H8. Active use of the social network influences the intention to share a message about an environmental issue posted by a tourism destination.

Secondly, prior research has established that individuals can form attachments to social networks (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2019). These platforms facilitate connections with other people, companies and brands, which suggests that people can also develop psychological connections with the platforms themselves (VanMeter *et al.*, 2015; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2019). Social media is in fact considered an object of strong attachment, which can even generate addiction (Blackwell *et al.*, 2017). Here, attachment is defined as "the strength of a bond between a person and social media" (VanMeter *et al.*, 2015, p. 71). Casaló *et al.* (2021) also refer to affective commitment to an on-line community, which is a crucial predictor of community members' behaviour (Chung *et al.*, 2016), including consumer-to-business supportive communication behaviours (VanMeter *et al.*, 2015), because it reflects a long-term orientation in the relationship with the group derived from frequent and pleasing contact with other members of the collective. Nam *et al.* (2020) observed that attachment to the TripAdvisor community significantly predicted positive eWOM, while VanMeter *et al.* (2015) found that individuals more strongly attached to social media are more likely to engage in supporting a brand than those less attached. These prior findings lead us to propose that:

- H9. Attachment to the social network influences the intention to share a message about an environmental issue posted by a tourism destination.

Finally, previous research has found that emotional attachment to social media exerts a direct as well as an indirect effect on user loyalty; it also influences long-term use of social media brands (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2019). Social networks comprise both more and less active users, and attachment is an explanatory variable for these user profiles. Attachment predicts increased feedback seeking and overall Facebook activity (Hart *et al.*, 2015), while Nam *et al.* (2020)

found that attachment to the TripAdvisor community positively influenced active participation on the platform. Similarly, [Casaló et al. \(2021\)](#) observed that affective commitment to an Instagram account had a positive effect on the interaction intentions with the account. In summary, we propose that:

H10. Attachment to the social network influences the active use of the social network.

The research model following the proposed SOR model is shown in [Figure 1](#).

3. Methodology

3.1 Stimuli and questionnaire

To test the hypotheses and evaluate the validity of the model, we considered two tourism destinations in Spain with distinct competitive models: green tourism (Cantabria) and sun and beach tourism (Alicante). Cantabria is a northern Spanish region situated in a well-known green area of Spain. It is primarily renowned for its humid climate and mountainous terrain, which position it as a nature-centric destination. In contrast, Alicante, in a Mediterranean province, is famed for its warm climate and extensive tourism infrastructure, which features large resorts along the coast. While sun and beaches are its prominent attractions, it has recently implemented a sustainability plan to incorporate these issues into its tourism policy. Both destinations represent two clearly different models in terms of positioning.

We crafted two fictitious posts, one for each destination, addressing an environmental issue. Both posts featured identical text and a similar image to avoid biasing participants' opinions. The posts were exclusively designed for research purposes, ensuring that the stimulus was consistent for the two destinations. The images were the only difference between the posts, as each picture showcased a beach in the respective place. The fictitious post (see [Appendix 1](#)) was presented to the respondents prior to their completion of the questionnaire. At the conclusion of the survey, we revealed that the post had been created for a research study. The questionnaire encompassed inquiries related to each model variable, following previous research (see [Appendix 2](#)).

To mitigate potential issues associated with common method variance (CMV), we implemented various ex ante and ex post strategies. Ex ante, all items were meticulously reviewed to eliminate any ambiguous or unfamiliar concepts ([Chang et al., 2010](#)). The questionnaire also separated explanatory and explained variables ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)),

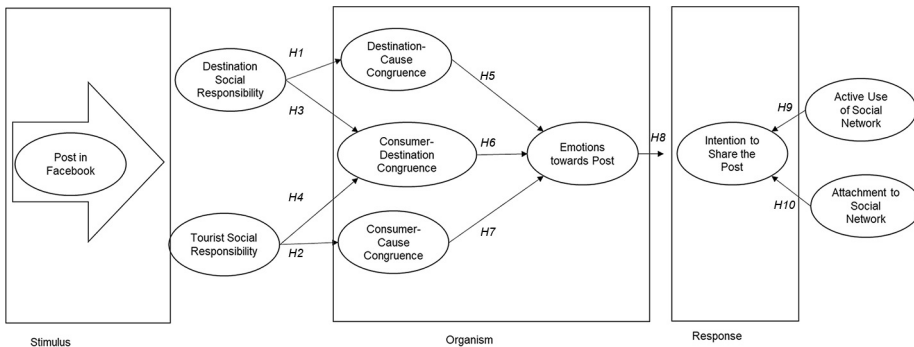


Figure 1. Research Model

and control questions were incorporated to verify respondents’ thorough reading of the measurement instruments.

As an ex post measure, we used the unmeasured latent method construct (ULMC) technique, proposed by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), which has been successfully applied in recent research (Min *et al.*, 2016; Suess *et al.*, 2020; Kock *et al.*, 2021). This method comparison of the results of ordinary CFA with an alternative model adding a single unmeasured first-order factor (i.e. a common factor), which has all the items as indicators. No evidence of CMV was found for either of the two samples considered, as there were no significant differences in the standardised loadings and correlations among factors between the two models (ordinary CFA and CFA with the unmeasured first-order factor).

3.2 Sampling and sample description

For the sampling strategy, we created a study based on online polls with a national sample of people who frequently used Facebook and who had travelled at least once in the previous year. In line with the sampling quotas and the sociodemographic profile of Facebook users in Spain, as outlined in the Annual Study of Social Networks (2021) and IAB Spain (2021), a non-probabilistic sampling approach was adopted.

The fieldwork was conducted in collaboration with Netquest, a multinational corporation specialising in market research, which contacted individuals meeting the established criteria to invite them to take part in the online survey. Data collection took place in March 2022 and was made in adherence to the ISO 26362:2009 standard, which guarantees the integrity and reliability of responses obtained from panellists. The system also authenticated the IP addresses of respondents to ensure singular completion of the questionnaire by each participant.

The sample consisted of 1,001 Facebook users, with 500 individuals evaluating the post from Cantabria, and 501 assessing the post for Alicante. Table 2 illustrates the socio-demographic characteristics of both sub-samples, which align closely with the profile of Facebook users in Spain as outlined by IAB Spain.

4. Results

The research hypotheses were tested using a covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) approach, using the EQS 6.1 software. This statistical method is particularly well-suited for social science research grounded in robust theoretical frameworks that investigates interdependencies and causal relationships among variables (Ullman and Bentler, 2012). CB-SEM also facilitates the examination of the psychometric

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Target quota (%)	Alicante (%)	Cantabria (%)
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	51.0	51.1	51.0
Female	49.0	48.9	49.0
<i>Age</i>			
18–34 years old	32.0	32.1	32.6
35–54 years old	40.0	40.7	39.8
55+ years old	27.0	27.1	27.6

properties of multi-item scales through CFA (Hair *et al.*, 2010). More specifically, a multi-group analysis approach was adopted to assess the invariance of the measurement model and compare the outcomes of the structural model across the two considered samples (Byrne, 2006). Following the procedure proposed by Fischer and Karl (2019), in each case the model was estimated first for each sample independently to test for configural invariance; then, the multigroup model was estimated with the corresponding constraints for the equality of factor loadings and intercepts to test for metric and scalar invariance, respectively. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated that the data followed a non-normal distribution for some of the variables in both samples, so the models were estimated following a robust maximum likelihood procedure, which provides the outputs “robust chi-square statistic” and “robust standard errors”, which corrected for non-normality (Bentler, 2006).

4.1 Estimation of the measurement model

The measurement model was estimated for each sample to test the psychometric properties of the scales (Byrne, 2006). Multigroup analysis was then conducted to test for the invariance of the factorial structure of the measurement instruments across groups (Fischer and Karl, 2019). The measurement model estimation (see Tables 3 and 4) supports the appropriate psychometric qualities of the scales for the two samples considered. The Cronbach’s alpha, compound reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) coefficients were all above the necessary minimum levels of 0.7, 0.7 and 0.5, respectively, indicating the good reliability of the measurement instruments (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair *et al.*, 2010).

The standardised lambda coefficients exceeded 0.5 and all items were significant to a confidence level of 95%, thereby supporting the convergent validity of the scales in both samples (Steenkamp and Van Trijp, 1991).

The multigroup estimation of the measurement model for both samples indicated good fit of the constrained model for the invariance of the factorial structure established in the measurement model (BBNFI = 0.91; BBNNFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.034; Normed χ^2 = 2.13). The Lagrange multiplier (LM) test also supported the invariant factorial structure of the measurement instruments for all the items, with the only exceptions being DSR2, DSR3, EMPO2 and ICO1. Thus, in general, the multigroup analysis confirmed the invariance of the measurement model for both samples (Byrne, 2006; Fischer and Karl, 2019). Configural invariance was supported, because the factorial structure proposed was confirmed for the two samples analysed. Metric and scalar invariance was also supported, as the constrained multigroup analyses confirmed that factor loadings and intercepts were the same across groups.

Finally, we applied the methods proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1984) and Fornell and Larcker (1981) to test the discriminant validity of the measurement instruments. According to the criterion proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1984), discriminant validity was confirmed in all cases for both samples, as the confidence intervals for the correlations between constructs did not contain the unit in any of the cases. Regarding the criterion established by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the AVE coefficients for each factor were greater than the squared correlation among the constructs (see Tables 5 and 6), in all cases except for two pairs of factors in Sample 1 (active use of social network, consumer–destination congruence; and active use of social network, attachment to the social network). However, in these cases, the AVE was very close to the squared correlations between the constructs in Sample 1, and the criterion was totally fulfilled in Sample 2. Overall, these results demonstrate the convergent validity of the scales for both samples considered.

Table 3. Measurement model for alicante (sun and beach model)

Factor	Variable	Stand. Coef	R ²	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	Goodness of fit indices
Destination Social Responsibility (RSD)	DSR1	0.89	0.78	0.93	0.93	0.74	BBNFI = 0.92
	DSR2	0.88	0.119.77				BBNNFI = 0.95
	DSR3	0.75	0.56				CFI = 0.95
	DSR4	0.87	0.76				IFI = 0.96
	DSR5	0.89	0.78				RMSEA = 0.05
Tourist Social Responsibility (TSR)	TSR1	0.70	0.49	0.85	0.85	0.55	Normed χ^2 = 2.09
	TSR2	0.53	0.29				
	TSR3	0.82	0.67				
	TSR4	0.76	0.58				
	TSR5	0.84	0.71				
Consumer-Cause Congruence (COCA)	COCA1	0.90	0.82	0.93	0.93	0.78	
	COCA2	0.90	0.81				
	COCA3	0.84	0.71				
	COCA4	0.88	0.78				
Destination-Cause Congruence (DECA)	DECA1	0.84	0.71	0.91	0.91	0.72	
	DECA2	0.90	0.81				
	DECA3	0.85	0.73				
	DECA4	0.79	0.63				
Consumer-Destination Congruence (CODE)	CODE1	0.95	0.91	0.96	0.96	0.86	
	CODE2	0.86	0.74				
	CODE3	0.95	0.90				
	CODE4	0.95	0.90				
Emotions towards Post (EMPO)	EMPO1	0.89	0.79	0.90	0.91	0.66	
	EMPO2	0.64	0.41				
	EMPO3	0.87	0.76				
	EMPO4	0.82	0.66				
	EMPO5	0.83	0.69				
Attachment to Social Network (ATSN)	ATSN1	0.90	0.82	0.91	0.91	0.77	
	ATSN2	0.81	0.65				
	ATSN3	0.92	0.84				
Active Use of Social Network (AUSN)	AUSN1	0.75	0.57	0.85	0.85	0.59	
	AUSN2	0.70	0.50				
	AUSN3	0.81	0.66				
	AUSN4	0.80	0.65				
Intention to Share the Post (ISP)	ISP1	0.97	0.93	0.97	0.97	0.91	
	ISP2	0.93	0.87				
	ISP3	0.96	0.93				

4.2 Estimation of the structural model

To test the research hypotheses, as well as the invariance in the results of the structural model across the two samples analysed, we followed the sequential process suggested by [Fischer and Karl \(2019\)](#). We first estimated the structural model independently for each sample. All research hypotheses except for *H4* (Destination–Cause congruence and emotions towards post) were supported, and the goodness-of-fit was good for the two samples (Alicante: BBNFI = 0.89; BBNNFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.93; IFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.057; Normed χ^2 = 2.64; Cantabria: BBNFI = 0.90; BBNNFI = 0.93; CFI = 0.93; IFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.057; Normed χ^2 = 2.61), thus supporting configural invariance across groups.

Table 4. Measurement model for Cantabria (green model)

Factor	Variable	Stand. Coef.	R ²	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Goodness of fit indices
Destination Social Responsibility (RSD)	DSR1	0,86	0.74	0.93	0.93	0.72	BBNFI = 0.91
	DSR2	0,85	0.73				BBNNFI = 0.94
	DSR3	0,83	0.69				CFI = 0.95
	DSR4	0,86	0.75				IFI = 0.95
	DSR5	0,85	0.73				RMSEA = 0.05
Tourist Social Responsibility (TSR)	TSR1	0,77	0.59	0.87	0.87	0.58	Normed χ^2 = 2.20
	TSR2	0,67	0.45				
	TSR3	0,80	0.65				
	TSR4	0,76	0.57				
	TSR5	0,80	0.65				
Consumer-Cause Congruence (COCA)	COCA1	0,87	0.76	0.93	0.93	0.78	
	COCA2	0,93	0.87				
	COCA3	0,82	0.67				
	COCA4	0,90	0.80				
Destination-Cause Congruence (DECA)	DECA1	0,81	0.66	0.91	0.91	0.73	
	DECA2	0,90	0.81				
	DECA3	0,89	0.79				
	DECA4	0,80	0.63				
Consumer-Destination Congruence (CODE)	CODE1	0,93	0.86	0.96	0.96	0.86	
	CODE2	0,90	0.81				
	CODE3	0,94	0.89				
	CODE4	0,93	0.87				
Emotions towards Post (EMPO)	EMPO1	0,92	0.84	0.89	0.90	0.64	
	EMPO2	0,55	0.30				
	EMPO3	0,88	0.78				
	EMPO4	0,78	0.61				
	EMPO5	0,81	0.65				
Attachment to Social Network (ATSN)	ATSN1	0,88	0.78	0.92	0.92	0.79	
	ATSN2	0,85	0.72				
	ATSN3	0,93	0.86				
Active Use of Social Network (AUSN)	AUSN1	0,76	0.58	0.86	0.86	0.61	
	AUSN2	0,71	0.51				
	AUSN3	0,84	0.70				
	AUSN4	0,81	0.66				
Intention to Share the Post (ISP)	ISP1	0,98	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.92	
	ISP2	0,94	0.88				
	ISP3	0,96	0.93				

The structural model was then estimated imposing equality constraints on the factor loadings across groups to test for metric invariance. Finally, scalar invariance was tested by examining whether both the factor loadings and item intercepts were invariant across groups. The results obtained in the multigroup analysis supported the good fit of the structural model to the data, as the goodness-of-fit indices showed values over the recommended thresholds (BBNFI = 0.89; BBNNFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.93; IFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.040; Normed χ^2 = 2.60). The Lagrange multiplier test also confirmed the invariance of the causal effects in all cases (see Table 7), with very small chi-square values (and the corresponding *p*-values clearly above 0.05), which implies no significant differences between the two samples analysed.

Table 5. Results for Fornell and Larcker's criterion for discriminant validity (all constructs) – alicante (sun and beach model)

Variables	DSR	CENV	COCA	DECA	CODE	EMPO	ATSN	AUSN	ISP
DSR	0.74 ^a								
TSR	0.09	0.55 ^a							
COCA	0.34	0.09	0.78 ^a						
DECA	0.45	0.34	0.51	0.72 ^a					
CODE	0.42	0.45	0.48	0.51	0.86 ^a				
EMPO	0.39	0.42	0.61	0.48	0.51	0.66 ^a			
ATSN	0.12	0.39	0.13	0.61	0.48	0.10	0.77 ^a		
AUSN	0.09	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.61	0.11	0.59	0.59 ^a	
ISP	0.28	0.09	0.32	0.12	0.13	0.34	0.39	0.45	0.91 ^a

Note: ^aAVE Coefficient/Out of main diagonal: squared correlations among constructs

Table 6. Results for Fornell and Larcker's criterion for discriminant validity (all constructs) – Cantabria (green model)

Variables	DSR	CENV	COCA	DECA	CODE	EMPO	ATSN	AUSN	ISP
DSR	0.72 ^a								
TSR	0.19	0.58 ^a							
COCA	0.36	0.21	0.78 ^a						
DECA	0.50	0.26	0.59	0.73 ^a					
CODE	0.45	0.23	0.43	0.71	0.86 ^a				
EMPO	0.34	0.16	0.61	0.49	0.43	0.64 ^a			
ATSN	0.07	0.00	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.79 ^a		
AUSN	0.09	0.02	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.59	0.61 ^a	
ISP	0.28	0.04	0.29	0.16	0.18	0.26	0.26	0.36	0.92 ^a

Note: ^aAVE Coefficient/Out of main diagonal = squared correlations among constructs

Table 7. Estimation structural model: multigroup analysis

Hypotheses	Alicante (Std. Coef.)	Cantabria (Std. Coef.)	Chi-Square
H1: DSR → Destination-Cause Congruence	0.48**	0.54**	0.95
H2: DSR → Consumer-Destination Congruence	0.48**	0.54**	0.84
H3: Tourist Social Responsibility → Consumer-Cause Congruence	0.26**	0.27**	0.03
H4: Destination-Cause Congruence → Emotions towards Post	0.07 (n.s.)	0.06 (n.s.)	0.26
H5: Consumer-Destination Congruence → Emotions towards Post	0.26**	0.25**	0.14
H6: Consumer-Cause Congruence → Emotions towards post	0.57**	0.59**	0.31
H7: Emotions towards post → Intention to Share the Post	0.44**	0.37**	0.04
H8: Active Use of Social Network → Intention to Share the Post	0.44**	0.40**	0.18
H9: Attachment to Social Network → Intention to Share the Post	0.19**	0.17**	1.12
H10: Attachment to Social Network → Active Use of Social Network	0.77**	0.77**	0.03

Note: **p-value < 0.05

The findings obtained in this research thus confirm the explanatory capacity of the research model and, specifically, of the key dependent variables. Thus, the R-square statistics for the intention to share the post, active use of social networks and emotions towards the post had values over 0.5 for both samples (Table 8). More than 50% of the variance of these variables was explained by the independent variables proposed in the research model.

Regarding the testing of the research hypotheses (Tables 7 and 8), the empirical evidence obtained supported all the causal effects proposed for both samples (Alicante as a sun and beach destination and Cantabria as a green destination), except the influence of destination–cause congruence on the emotions towards post (*H4*, non-significant in both cases).

The results for both tourism models supported the effect of perceived DSR on destination–cause congruence (*H1*) and consumer–destination congruence (*H2*). Emotions towards the post were triggered by the consumer–destination (*H5*) and consumer–cause (*H6*) congruencies. In contrast, destination–cause congruence did not exert a significant influence on emotions (*H4*). These findings imply that, in the context of social networks and tourism destinations, feelings towards a post centre on the consumer her/himself. Emotions are inherently individual variables, which could explain why the feeling towards the post was dependent on how the consumer interpreted the cause and destination with regard to his/her own values. The non-significant effect of destination–cause congruence on emotions towards the post also seems to imply that, in this specific context, the cause and its relation to the destination is less important, in contrast to the findings in corporate environments.

Regarding the determinants of the intention to share the post, the results confirmed the significant effect of emotions towards the post (*H7*), which aligns with the sequence outlined by the SOR theory. We also found that active use of the social network (*H8*) and personal attachment to it (*H9*) influenced the intention to share the specific post. Attachment to the social network also had a direct effect on the active use of the social network for both destinations examined (*H10*). These results suggest that positive emotions towards the post, being active users of the social network and having attachment to it are the key direct determinants of the intention to share the post.

The results obtained in the estimation of the structural model confirmed that the effects considered in the research model work in a similar way for the two types of tourism destinations considered. However, this does not imply that tourists' perceptions of the destination and their responses towards the posts are the same in both cases. In fact, the descriptive analyses showed that the tourists' average perception of destination responsibility and destination–cause congruence was higher in the case of Cantabria, as was the intention to share the post about the environmental issue. Thus, while the intensity of the effects was the same for both destinations (invariance in the effects was confirmed in the multigroup analyses), tourists' average intention to share the posts about an environmental

Table 8. R^2 Statistics for the dependant variables

Dependant variable	R^2 Alicante	R^2 Cantabria
Intention to share the post	0.54	0.43
Active use of social network	0.59	0.59
Emotions towards post	0.61	0.58
Destination-cause congruence	0.23	0.30
Consumer-destination congruence	0.23	0.29
Consumer-cause congruence	0.07	0.07

issue was higher for the destination that was perceived, on average, as more responsible and congruent with the cause communicated (i.e. the green destination).

5. Conclusions

This study analysed the intention to share a post on Facebook about an environmental issue posted by a tourism destination. Sustainable tourism is a new paradigm applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments (UNWTO, 2023). The particular idiosyncrasy of sustainability communication makes it interesting to explore within two different tourism models (green tourism and sun and beach tourism) to assess the robustness of the proposed model and potential differences between destinations.

5.1 Theoretical implications

The study of factors that can maximise communication effectiveness has garnered attention in the academic literature. The results of the present model confirmed the importance of the different types of congruence, although not all types were equally relevant. This finding aligns with previous studies unrelated to tourism (Goldsmith and Yimin, 2014; Albert *et al.*, 2017), which suggests a broader perspective on congruence. Despite its importance in other contexts (Bigné *et al.*, 2010; García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2017), cause–destination congruence does not evoke emotions, regardless of whether the region is positioned as a green or a sun and beach destination. Rather, consumer–cause congruence proved to be the most significant variable, which underscores the importance of crafting a message that resonates with consumer interests and holds personal relevance (Darley and Lim, 1992; Lee *et al.*, 2012). This type of congruence is explained by the tourist social responsibility. Generally speaking, environmentally concerned people tend to minimise their negative impact on the environment throughout the consumption process, as this reflects a certain lifestyle and bolsters their identity and social status. Pro-social people are therefore more predisposed to be interested in this topic (Du *et al.*, 2010), because it connects with their values and identity.

Consumer–destination congruence was also significant in both tourism models. As observed in other contexts (Moon *et al.*, 2015), people can feel drawn towards a destination, appreciating what it embodies and symbolises and we found that these shared values generated positive emotions. CSR associations also contribute to the social self-concept of consumers (Moon *et al.*, 2015), which emphasises the importance of incorporating sustainable values into brand identity.

With regard to the role of emotions, we supported the inclusion of affective variables and the sequence outlined by the SOR theory (Casaló *et al.*, 2021). This suggests that cognitions trigger emotions, and these emotions, in turn, explain the behaviour – in our case, the intention to share the post. This result highlights the importance of measuring emotions in CSR communication (García de los Salmones and Perez, 2018).

Finally, as we proposed, social media users with a participative profile had a higher intention to share information compared to passive users or spectators (Li, 2016). This supports previous results related to the benefits of customers' intensive use of social media (Jahn and Kunz, 2012; De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Stojanovic *et al.*, 2018). We also found that the sense of attachment to social media explained users' behaviour (VanMeter *et al.*, 2015; Chung *et al.*, 2016).

5.2 Discussion of results

One important finding of this research was the role of different types of congruence in explaining emotions and, consequently, the intention to share the post. Previous studies

have demonstrated the significant influence of company–cause congruence (Bigné *et al.*, 2010; García-Jiménez *et al.*, 2017), which they explained using information processing theories. Thus, when a company communicates a CSR action that aligns with its values or activities (company–cause congruence), the perceived fit reduces the cognitive effort required to interpret the information, thus minimising extrinsic attributions and enhancing communication effectiveness. However, this effect was diluted when the combined impact of the three types of congruence was analysed. We found some explanations for this in the works of Goldsmith and Yimin (2014) and Albert *et al.* (2017). Goldsmith and Yimin (2014) found that cause–brand congruence loses importance in explaining reactions to cause-related marketing campaigns for low-involvement products. In such cases, the influence of perceived company motivations has a much higher impact than cause–brand fit, although consideration of other types of products is needed to delve deeper into this result.

In the present study focused on destination communication on social media, we found that high or low destination–cause congruence did not influence emotions. Sustainable tourism requires the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including tourists (World Tourism Organization, 2023), who have been considered co-creators of green values alongside tourist companies (Tan *et al.*, 2014) and play a highly influential role in the CSR efforts of destinations (Chilufya *et al.*, 2019). This integrative perspective can neutralise the effect of extrinsic attributions, explaining why destination–cause congruence lost importance in the model. It appears that this new paradigm is accepted irrespective of the tourist model. This argument needs further support through specific measurement of the perceived attributions of sustainable initiatives. This result should also be interpreted with caution, as destination–cause congruence could potentially be significant if considered individually.

In this regard, Albert *et al.* (2017) discovered that within the domain of brand–celebrity alliances, congruencies that involve the consumer (consumer–brand and consumer–celebrity) held more significance than brand–celebrity congruence. Traditionally, the literature had predominantly regarded the celebrity–brand connection as fundamental and even as the sole explanation for endorsement effects on consumer attitudes and behaviours. Their work emphasised the significance of adopting a broader perspective on congruence. In line with this, our research revealed that consumer-centred congruences also emerged as the most influential variables in explaining emotions. The inclusion of all three types of congruence in the same model suggests that the prominence of certain congruences may diminish the importance of others.

Companies should therefore prioritise consumers (Lee *et al.*, 2012), as their values and lifestyles significantly influence the acceptance and formation of overall perceptions of CSR communication (Lass and Hart, 2004). In general, environmentally conscious individuals tend to mitigate their negative impact on the environment throughout the consumption process. Through these actions, they can manifest a particular lifestyle, thereby reinforcing their identity and social status. Pro-social individuals are more likely to be predisposed to this topic (Du *et al.*, 2010) because it resonates with their values and sense of identity. This holds particularly true in the context of social networks, which are virtual spaces where individuals actively engage and express their personality, status and social or personal identity (Currás-Pérez *et al.*, 2014).

It is also important to consider that social platforms themselves function as brands, which facilitates the formation of emotional bonds with users (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2019). This, in turn,

fosters active participation and the intention to share specific posts. It is worth noting that this result pertains not to the tourism destination but to the platform itself. However, it can also assist destinations in selecting the most suitable social media channels for communication purposes.

5.3 *Managerial implications*

The results obtained in this study also have relevant implications for the marketing management of tourism destinations, at both the strategic and operational level. From a strategic perspective, this research showed that accepting the sustainable tourism paradigm and being considered a socially responsible destination can have benefits. Thus, in addition to the intrinsic importance of managing the destination in a socially responsible way, it is important to build up the image of sustainability to enhance consumers' identification with the destination, along with its credibility in developing and communicating environmental actions. In other words, tourism destinations must not only be socially responsible, but also be perceived as such. It is therefore essential that DMOs implement strategic communication and public relations actions to ensure that tourists are aware of these values. One crucial aspect is building partnerships with key stakeholders and influencers who align with the destination's sustainability goals. Operationally, DMOs could collaborate with local environmental NGOs, eco-conscious celebrities or influential travel bloggers known for promoting sustainable tourism practices. Additionally, DMOs can leverage events and initiatives to showcase their commitment to sustainability and engage with tourists. Hosting eco-friendly festivals, beach clean-up campaigns or nature conservation workshops not only raise awareness but also provide tangible experiences that align with the destination's values. Furthermore, DMOs should use digital platforms effectively to communicate their sustainability initiatives to a broader audience. This could involve creating engaging content for social media channels, such as sharing success stories of local sustainability projects or showcasing eco-friendly accommodations and activities. Proactive media relations can also play a vital role in amplifying the destination's sustainability message. DMOs should establish relationships with journalists and media outlets to secure coverage of their sustainability initiatives in travel publications, news websites and TV shows.

This research has confirmed the need to adopt a consumer-centric approach in the management of online communication. It is very important that both the destination image and the cause communicated align with the values of target tourists. Thus, in the design of content focusing on the sustainability of the destination – and specifically posts for social networks – DMO managers must consider the congruence of this content with tourists' values. This is crucial for evoking more positive emotions towards the post and increasing its virality. To achieve this, it is key to have a deep understanding of tourists, which requires continuous efforts in consumer research and monitoring. DMOs should analyse social media engagement metrics to gain insights into tourists' preferences and values regarding sustainability. This will also enable the targeting of social media communication towards segments that are more socially responsible and aligned with the destination, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of posts focused on sustainability issues. It is also key to foster interactions with them through the publication of relevant and appealing content to build an online community attached to the destination. DMOs should focus on crafting content that evokes emotions such as awe, inspiration, joy or empathy, as these are more likely to resonate with audiences

and prompt them to take action. For example, rather than simply listing facts about sustainability initiatives, DMOs could tell compelling stories that showcase the positive impact of these efforts on local communities, wildlife or the environment. Highlighting real-life experiences and human connections can evoke empathy and foster a sense of belonging among their audience, motivating them to share the content with others. Moreover, incorporating visually appealing elements such as high-quality images, videos or infographics can further enhance the emotional appeal of the post. For instance, DMOs could share captivating images of natural landscapes, eco-friendly attractions or meaningful interactions between tourists and locals, stirring up emotions and encouraging sharing. Furthermore, DMOs can leverage storytelling techniques to create narratives that resonate with their target audience's values and aspirations.

Finally, the virality of social media communication focused on the sustainable values of the destination also depend on the profiles of tourists in terms of their active use of the social network. This has relevant implications for customer segmentation, so DMOs should target their posts on social networks to more dynamic users, who are more prone to share and spread that content. By directing resources towards engaging these dynamic users, DMOs can leverage their social networks to disseminate sustainability-focused messages effectively. DMOs should prioritise two-way communication channels, responding to comments, questions and feedback from users promptly. By actively engaging with followers and involving them in discussions about sustainability initiatives, DMOs can cultivate a sense of belonging and ownership within the online community.

5.4 Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations that must be acknowledged and taken into consideration to guide future research. A non-probabilistic sampling procedure was used, which could affect the representativeness of the samples and the generalisability of the results obtained. Nevertheless, we established socio-demographic quotas to ensure that the samples represented the population of Facebook users in the studied context in terms of age and gender. We also tested the research model in two samples focused on different types of tourism destinations, and the results obtained were very similar, thus supporting the robustness of the samples used.

This research was also based on cross-sectional data, using intended behaviour as a dependent variable; it would be more rigorous to use longitudinal data and analyse actual behaviour. Future research should therefore aim to overcome this limitation with the application of new technological tools based on artificial intelligence and big data. With regard to the message, the type of content (e.g. a video instead a static image or information about another dimension of CSR) may play a significant role in the intention to share a post. Regarding CSR, the majority of articles (57.4%) about sustainability communication in tourism analyse the “environmental” dimension, in opposite to the “triple bottom line” approach-economic, ecological and social aspects- (Tölkes, 2018). Therefore, we decided to focus the content of the post on this dimension. This approach can be a limitation of the work, so we propose to explore the effect of other types of content on congruence and the intention to share.

We also suggest including new variables in the model. Due to the idiosyncratic nature of sustainable tourism and its integrative perspective, the extrinsic attributions that arise in business communication may be less relevant or may not appear. Thus, we propose the explicit measurement of attributions in future research;

it would be also interesting to complement the positive emotions with analysis of negative emotions.

With regard to social networks, we also suggest exploring other social network characteristics. Variables such as prior knowledge, consumer expertise or involvement in a product or topic determine the degree of effortful information processing for the word-of-mouth received (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). This reasoning prompts us to suggest investigating whether active use and attachment to the platform can also influence information processing, thereby affecting emotions towards the post.

Finally, we also acknowledge the limitations of the SOR theory, including its linear sequence, which could hinder researchers from recognising significant phenomena and dynamic relationships or the fact that certain constructs may be both organisms and responses (i.e. internal and external responses) (Jacoby, 2002). This fact leads us to propose that new and advanced versions of the model considering overlapping and dynamic processes (Bigné *et al.*, 2020) be considered in future research.

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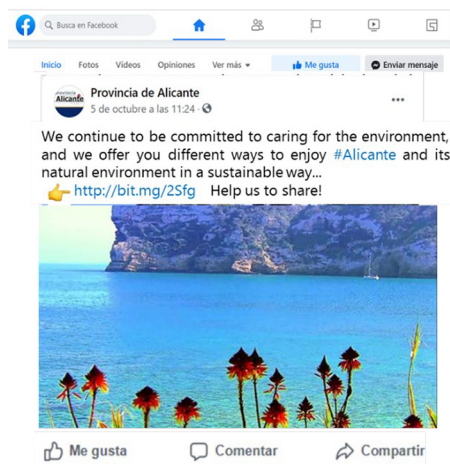
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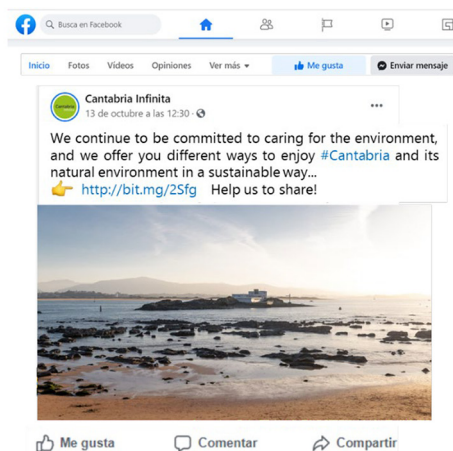
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Appendix 1. Stimuli (fictitious posts)

Alicante (Sun and beach destination)



Cantabria (Green destination)



Appendix 2. Measurement scales (seven point Likert scale)

Destination Social Responsibility (DSR) (Su and Swanson, 2017; Su et al., 2020)

The tourism organisations at the destination

DSR1. ... are environmentally responsible in conducting their activity.

DSR2. ... do something for the local community.

DSR3. ... treat tourists well.

DSR4. ... act ethically and obey all legal obligations to fulfil their social responsibilities.

DSR5. ... care about preserving cultural heritage.

Tourist Social Responsibility (Saleem et al., 2021; Del Chiappa et al., 2018);

During my tourist trips....

TSR1. ... I try to respect the natural resources of the destination.

TSR2. ... I try to protect the historical/archaeological/cultural resources of the destination.

TSR3. ... I try to conserve energy and limit the use of natural resources.

TSR4. ... I try to consume sustainable products/services.

TSR5. ... I try to adopt environmentally responsible actions.

Consumer-Cause Congruence (Darley and Lim, 1992; Lee et al., 2012).

This cause (stimulus)....

COCA1. ... it matters a great deal to me.

COCA2. ... seems very relevant to me.

COCA3. ... means a lot to me.

COCA4. ... seems very important to me.

Destination-Cause Congruence (Till and Busler, 2000; Bigné et al., 2010; García de los Salmones et al., 2013);

After seeing the post (stimulus), and considering the image you have about (X) as a tourism destination, the fact that this destination implements sustainable programs of this type...

DECA1. I find it congruent with its policies.

DECA2. It seems to me that this sustainable action is compatible with the destination.
DECA3. It makes sense that the destination performs this sustainable action.
DECA4. it fits to me that the destination develops this sustainable action.
Consumer-Destination Congruence (Lee *et al.*, 2012; Currás-Pérez *et al.*, 2009).
Generally speaking,....
CODE1. ... I like what the destination represents.
CODE2. ... I think that the destination has attractive values.
CODE3. ... I like what the destination embodies.
CODE4. ... I like what the destination symbolises.
Emotions towards the post (Darley and Lim, 1992; García de los Salmones and Perez, 2018).
The post (stimulus) has made me feel....
EMPO1. ... Interest.
EMPO2. ... Surprise.
EMPO3. ... Curiosity.
EMPO4. ... Sympathy.
EMPO5. ... Liking.
Attachment to Social Network (Nam *et al.*, 2020);
ATSN1. Belonging to Facebook social network is important to me.
ATSN2. I often acknowledge the fact that I am a member of Facebook social network.
ATSN3. I feel a strong attachment to the Facebook community.
Active Use of the Social Network (Li, 2016; Martínez *et al.*, 2022);
AUSN1. I usually give “like”/interact on others’ posts on Facebook.
AUSN2. I usually give “like”/interact with posts from companies/companies on Facebook.
AUSN3. I usually use Facebook to share information that may be of use or interest to my contacts.
AUSN4. I usually post contents on my own Facebook page.
Intention to Share the Post (García de los Salmones *et al.*, 2021; Martínez *et al.*, 2022);
ISP1. I intend to use Facebook to share this post.
ISP2. I will possibly use Facebook to share this post.
ISP3. I would be decided to use Facebook to share this post.
ISP4. I usually use Facebook to provide information about topics that are interesting to me.

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