

Engaging consumers through firm-generated content on Instagram

Engaging
consumers

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Engagement del consumidor a través del contenido generado por las empresas en instagram

企业如何通过发布在instagram上的内容来吸引消费者

Estefania Ballester and Carla Ruiz
Universidad de València, Valencia, Spain, and

Natalia Rubio
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyse the impact of consumers' perceptions of the enjoyment and originality of firm-generated content (FGC) posted on Instagram on affective customer engagement (CE). In addition, an examination is undertaken of affective CE as a driver of customer behaviour.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper takes a quantitative approach using a sample of 334 women followers of an eco-friendly restaurant Instagram account. After validation of the measurement scales, the hypotheses were tested through structural equation modelling. Drawing on the stimuli-organism-response framework the authors posit that consumers' perceptions of the enjoyment and originality of Instagram posts generate affective CE, which, in turn, influences customer behaviour.

Findings – The results showed that the perceived enjoyment and perceived originality of Instagram posts generated by an eco-friendly restaurant have a positive influence on affective CE, which, in turn, affects consumers' recommendation behaviours, intention to follow the restaurant's advice on Instagram and intention to revisit the restaurant.

Originality/value – This research provides novel insights into how the perceived enjoyment and originality of FGC posted on Instagram increases women's affective engagement and expands knowledge of

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how affective CE might increase positive electronic word-of-mouth, intention to follow the restaurant's advice and repurchase intentions.

Keywords Instagram, Eco-friendly restaurant, Customer engagement, Originality, Enjoyment

Paper type Research paper

Resumen

Propósito – El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar el impacto de las percepciones de los consumidores sobre el disfrute y la originalidad del contenido generado por la empresa (CGE) publicado en Instagram en el engagement afectivo del cliente. Además, se examina el engagement afectivo del cliente como impulsor de su comportamiento.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque – El artículo adopta un enfoque cuantitativo utilizando una muestra de 334 mujeres seguidoras de la cuenta de Instagram de un restaurante ecológico. Tras la validación de las escalas de medición, las hipótesis se testaron mediante un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales. Basándonos en el marco S-O-R, se postula que las percepciones de los consumidores sobre el disfrute y la originalidad de las publicaciones de Instagram generan un engagement afectivo del cliente que, a su vez, influye en su comportamiento.

Hallazgos – Los resultados mostraron que la percepción de disfrute y la percepción de originalidad de las publicaciones de Instagram generadas por un restaurante ecológico tienen una influencia positiva en el engagement afectivo del cliente, que, a su vez, afecta a los comportamientos de recomendación de los consumidores, la intención de seguir los consejos del restaurante en Instagram y la intención de volver a visitar el restaurante.

Originalidad/valor – Esta investigación proporciona una visión novedosa sobre cómo la percepción del disfrute y la originalidad de los CGE publicados en Instagram aumenta el engagement afectivo de las mujeres, y amplía el conocimiento sobre cómo el engagement afectivo de los clientes podría aumentar la comunicación boca-oído electrónica (eCBO) positiva, la intención de seguir los consejos del restaurante y las intenciones de recompra.

Palabras clave – Instagram, Restaurante ecológico, Engagement del consumidor, Originalidad, Disfrute

Tipo de trabajo – Trabajo de investigación

摘要

目的 – 本文旨在分析消费者对Instagram上发布的企业生成内容 (FGC) 的愉悦度和原创性的感知对情感性顾客契合的影响。此外, 本文还对作为顾客行为驱动因素之一的情感性顾客契合进行了研究。

设计/方法/途径 – 本文采用定量方法, 以一家生态友好餐厅的Instagram账户的334名女性粉丝为研究样本。在验证了测量量表有效性后, 通过结构方程模型对假设进行了检验。基于S-O-R框架, 我们认为消费者对Instagram帖子的愉悦度和原创性的感知会产生情感性的顾客契合, 进而影响顾客行为。

研究结果 – 研究结果显示, 消费者对生态友好餐厅在Instagram上所发帖子的愉悦度和原创性的感知对情感性顾客参与有正向影响, 而情感性顾客契合进而影响消费者在Instagram上的推荐行为、采纳餐厅建议的意愿和重访该餐厅的意愿。

原创性/价值 – 这项研究对Instagram上发布的FGC的愉悦度和原创性消费者感知如何增加女性的情感契合提供了新的见解, 并扩展了关于情感性顾客契合如何增加积极的电子口碑、采纳餐厅建议的意愿和再次购买意愿的知识。

关键词: Instagram, 生态友好型餐厅, 顾客契合, 原创性, 愉悦度

1. Introduction

Image-based social networking sites have gained popularity during the past years (Choi and Sung, 2018). Instagram has recently experienced extraordinary growth in popularity as a communication channel through which brands can transmit their commercial messages (Rietveld *et al.*, 2020). Instagram reported that it had more than 1 billion monthly active users worldwide in January 2021, half of them using the platform daily (Statista, 2021). Women are the more active Instagram users, due to its visual element (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016;

King, 2019) and use Instagram to pursue personal health goals such as healthy eating (Chung *et al.*, 2017; Djafarova and Bowes, 2021).

The increasing importance of Instagram has prompted firms to make considerable investments in social media activities to engage and connect with potential consumers (Perreault and Mosconi, 2018). Firm-generated content (FGC) elicits positive responses from consumers, such as greater recognition, favourable attitudes, repurchase intentions (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Colliander and Marder, 2018) and customer engagement (CE) (Perreault and Mosconi, 2018). Through visual content (e.g. photos) restaurants can emphasise their eco-friendly credentials and improve consumer attitude (Hwang *et al.*, 2020). Recent research has highlighted that the food industry is one of the most prominent sectors on social media (Kusumasondjaja and Tjiptono, 2019). In a further example, Yu and Sun (2019), in a study into promotional material about Macau, observed that most Instagram posts related to Taiwanese cuisine. Tandoh (2016) demonstrated that Instagram is a driver of consumer restaurant choice. Moreover, Zhu *et al.* (2020) showed that restaurants which posted pictures of their food were more positively evaluated by consumers.

The eco-friendly restaurant industry has gained popularity during the past years and recent studies have shown that social media influence eating habits (Sidani *et al.*, 2016; Park *et al.*, 2017). Previous literature has suggested that the number of customers who choose healthy menu options is increasing (Schwingshackl and Hoffmann, 2015). The restaurant industry was chosen as the context of this research because it is one of the most important sectors in the Spanish economy (Miragaya and Miret-Pastor, 2019). Gender is an important driver of food preference (Shin and Mattila, 2019). Azzurra *et al.* (2019) pointed out that women have a greater tendency to consume organic products. In general, terms, women eat more fruit, vegetables and fibre and, thus give greater importance to healthy eating (Arganini *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the context of this study is female customers of eco-friendly restaurants.

The concept of CE has been accorded a significant role within the marketing literature (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). CE provides a sustainable competitive advantage (Kumar and Pansari, 2016) and plays an important role as a driver of sales performance, particularly amongst companies in the tourism sector such as restaurants (Romero, 2017). However, the effect of Instagram content on CE merits further investigation. Previous works have identified customer participation and customer interactivity as antecedents of CE (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Regarding its consequences, Verhoef *et al.* (2010) found that CE reinforces long-term company reputation, a frequent problem for restaurants. Restaurants, like hotels, cannot be rated by official organisations in some standard aspects, such as quality of service, food and experience and this increases the importance of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Ruiz-Mafe *et al.*, 2018).

Despite the importance of Instagram in the context of eco-friendly restaurants, there is little understanding of the link between the characteristics of Instagram-based FGC and CE. The aim of the paper is to assess the impact of the perceived enjoyment and originality of the FGC posted on Instagram on female CE with eco-friendly restaurants on the basis of the stimuli-organism-response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974).

The study makes two contributions to the social media literature. Firstly, light is shed on how the perceived enjoyment and originality of FGC posted on Instagram increases women's affective engagement with eco-friendly restaurants. By its nature, Instagram is well suited to allow eco-friendly restaurants to visually display their food, atmosphere and facilities using pleasing and appealing content. As previous research has noted (Casaló *et al.*, 2021), there is a need to explore the consequences of creative online communications on Instagram. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the process through which enjoyable and original restaurant posts on Instagram affect customer behaviours through

their internal responses, that is, affective engagement aroused, based on the S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response) framework. Secondly, we expand the knowledge of the effects of FGC posted on Instagram on customer behaviour. Specifically, the study focusses on two crucial behavioural intentions, intention to follow the advice posted by a company on its Instagram account and consumer's repurchase intentions. Given the increasing competition in the hospitality industry, it is important to understand the individual's intention to follow the advice posted on Instagram, as this has considerable influence on his or her behavioural decision-making processes (Casaló *et al.*, 2017b; Ruiz-Mafe *et al.*, 2020).

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

2.1 *The stimulus – organism – response model*

The S-O-R framework (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) argues that a stimulus (S) perceived in the environment is processed by an internal component, the organism (O), which, in turn, produces positive or negative responses (R). The S-O-R framework has been used in different contexts, including restaurants, movie tickets and hospitality (Fu *et al.*, 2018; Bigne *et al.*, 2020; Ali *et al.*, 2021). Using the S-O-R paradigm Fu *et al.* (2018) analysed whether similarities amongst users increased their online purchase intentions for movie tickets. In addition, previous research into social networks (e.g. Facebook, Instagram) has successfully applied the framework to analyse customers' responses, taking brand posts on social networks as stimuli (Kim and Johnson, 2016; Casaló *et al.*, 2021). In particular, Islam and Rahman (2017), based on the S-O-R model, investigated what motivates customers to engage in brand social networks. In the present study, FGC posted on Instagram is used as the stimuli which may activate CE with the restaurant (organism), which may subsequently elicit future behaviours (responses). Thus, this research provides additional support for the application of the S-O-R paradigm in a visuals-based social network, Instagram.

2.2 *Firm-generated content on Instagram (stimulus)*

FGC is content produced by companies to promote their goods and to increase CE on social media (Liang *et al.*, 2020). Firm-generated content increases followers' engagement with social media brand pages and provides more firm-consumer and consumer-consumer touchpoints (Pongpaew *et al.*, 2017). FGC is especially important for restaurants, as through posting content they can publicise their eco-friendly activities and generate favourable consumer attitudes (Hwang *et al.*, 2020). Recent research by Gruss *et al.* (2020) highlighted the impact of specific Facebook post-attributes on CE with restaurants. Romão *et al.* (2019) recommended that brands should invest in the more visually appealing social networks, recalling the statement that "a picture is worth a thousand words". This study focusses on the conjoint impact of two characteristics of FGC, perceived enjoyment and perceived originality, on affective CE.

2.2.1 Perceived enjoyment. Previous research has found that perceived enjoyment is a key driver of the consumer's use of social networks (Lin *et al.*, 2017); it can keep users active on social media for longer periods of time (Hsiao *et al.*, 2016). In the context of this research, perceived enjoyment is the degree of fun and relaxation derived from FGC posted on a restaurant's Instagram account (Seol *et al.*, 2016). Studies into the motivation to use social media have shown that "Passtime" is the main motivation to use Facebook (Quan-Haase and Young, 2010) and entertainment is one of the main motivations to use Pinterest (Mull and Lee, 2014). Muntinga *et al.* (2011) showed that visuals-based social networking sites, such as Instagram, are powerful online instruments that help brands increase and stimulate enjoyment (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). O'Brien and Toms (2008) recommended that companies use aesthetics, novelty and sensory appeal to encourage CE. Previous research has found

that certain aspects of online content, such as perceived enjoyment, can help generate customer affective engagement (Agarwal and Karahanna, 2000; Turel and Serenko, 2012). Hence, as follows:

H1. The perceived enjoyment of a restaurant's firm-generated content on Instagram has a positive effect on affective CE.

2.2.2 Perceived originality. Perceived originality has been defined as the extent to which the content in social media is perceived as unusual, innovative and sophisticated (Casaló *et al.*, 2020). According to Peters *et al.* (2009), individuals are more willing to share their comments or anecdotes if the degree of surprise and interest is high. In addition, Casaló *et al.* (2020) showed that the originality of content posted on Instagram accounts has a direct impact on users' perceptions. Instagram offers brands a visual story-telling platform with tools that allow them to demonstrate their originality, evoking positive emotions amongst their followers (Casaló *et al.*, 2017a). Mohsen *et al.* (2018) argued that original content may generate closer ties. In this regard, it is reasonable to expect that originality will positively influence affective CE because it increases the surprise element and consumers might thus be more interested in following the brand and discussing its content online. Therefore, as follows:

H2. The perceived originality of a restaurant's firm-generated content on Instagram has a positive effect on affective CE.

2.3 Customer engagement (organism)

CE is regarded as a novel approach to explaining customer value (Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Gligor *et al.*, 2019). Social media have provided enhanced opportunities for CE and have become the key loci of customer-firm interactions (Mariani *et al.*, 2016; Viglia *et al.*, 2018). Dolan *et al.* (2019) showed that social media influence the degree to which customers engage with organisations and that the customer's level of engagement both affects and is affected by, the organisation's approach to customer relationship management.

This study adopts Hollebeek's (2014, p. 154) conceptualisation of CE; CE is "a consumer's positively valenced cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-related activity during or related to, specific consumer-brand interactions". This conceptualisation proposes three dimensions corresponding to the generic cognitive, affective and behavioural nature of "engagement". This paper focusses on affective CE, defined as "a consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction" because positive emotions broaden the scope of cognition and facilitate flexible and creative thinking (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002). More specifically, Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) argued that positive emotions produce enhanced well-being through cognitive broadening, which often leads to effective action. Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) suggested that the three components of engagement may represent an upward (or downward) spiral. The starting point is positive emotions. Positive emotions may act as a "spring" that facilitates actions and inspires deeper commitment. Coetzee and Pourfakhimi (2019) highlighted the positive effects of the affective dimension on behavioural intentions (repurchase and recommendation). Some recent studies have suggested that affect engagement could be a significant predictor of loyalty (Lim *et al.*, 2020). In addition, previous research has also highlighted that the user's affective component plays an important role in consumer behaviour. Bandura (2012) emphasised the importance of affective engagement in changing people's behaviours and

Flavián-Blanco *et al.* (2011) showed that emotional outcomes are likely to influence the actions that internet users perform on the web.

2.4 Behavioural intentions (response)

Based on prior research we analyse three different consequences of affective CE: positive eWOM, intention to follow a restaurant's advice on Instagram and repurchase intentions.

2.4.1 Positive electronic word-of-mouth. The massive increase in the use of the internet has transformed traditional word-of-mouth into eWOM (Reyes-Menendez *et al.*, 2019). eWOM has been defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004, pp. 39). The Chu and Kim (2011) argued that eWOM on social networking sites relates to the following three actions: "opinion seeking, opinion giving and opinion passive". As the present study examines recommendations, we focus exclusively on positive eWOM. Many previous studies have linked consumer engagement to superior performance outcomes, for example, brand referrals and positive word-of-mouth (Casaló *et al.*, 2010a, 2010b; Payne *et al.*, 2017; Beckers *et al.*, 2018). Wei *et al.* (2013) argued that CE positively affects customers' opinions of hotels. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Affective CE with the FGC posted on a restaurant's Instagram account influences consumers to create positive eWOM.

2.4.2 Intention to follow the advice posted on Instagram. Visuals-based social networks such as Instagram make it easy for consumers to obtain helpful advice from brands through reference to their official platforms, which can increase their intention to follow the brand advice. Casaló *et al.* (2020) showed that intention to follow the advice is related to the extent that individuals follow, take into account and put into practice the suggestions brands make in their official Instagram accounts. Prior research has suggested that where a positive consumer-brand relationship on the brand's social media site exists the consumer is more likely to follow brand advice (Fang and Li, 2016). In this context, recent research has highlighted that customers' engagement with the FGC on social media positively affects their intention to follow brand advice (Erkan and Evans, 2016). Thus, it is proposed that as follows:

H4. Affective CE with the FGC posted on a restaurant's Instagram account influences consumers to follow the restaurant's advice on Instagram.

2.4.3 Repurchase intentions. Repurchase intentions are a person's choice to continue purchasing a brand, neglecting other options (Ariffin *et al.*, 2016). For the purposes of the present study, repurchase intentions are defined as the users' judgements about their intentions, stimulated by FGC posted on Instagram, to revisit a restaurant. Previous tourism-based studies have posited that online brand experience positively affects users' revisit intentions (Boley *et al.*, 2018; Jiménez-Barreto *et al.*, 2020). Due to its interactive nature, CE generates relational links with brands, which consumers may wish to maintain in the future through recommendations, intention to visit and loyalty (Dessart *et al.*, 2015). Ortégón-Cortázar and Royo-Vela (2019) argued that emotional responses impact on intention to revisit. In tourism, studies have found that a positive social media experience involving a destination is an important predictor of the user's intention to visit the destination (Boley *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is posited that as follows:

H5. Affective CE with the FGC posted on a restaurant's Instagram account influences consumer's repurchase intentions.

Increased digitalisation makes eWOM communication an important factor affecting consumer attitudes and behaviours (Reimer and Benkenstein, 2016). eWOM can change customer preferences and behavioural intentions (Tien *et al.*, 2019). We expect that customers who recommend brands will have strong intentions to follow FGC advice. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. Positive eWOM has a positive effect on the intention to follow a restaurant's advice posted on Instagram.

Putri and Agus (2019) showed that recommendations significantly affect purchase intention in the Instagram context. Previous tourism-based studies have posited that eWOM positively affects travel intentions (Göker and Ayar, 2020) and visit/re-visit intentions (Abubakar *et al.*, 2017; Huifeng and Ha, 2021). Therefore, we expect that a customer who recommends a brand will have strong repurchase intentions. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7. Positive eWOM has a positive effect on repurchase intentions.

Finally, in line with information adoption theory, we propose that intention to follow the advice is the eWOM receivers' intention to internalise and subsequently use, review information in their decision-making (Erkan and Evans, 2016). Brand followers are exposed to a huge amount of information that affects their purchase intentions (See-To and Ho, 2014). Based on the acknowledged high importance of eWOM adoption in forming consumer intentions, this study proposes that adoption of a brand's advice on its official Instagram account plays an important role in repurchase intentions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8. Intention to follow the advice posted by a restaurant on its Instagram account has a positive effect on repurchase intentions.

The research model is displayed in [Figure 1](#).

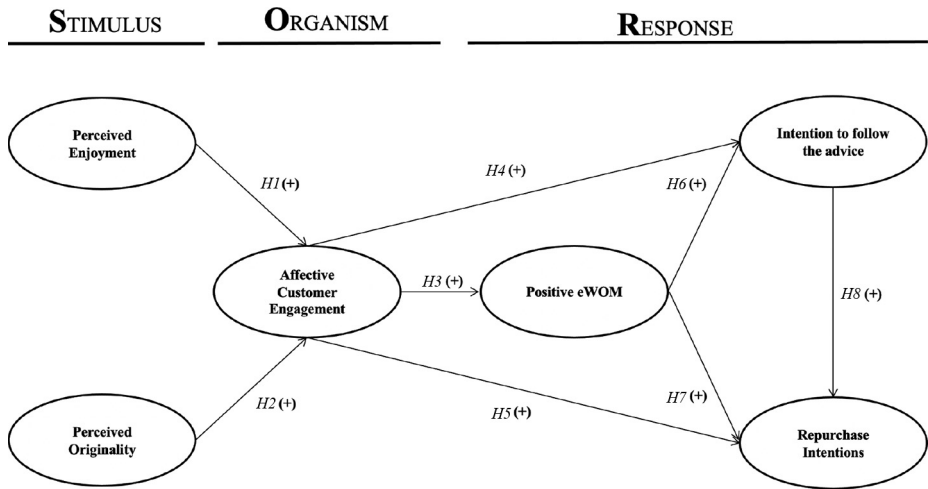
3. Methodology

Data were collected from the official Instagram account of a well-known eco-friendly restaurant. The Superchulo restaurant in Madrid was chosen as the context of this research because:

- It has a large, and increasing, number of followers (101,000, May 2021);
- It has an official Instagram account which provides healthy menu advice/recipes, targeted mainly at women;
- Collaborating with a well-known restaurant allowed us to measure the research variables using a sample of real customers; and
- It is ranked in TripAdvisor as amongst the top 5% of restaurants in Madrid (TripAdvisor, 2021).

The restaurant distributed an online questionnaire amongst its female followers through a link on its official Instagram brand account. We followed recent social media/restaurant-based studies that used a single case as a research context; Royo-Vela and Casamassima

Figure 1.
Research model



(2011) measured active and passive participation on the Zara brand Facebook community; Sørensen *et al.* (2020) used a themed attraction restaurant to analyse experience value creation; Murillo-Zegarra *et al.* (2020) used a Veepee company to analyse eWOM behaviours on branded mobile apps.

The restaurant’s official Instagram site shows pictures of its food and posts eco-friendly recipes. Eco-friendly restaurant Instagram accounts were selected as the study context due to the important role that engagement plays in the hospitality industry, the increasing use of Instagram by restaurants (Kim *et al.*, 2020) and because interest in healthy restaurants is witnessing continual growth (Rodríguez-López *et al.*, 2020). Over 70% of the global Instagram population is below 34 years of age (Statista, 2019). The restaurant’s Instagram followers are mainly young and female, a profile similar to followers of other eco-friendly restaurants. Women tend to have healthier lifestyles, making food choices-based more on healthy food content (Azzurra *et al.*, 2019).

The link to the research questionnaire was posted on the restaurant account for a week. The survey asked the followers about their perceptions of the enjoyment (Nambisan and Baron, 2007) and originality (Moldovan *et al.*, 2011) of the restaurant’s FGC. Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) was drawn on to measure affective CE. As to the customers’ behavioural intentions, we asked about their intention to post-positive eWOM (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), intention to follow the restaurant’s advice (Casaló *et al.*, 2011) and revisit intentions (Huang and Hsu, 2009; Žabkar *et al.*, 2010). Sociodemographic information was also sought (e.g. age, type of diet and how often the respondents visited the restaurant). Table 1 sets out the items, seven-point Likert-type response formats, where 1 is “strongly disagree” and 7 is “strongly agree”, used in the study. Prior to collecting the data, the survey was pre-tested on a sample of 20 female business studies students; there was no need for any adjustments to the measurement instrument because the questionnaire content was well understood for all the respondents.

A total of 334 women who had visited the restaurant at least once responded to the questionnaire. Although the sampling procedure was based on self-selection, which may cause some bias, this method of data collection is consistent with common research practice in the online context (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Steenkamp and Geyskens, 2006). The largest percentage age group was below 25 years (N = 158, 47.31%), followed by those

Items	Mean	SD	Standardised loadings
Perceived enjoyment (Nambisan and Baron, 2007)	5.533	1.138	
Visiting X Instagram account make me spend some enjoyable and relaxing time			0.764 ^{**}
Visiting X Instagram account is funny and pleasant			0.892 ^{**}
Visiting X Instagram account entertains me and stimulates my mind			0.840 ^{**}
I have great enjoyment when visiting X Instagram account			0.829 ^{**}
Perceived originality (Moldovan <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	5.580	1.185	
Publications on X Instagram account are original			0.846 ^{**}
Publications on X Instagram account are novel			0.771 ^{**}
Publications on X Instagram account are innovative			0.706 ^{**}
Publications on X Instagram account are creative			0.792 ^{**}
Affective CE (Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	5.253	1.192	
I feel very positive when I use the X Instagram account			0.883 ^{**}
Using the X Instagram account makes me happy			0.947 ^{**}
I'm proud to use X Instagram account			0.925 ^{**}
Repurchase intentions (Zabkar <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Huang and Hsu, 2009)	5.868	1.099	
I would like to revisit X in the near future			0.843 ^{**}
If had to decide again I would choose X			0.927 ^{**}
I would more frequently visit X			0.756 ^{**}
X would be my first restaurant choice over other restaurants			0.794 ^{**}
Intention to follow advice (Casaló <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	6.035	1.119	
I would feel comfortable eating healthy food as shown on X Instagram account			0.921 ^{**}
I would not hesitate to take into account the suggestions about healthy food I can find in X Instagram account			0.954 ^{**}
I would feel secure in following the suggestions about healthy food made by X Instagram account			0.903 ^{**}
I will rely on the suggestions about healthy food made by X Instagram account			0.813 ^{**}
Positive eWOM (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Zeithaml <i>et al.</i> , 1996)	5.915	1.187	
I have recommended X to lots of people			0.905 ^{**}
I "talk up" X to my friends			0.910 ^{**}
I spread the good-word about X			0.869 ^{**}
I say positive things on social media about X to other people			0.828 ^{**}

Notes: X = Superchulo eco-friendly restaurant; SD = standard deviation; χ^2 (253) = 7,345.13 ($p < 0.01$); NFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.926; CFI = 0.937; RMSEA (90%) = 0.079 [0.072; 0.085]. Significance level: ^{**} $p < 0.01$

Table 1.
Scales

between 25 and 34 (N = 148, 44.31%); the remaining being older than 34 (N = 28, 8.38%). In terms of the type of diet, the participants were mainly omnivores (N = 219, 65.57%), 22.75% were vegetarians and 6.29% vegans. Finally, in terms of average experience on Instagram, 88.62% of the participants (N = 296) had been users for more than 2 years.

4. Findings

A covariance-based structural equation modelling approach, with the lavaan statistical programme (R), was used to test the research model. Although the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and the analysis of the moment structural programme (AMOS) are popular in the marketing area we estimated the proposed model using the R programme because it is open-source software that improves the reproducibility of scientific research

(Arslan *et al.*, 2020). R is as accurate as AMOS (Tang and Ji, 2014). A two-step process was carried out to analyse the data as follows (Reyes-Mendez *et al.*, 2018):

- A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was undertaken to examine the psychometric, properties of the measurement scales; and
- Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the relationships in the research model.

4.1 Validation of the measurement scales

Before testing the hypotheses, the psychometric properties of the measurement instrument were assessed. To assess measurement reliability and validity the maximum likelihood method and a CFA of all the multi-item constructs in the proposed framework were applied (using R statistical software). The statistics were found to be robust (Satorra and Bentler, 1988; Chou *et al.*, 1991; Hu *et al.*, 1992). The overall goodness-of-fit of the CFA measurement model indicated satisfactory model fit to the data (comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), normed fit index (NFI) and standardized root mean residual (SRMR) < 0.08; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08) (Bollen and Long, 1993). The overall CFA measurement model also achieved satisfactory fit: χ^2 (253) = 7,345.13 ($p < 0.01$); NFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.926; CFI = 0.937; SRMR = 0.045 and RMSEA (90%) = 0.079 (0.072; 0.085). Table 1 shows standardised loadings of the items for all the constructs.

Reliability and validity analyses were undertaken to test the model’s constructs (Table 2). We calculated the average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s *alpha* (CA) of all the constructs. The measurement instrument shows no reliability problems. All CA values were satisfactory, exceeding in all cases the minimum threshold of 0.7 (Churchill, 1979), the compound reliability index for all factors was above the recommended value of 0.7 and AVE was above 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was also confirmed. Two criteria were followed to confirm discriminant validity. Firstly, the confidence interval in the estimation of the correlations between each pair of factors does not include the value 1 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) and, secondly, the square root of the AVE for each factor is higher than the inter-construct correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Based on these criteria, the measurements in the study provided sufficient evidence of reliability and convergent and discriminant validity.

4.2 Structural equations model

After we had verified the reliability and validity of the measurement scales, SEM was used to test the hypotheses. The standardised solution is shown at Table 3 and, as can be seen, all

Constructs	CA	CR	AVE	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Perceived enjoyment (1)	0.895	0.900	0.693	<i>0.832</i>	0.837	0.764	0.683	0.692	0.741
Perceived originality (2)	0.857	0.907	0.609	0.779	<i>0.780</i>	0.721	0.670	0.739	0.709
Affective CE (3)	0.940	0.942	0.844	0.698	0.645	<i>0.919</i>	0.558	0.614	0.653
Repurchase intentions (4)	0.889	0.931	0.772	0.603	0.586	0.500	<i>0.879</i>	0.654	0.838
Intention to follow advice (5)	0.943	0.944	0.809	0.616	0.667	0.530	0.574	<i>0.899</i>	0.652
Positive eWOM (6)	0.925	0.900	0.693	0.671	0.629	0.571	0.788	0.570	<i>0.832</i>

Table 2.
Reliability and
validity analysis

Notes: Italics numbers on the diagonal show the square root of the AVE; Above the diagonal: upper limit of the 90% CI for factor correlation estimation; below the diagonal: correlation between factors. CA = Cronbach’s *alpha*; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

the hypotheses, except *H8*, were supported. The results indicated that, from a statistical point of view, the data fit the conceptual model acceptably (χ^2 (253) = 7,345.13 ($p < 0.01$); NFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.926; CFI = 0.937; SRMR = 0.045 and RMSEA (90%) = 0.079 confidence interval [0.072; 0.085]). The results of the proposed model (Table 3) revealed the important role that FGC has in engaging customers with brands on Instagram. Specifically, affective CE in Instagram is positively affected by the perceived enjoyment (*H1*: $\beta = 0.433$; $p < 0.01$) and perceived originality of FGC posted on Instagram (*H2*: $\beta = 0.239$; $p < 0.05$), supporting *H1* and *H2*. In turn, affective CE had a significant influence on positive eWOM (*H3*: $\beta = 0.578$; $p < 0.01$), intention to follow the restaurant's advice (*H4*: $\beta = 0.334$; $p < 0.01$) and repurchase intentions (*H5*: $\beta = 0.180$; $p < 0.05$). Thus, *H3*, *H4* and *H5* were supported. The analyses confirmed the direct effect of positive eWOM on intention to follow the restaurant's advice (*H6*: $\beta = 0.338$; $p < 0.01$) and on repurchase intentions (*H7*: $\beta = 0.408$; $p < 0.01$). Therefore, *H6* and *H7* are also supported. Finally, contrary to our expectations, intention to follow the restaurant's advice did not affect repurchase intentions (*H8*: $\beta = 0.107$; $p > 0.05$), rejecting *H8*. The results showed that perceived post-characteristics (perceived enjoyment and originality) play a key role in developing CE on Instagram, which, in turn, influences customer behaviours related to both the account and to the restaurant.

5. Discussion

The present study sheds light on the effects of FGC posted on Instagram on CE and in driving users' behavioural intentions. This is –to the best of the authors' knowledge– the first research to analyse in the same model two crucial concepts in this context, that is, the perceived enjoyment and originality of FGC posted on an official brand Instagram account and their subsequent influence on CE.

Firstly, the findings showed that perceived enjoyment and originality had a direct effect on affective CE. This result is consistent with previous research that suggested that original and enjoyable Instagram-based content may generate closer ties between brands and consumers, which might serve to develop CE (Mohsen *et al.*, 2018; Pongpaew *et al.*, 2017). Secondly, the results suggested that affective CE influences consumer behavioural intentions in several ways. Firstly, it increases positive eWOM and intention to follow the restaurant's advice, thus benefiting the brand. In this sense, the results confirm that CE on visuals-based networks positively influences customers' recommendation intentions and is linked to eWOM (Payne *et al.*, 2017; Beckers *et al.*, 2018). The reason behind this is that the emotional dimension has positive effects on behavioural intentions (Coetzee and Pourfakhimi, 2019). Secondly, affective CE increases repurchase intentions (intention to

Hypotheses	Stad. beta	
<i>H1</i> . Perceived enjoyment – affective CE	0.433**	Supported
<i>H2</i> . Perceived originality – affective CE	0.239*	Supported
<i>H3</i> . Affective CE – positive eWOM	0.578**	Supported
<i>H4</i> . Affective CE – intention to follow advice	0.334**	Supported
<i>H5</i> . Affective CE – repurchase intentions	0.180*	Supported
<i>H6</i> . Positive eWOM – intention to follow the advice	0.338**	Supported
<i>H7</i> . Positive eWOM – repurchase intentions	0.408**	Supported
<i>H8</i> . Intention to follow advice – repurchase intentions	0.107 n.s	Not supported

Notes: Significance level: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; n.s: non-significant; χ^2 (253) = 7,345.13 ($p < 0.01$); NFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.926; CFI = 0.937; RMSEA (90%) = 0.079 [0.072; 0.085]

Table 3.
Hypotheses

revisit the restaurant). This supports recent research that found that a positive social media experience with a destination is an important predictor of users' future intentions to visit that destination (Boley *et al.*, 2018). Thirdly, we posit that customers who recommend the restaurant will have higher intentions to follow its advice and to revisit the restaurant; it seems that direct eWOM can change customer preferences and behavioural intentions (Tien *et al.*, 2019) and significantly affects repurchase intentions (Putri and Agus, 2019). However, an unexpected result was that intention to follow the restaurant's advice did not affect repurchase intentions. A possible explanation for this may be that followers who had visited the restaurant at least once previously did not value the advice posted on the brand's social media account because they had had their own experiences.

5.1 Theoretical and managerial implications

This research has interesting implications for both researchers and managers. Overall, the findings provide a better understanding of the role of affective CE in the online context. The study demonstrated that brands must trigger their followers' perceptions of the enjoyment and originality of their firm-generated content; this can drive affective CE (organismic reaction) in followers and promote the development of favourable responses, such as positive behavioural intentions. This reveals the specific role that official brand Instagram accounts can play in increasing affective CE and in improving the relationship between brands and customers. Therefore, we suggest that future research should take into account the important roles played by perceived enjoyment and originality in digital marketing. Secondly, this study confirmed that the S-O-R is a valid framework for understanding how the attributes of brand content posted on social networks can generate behavioural intention responses.

The findings can help managers understand the important role of perceived enjoyment and perceived originality in creating affective CE. Ideally, companies should upload content that will strengthen their engagement with their Instagram account followers. The experience that customers have with brand Instagram accounts directly relates to affective CE; companies should post-content that motivates customers to interact with the brand. Instagram is focussed on visuals and aesthetics, so brands should post-attractive visual content to enhance their follower's perceptions of their enjoyment and originality of FGC. Prior studies have demonstrated that aesthetics are a significant and positive predictor of platform co-creation experiences (Lam *et al.*, 2020). In addition, it has been shown that customer experience with social platforms improves relationships between restaurants and customers (Kim and Tang, 2016) and that social media communications are a critical element of CE (Gruss *et al.*, 2020). This is important because, when users engage with brands, they recommend them and develop positive behavioural intentions. Therefore, as this study points out, companies should pay attention to the attributes of their FGC because they can reinforce customers' behavioural intentions.

Table 4 summarises the research conclusions and implications.

6. Limitations and future research directions

The study has some limitations that open the door to the development of future research lines. Firstly, it was conducted using the official Instagram account of only one type of restaurant, that is, an eco-friendly restaurant. Therefore, future research might examine other restaurant types, for example, fast-food, casual and fine dining. This may make it possible to generalise the results. Secondly, the account followers are all female. Future research might use a gender-balanced sample to help generalise the results and analyse if gender plays a moderating role in perceptions and emotions. Similarly, future studies should

Table 4.
Conclusions and theoretical and managerial implications

Conclusions	Theoretical and managerial implications
Image-based social networks, such as Instagram, have completely transformed how brands interact with their customers	Brand official accounts in Instagram play a key role in improving the relationship between brands and customers
Enjoyable and original firm-generated content increase affective CE with the brand in Instagram	Brands should upload attractive visual content and consider the importance of FGC characteristics to plan a successful digital marketing strategy
Affective CE with the brand in Instagram generates positive eWOM, intentions to follow the brand advice and repurchase intentions	Official Instagram brand accounts constitute crucial communication channels to generate favourable behaviour intentions to the brand through CE with the online brand content
Positive eWOM favours the customer intentions to follow the brand advice and repurchase intentions	Brands should co-create content with its followers to generate affective CE and positive e-WOM. Positive brand e-WOM as a result of affective CE with the brand in Instagram reinforces customer preferences towards the brand

investigate whether the results vary based on diet type (omnivores vs vegetarians vs vegans). Thirdly, in terms of CE, future research might analyse the impact of post-characteristics on each of the dimensions of engagement. Fourthly, it would be interesting to analyse consumers' perceptions of different forms of FGC (e.g. food vs atmosphere) posted on Instagram, using an experimental design, to identify which are most effective. Furthermore, an analysis could be made, using the S-O-R framework, of the effects of posts with other characteristics, for instance, popularity. It may be that the influence of an Instagram post is dependent on the account on which it is published. Last, the study is based on data gathered from Spanish participants. Future studies might evaluate whether cross-cultural differences influence consumers' perceptions of the FGC posted by eco-friendly restaurants on their Instagram accounts.

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Corresponding author

Estefania Ballester can be contacted at: stedu@alumni.uv.es

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