

This is the authors' final version of an article published in Journal of Destination Marketing & Management

The original publication is available at: DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2019.03.004>

Journal of Destination Marketing & Management

Research Paper: **Emotional brand communication on Facebook and Twitter: Are DMOs successful?**

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Abstract

The following study analyzes the emotional brand communication of the 10 most popular DMOs in Europe according to TripAdvisor (2017) by observing user responses across Facebook and Twitter. The paper presents a matrix of successful and promising values that DMOs should integrate into their social media communication strategies regarding their destination brands. Furthermore, the study visualizes a set of values that DMOs should either not include or try to avoid when aiming to successfully engage with their users. In addition to the differences between the two platforms, the type of engagement that DMOs should aim for is also examined. Overall, the paper provides DMOs with guidelines on how to effectively communicate their brands using specific emotional brand values on social media.

Keywords: Brand values, Semantic analysis, DMOs, Social media Communication.

PLEASE CITE THIS ARTICLE AS:

Lalicic, L., Huertas, A., Moreno, A., & Jabreel, M. (2020). *Emotional brand communication on Facebook and Twitter: Are DMOs successful?. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 16*, 100350.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2019.03.004>

Emotional brand communication on Facebook and Twitter: Are DMOs successful?

1. Introduction

Destination management organizations (DMOs) are facing a paradigm shift in how they have to market and communicate their destinations. The conventional function of DMOs as a dominant source of information for tourists has been challenged by the appearance of online communication tools such as Facebook and Twitter (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013; Li, Robinson, & Oriade, 2017). Generally, information, communication and technologies (ICTs) have had a transformational effect on the way that DMOs market and communicate their brands, offerings and destinations (Li et al., 2017). Nowadays, wide virtual visibility is critical to attract potential first-time or inexperienced tourists (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2015). This forces DMOs to expand their online presence beyond their official websites and include platforms like Facebook. In doing so, DMOs can co-produce their content with their users, be pro-active and stay competitive in online spheres (Mariani, Di Felice, & Mura, 2016). However, DMOs tend to utilize social media for traditional marketing purposes or for crisis management (i.e. service failure, natural disaster) and tend to be in the experimental phases of testing best practices for communicating with their users (Chan & Guillet, 2011; Hays et al., 2013; Leung, Schuckert, & Yeung, 2013; Sigala, 2011). Various studies show that DMOs tend to focus on functional elements in their online communication related to their destination (e.g. historic sites, beach) and limit the use of emotional adjectives (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016b; Michaelidou, Siamagka, Moraes, & Micevski, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Despite emotions being of utmost importance for experiencing a destination, they also exert the greatest influence on the overall image of a destination and on future behavioral intentions (Bigné, García, & Blas, 2009). Huertas and Marine-Roig (2015) show how the communication of specific emotional brand values on social media generates greater interactivity and, thus, enhances the overall destination brand image. Even though online platforms offer a very supportive environment to communicate the emotional values of a destination brand effectively (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), DMOs lack strategies to communicate their brand emotional values and/or have distinct communication strategies for different social media platforms (Guerrero-Solé & Fernández-Cavia, 2013; Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016a, b; Moreno, Jabreel, & Huertas, 2015). Uşakli, Koç, and Sönmez (2017) recently demonstrated the importance of effective online communication and engagement with users on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, as this can increase the number of tourist arrivals. Thus, from a practical point of view, a better understanding of how to effectively be present across various social media platforms in order to enhance the destination performance is called for.

Seen from a theoretical perspective, new insights are also needed. Despite the growing research on DMOs' use of social media platforms (Uşakli et al., 2017) and DMOs' brand emotions in online spheres (Dickinger & Lalicic, 2016; Jabreel, Moreno, & Huertas, 2017; Moreno et al., 2015), there are no specific studies that analyze how successful DMOs are in communicating their respective emotional brand values across online platforms.

This study therefore aims to demonstrate which emotional brand communication strategies are used by DMOs and are most effective in terms of online popularity across Facebook and Twitter (i.e. generating user responses and re-tweets). To do so, DMOs from the top 10 European

destinations according to TripAdvisor (2017) were assessed. This study presents a strategic brand communication matrix for both platforms that identifies the most receptive emotional brand values among the audiences of the two platforms as well as the values that failed to generate user engagement. In doing so, the paper provides new insight into designing effective online communication strategies. Furthermore, DMOs are recommended to critically review their online media communication strategies in order to enhance the impact and online popularity.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Emotional destination branding and social media communication.

The emotional elements of destination brands, their personality or identity, is what differentiates tourist destinations (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2009; Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005; Cai, 2002; Chaykina, Guerreiro, & Mendes, 2014; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Govers & Go, 2009; Morgan & Pritchard, 2004, 1998). A distinctive destination brand generates favorable associations and influences consumer destination preferences (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2003). As a result, many studies have focused on emotional branding in the field of tourism (Blain et al., 2005; Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007; Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2015; Morgan et al., 2003; Morgan & Pritchard, 2004). One explicit task has been used to understand how tourists develop emotional bonds with a destination, namely, destination brand personality. This concept originates from Aaker's (1997) brand personality concept, which derives from the premise of consumers who choose brands that fit with their personal style or even complement their status. Thus, a brand personality allows businesses to create symbolic effects for consumers (Aaker, 1997). For example, a brand personality can be created where consumers describe their brand experience using human characteristics such as 'cool' and 'exciting' (Uşakli & Baloglu, 2011). According to Aaker (1997), there are generally five dimensions, known as competence, excitement, ruggedness, sincerity and sophistication, which also make up the brand personality scale (BPS). This concept can also naturally be applied to destination management. Uşakli and Baloglu (2011) state that a destination personality can be used by consumers as an avenue for self-expression or by DMOs that wish to differentiate themselves from their competitors. As a result, many studies have analyzed the concept of brand personality in the field of tourism. Some of these studies have analyzed the communication of destination brand values through the brand personality scale created by Aaker (1997) (De Moya & Jain, 2013; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2007; Pitt, Opoku, Hultman, Abratt, & Spyropoulou, 2007). These studies support the hypothesis that humanizing destination brands can lead to higher levels of brand attachment and purchase intention (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006), clearly illustrating the strategic importance of using emotional brand values in online communications.

Looking into studies that analyze the communication of destination brands in an online setting, two different approaches can be seen. The first stream of studies demonstrates the importance of social media for the communication of destination brands. For example, some studies have analyzed how social media influences the configuration of a destination brand image among users and the relationships that they create with brands (Govers et al., 2007; Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Laroche et al. (2013) demonstrate that if users engage in a brand community, it not only has positive effects on their relationship with the brand, but also leads to higher levels of brand credibility and brand loyalty. Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann (2005) have also

shown that the active participation of users on social media increases their emotional attachment to the brand.

The second stream of studies analyzes the DMOs' brand communication and user-generated content (UGC) that communicates the images that tourists create of destination brands. Some of these studies have analyzed how tourist destinations communicate their brands, especially the emotional values of the brand on social media (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016a; Moreno et al., 2015). De Moya and Jain (2013) explored how two tourist destinations (Mexico and Brazil) communicated their brand personality through Facebook and which personality traits their Facebook fans associated with the brands. The results showed that Mexico and Brazil communicated distinctive brand personalities on each country's official Facebook page with leading brand values of 'sincerity' and 'excitement'. This is in line with the findings of previous studies (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Jain & Chan-Olmsted, 2009). These results also coincide with the later research of Huertas and Marine-Roig (2016b). In their study, regardless of the type of destination, brand values related to traditional brand values such as 'honesty' and 'sincerity', as well as 'excitement', 'spirited' and 'imaginative', were found to be the most popular.

Various studies have also analyzed whether the DMOs' emotional brand communication aligns with UGC about the image of the brand. For example, De Moya and Jain (2013) demonstrate that the emotional brand values communicated by the DMO of Mexico coincided with the messages posted by its users. However, Brazil's promotional messages did not coincide with the messages posted by its users. Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013) also analyzed and compared DMOs photo content and UGC in the case of Peru and found differences among them. For example, travelers were more interested in how Peruvian people live their everyday lives, whereas the DMO focused on promoting Peruvian traditional artifacts. Dickinger and Lalicic (2016) demonstrate how the concept of destination brand personality and emotions differ across tourist services in Tripadvisor reviews. Marine-Roig (2017) also analyzes tourist destination image in user reviews on Tripadvisor by using a designative-appraisive image dichotomy similar to the dichotomy cognitive-affective. However, the designative-appraisive image dichotomy reveals the preferences and emotional opinions of users more effectively (Marine-Roig, 2017). Moreno et al. (2015) demonstrate how European DMOs communicate on Twitter and they show that DMOs often: (1) do not use specific adjectives to communicate their identity, (2) tend to use common and generic brand communications and, in so doing, they do not distinguish or identify themselves, and (3) do not have a coherent communicative strategy. Huertas and Marine-Roig (2016b) demonstrate how DMOs communicate their brands through different social media platforms. In keeping with a previous study (Moreno et al., 2015), the values were transmitted in a rather similar way and tangible elements were used more frequently in their communication, regardless of the destination matrix (Bigné et al., 2009; Michaelido et al., 2013). However, Huertas and Marine-Roig (2016b) did not find any remarkable differences in the communication of emotional brand values across the different social media platforms. Hence, no specific emotional branding strategies employed by the DMOs were identified.

As a result of these findings, the following challenges can be seen: (1) there is a difference between what DMOs communicate about their destination brands and what tourists communicate (De Moya & Jain, 2013; Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013), (2) DMOs do not have distinct strategies to communicate their emotional brand values (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016b;

Moreno et al., 2015), and (3) DMOs do not have different communication brand strategies for different social media platforms in place (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016b). Given the dominant focus on the communication of functional and tangible elements, it would appear that emotional values are not given sufficient importance in brand communication strategies, (Bigné et al., 2009; Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016b; Michaelidou et al., 2013). In order to achieve successful emotional brand communication, destinations should transmit a unified identity as well as communicate those brand emotional values that also appeal to tourists' emotions (Morgan et al., 2003). Consumer engagement literature discusses in greater detail how one can measure the success of user reactions to emotional branding content. The next section will explain this in greater detail.

2.2. User engagement and successful brand communication

Successful brand communication should trigger engagement and reactions from users (Uşakli et al., 2017). On social media platforms, engagement is rendered rather transparent by the likes, shares, retweets and comments made by users (Kabadayi & Price, 2014; Oviedo García, Muñoz-Expósito, Castellanos-Verdugo, & Sancho-Mejías, 2014). Social media therefore offers destination brands an opportunity to act as relational tools, wherein a dialogue with their users can be enacted (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013). Thus, as Van Doorn et al. (2010) has shown, engagement with the brand can also lead to other types of relationships that go beyond merely purchasing the brand's offerings. For example, user engagement has positive effects on brand involvement and decision-making processes as well as brand satisfaction (Nusair, Bilgihan, & Okumus, 2013; Walther & Jang, 2012). Therefore, measuring online brand engagement is an important indicator of: (1) a brand's success, (2) how to generate a better destination brand image (Munar, 2011), and (3) how to maximize added value (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Indeed, a recent study from Uşakli et al. (2017) shows that positive online user engagement has a positive effect on a destination's international tourist arrivals.

Despite the importance of interaction and engagement for a destination's success, most of the previous studies suggest that DMOs generate very few interactions with users and achieve only minimal user reactions on social media (Chan & Guillet, 2011; Guillet, Kucukusta, & Liu, 2016; Wattanacharoensil & Schuckert, 2015). However, DMOs are still not using social media as a customer-service tool or engaging with their users (Hays et al., 2013; Uşakli et al., 2017). Indeed, DMOs tend to have different uses for various platforms. For example, DMOs tend to use Twitter more interactively than Instagram, Facebook and YouTube (Uşakli et al., 2017). There is limited research on whether brand communication generates more reactions (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016a). Of these handful of studies, Huertas and Marine-Roig (2016a) show that there is a lack of congruency between the most frequently communicated content and emotional brand values shared by DMOs and those that trigger the most reactions among users. Given the popularity of social media platforms and the ability for users to directly engage with brands on them, destination brands should use this opportunity. Based on the preceding discussion, this study aims to enrich the current studies and bolster practitioners in understanding which brand communication strategies strengthen a destination image and/or emotional brand values in order to increase tourist arrivals. Success measures will be highlighted by analyzing the most popular destination brands, which are mature and demonstrate a measurable history of brand communication. Furthermore, analysis will be performed to observe the different engagement

behaviors across Facebook and Twitter, the two most popular social media platforms. Finally, DMOs will be given guidelines as to which content and emotional values trigger the greatest consumer engagement, thus, leading to the successful management of their social media outlets in order to promote their destination by engaging on an emotional level with their users.

3.Method

3.1. Sample selection

At first, the top 25 European destinations in 2017 according to TripAdvisor were considered (TripAdvisor, 2017). However, after a manual search across the official Twitter accounts of the DMOs, only those that sent at least 3000 English tweets in 2016 (a minimum average of eight to nine daily tweets) and also had an active Facebook account with English posts were included in the final sample. These conditions enabled a selection of a set of destinations that actively use these two social networks in English. This resulted in a final sample of the following 10 destinations: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Dublin, Edinburgh, London, Madeira, Paris and Tenerife. As in previous studies (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2014), the collection of the tweets and Facebook posts was supported by two tools developed by the authors. The system *twiQuery* (<https://github.com/mhjabreel/twiQuery>) was used to collect the tweets to be analyzed. It is a crawler that enables users and developers to make advanced search actions on tweets, such as retrieving sets of tweets posted by a specific user, written in a specific language, sent from a certain area (determined by the name of a city or a geolocation), posted during a specific period of time, containing a given string or hashtag, etc. The Facebook posts were retrieved by using another self-developed tool (not available to public) that accesses the DMO's Facebook official application program interface (API). It consists of the messages a company posts on its timeline, their type (video, photo, etc) and the interaction of their users (i.e. the written comments and the emotions tags Facebook makes available). All of the English tweets and posts in 2016 were retrieved and analyzed for the purpose of this paper.

3.2. Tweets and Facebook post analysis

The analysis of the tweets and posts went through various steps. First, the tweets/posts went through an initial standard pre-processing stage (Hofmann & Klinkerberg, 2013). Elongated words were also automatically corrected.

After that, the content of the tweets/posts was analyzed. For the purpose of this paper, a slight adjustment of Aaker's brand personality scale (Aaker, 1997) was made in order to apply it to destination brands. The few items that were not applicable to destination brands were removed. In this case, the following list of five dimensions (and their 54 associated emotional values) was considered:

- Sincerity: family-oriented, down-to-earth, calm, real, traditional, honest, original, wholesome, quality of life, happiness, sentimental, friendly.
- Excitement: trendy, daring, exciting, exotic, fashionable, cool, spirited, dynamic, vital, fresh, young, unique, imaginative, creative, upto-date, independent, contemporary, tolerant, hospitable.

- Competence: reliable, hard-working, safe, rigorous, intelligent, technical, corporate, innovative, successful, leader, ambitious, powerful.
- Sophistication: glamorous, luxurious, charming, smooth, romantic, magical.
- Ruggedness: get-away, recreational, tough, rugged, non-conformist.

In the system that was developed, each adjective used in the tweets was compared semantically (i.e. at the conceptual level, not at the syntactic level) with all of the categories of emotional values. Adjectives were chosen because, as shown in previous studies on content analysis of the communication of destination brands (e.g. Lu & Stepchenkova, 2014), they are the words that tend to convey the greatest emotional responses. A standard natural language parser was applied to retrieve the adjectives. The Wu-Palmer ontology-based semantic similarity measure (Wu and Palmer, 1994) was used to check the similarity between adjectives and emotional values in WordNet. The Wu-Palmer similarity between two terms $c1$ and $c2$ is defined as: $simWP(c1, c2) = (2 \times N3) / (N1+N2+2 \times N3)$

Where $N1$ and $N2$ are the number of hypernym links from the terms $c1$ and $c2$ to their Least Common Subsumer (LCS) in WordNet and $N3$ is the number of hypernym links from the LCS to the root of the ontology.

Table 1 to Table 5

This measure ranges from 1 (for identical concepts) to 0 (when the LCS is the root of the ontology). In order to apply this measure, the terms being compared must be nouns. Thus, both the emotional values and the adjectives had to be transformed into nouns. In the case of the emotional values, the translation was made manually (e.g. 'ambitious' was transformed into 'ambition'). The adjectives appearing in the tweets/ posts were automatically transformed into nouns by using their derivative form in WordNet. After this transformation step, it was possible to compare the emotional values and the tweet/post adjectives to assess if the destination communicates certain emotional values. Only adjectives with a similarity higher than 0.7 to an emotional value (emotional adjectives) were considered in the final results of the analysis.

4. Results

4.1. DMOs' emotional brand communication and user reactions - Twitter

Firstly, the emotional brand values communicated by the DMOs on their official Twitter accounts were investigated. Table 1 demonstrates the number of tweets that contain emotional brand values. Categorizing the values according to their use, it can be seen that there are 14 values that have been used very often by DMOs on Twitter. The words 'honest' (655), 'fresh' (500) and 'glamorous' (462) are the most often used words in the DMOs' tweets. There are also a set of words that DMOs do not use at all. These hardly used words include 'reliable', 'cool', 'fashionable' and 'quality of life'. This already gives a first impression of which values DMOs tend to include in their communication on Twitter and, thus, that their users should associate with their destinations.

However, of greater interest is how often DMOs' tweets including specific emotional brand values are re-tweeted by their users on their personal social networks. Table 2 provides an overview ranking the most versus the least re-tweeted emotional brand values. Here we can see a different set of top three brand emotions that users highly retweet; 'happiness' (72,656 re-tweets), 'real' (71,738 re-tweets) and 'sentimental' (71,208 re-tweets). Interestingly, it can be seen that the emotional brand values that DMOs hardly tweet are often also not retweeted.

In addition to re-tweeting, users on Twitter can also highlight a tweet from a DMO by clicking on a heart-icon, which represents another form of user engagement on Twitter. Table 3 presents a list of emotional values ranked according to the number of 'favorites' marked by the users. In comparison to Table 2, it can be seen that there is a slightly different ranking. For example, in this case, the top three emotional brand values are: 'honest' (20,344), 'glamorous' (19,521) and 'fresh' (11,784). This is in line with what DMOs communicate in their tweets (see Table 1), whereas the average and hardly favorited brand emotional values are similar to the re-tweeted ones.

Figure 1

This study is also interested in the ratio between re-tweets and the number of emotional values as this gives us a better understanding of which values have the highest impact in terms of being the most popular in a setting like Twitter. Tables 4 and 5 show the ranking of the most popular emotional brand values based on the ratio of re-tweets and favorites. In fact, for the re-tweets ratio, three values stand out: 'real' (634.85), 'sentimental' (565.14) and 'happiness' (352.70). Thus, the popularity of these three emotional brand values for Twitter users is clearly indicated. Values such as 'hard-working', 'wholesome', 'vital' and 'hospitable' appear with a ratio lower than 10, which suggests that they are not well received by the audience. In observing Table 5, a different spread of emotional brand values can be seen in relation to the number of users marking the DMOs' message as 'favorite'. The top emotional brand values in this case are 'romantic', 'charming' and 'successful'.

In order to understand what makes a message with a specific emotional brand value successful in reaching a large audience, a matrix was developed that can support DMOs in designing successful emotional brand value communication strategies. One axis signifies the DMOs' degree of communicating their emotional brand values, which ranges from a high degree to a low degree. The other axis represents the impact in terms of engaging with users on the platforms and exhibits a similar range from low to high impact. Depending on the platform, the impact is measured differently based on the number of re-tweets, favorites and likes. The ranges of the scales depend on the categories presented in the tables. Furthermore, extreme values are taken into account and removed, allowing us to scale the remaining values. This results in four dimensions: (1) success values, in this case the DMOs intensively communicate these emotional values and users highly engage with these messages, (2) failing values, the DMOs have intensively used these emotional values in their social media communication, but users do not really engage with these messages, (3) unnecessary values, in this case, the DMOs hardly use these values and users also tend to hardly engage with messages that contain these values, and (4) promising values, DMOs hardly use these emotional values, but users engage with the message. The values closer to the middle should be taken into consideration, however, no specific focus should be put on them in order to boost a DMO's online impact.

Fig. 1 is based on the impact stemming from the number of retweets. It can be seen that a few outstanding values that are successful. In this case, DMOs were successful when using the words 'leader' and 'original'. DMOs used a lot of words related to the words 'romantic', 'imaginative' and 'charming', however, users did not respond to these messages and effective user engagement was not achieved. There are quite a lot of words that fall into the unnecessary values category, thus, DMOs need to be aware of preventing or trying not to use these words as they do not trigger the responses needed in order to create a higher level of impact online. Failing values are 'imaginative', 'technical', 'romantic' and 'charming', as they did not receive the same number of re-tweets compared to how often DMOs communicated them. However, as seen in the right lower corner of the matrix, DMOs have a set of highly promising values that users highly engage with such as 'calm', 'rugged', 'creative' and 'down-to-earth'. Consequently, they should integrate these highly promising values much more often into their tweets.

A different distribution of the emotional values (see Fig. 2) can be seen in a matrix that maps the impact stemming from users marking a DMO's tweet as a 'favorite'. The success values here relate to the word 'creative' followed by 'smooth', 'innovative' and 'independent'. One outstanding failing value is 'successful', followed by 'powerful', 'young', 'tough' and 'spirited'. Interestingly, in this case, we have 'contemporary' and 'magical' as promising values that create relatively high impact in terms of users marking the tweet as a 'favorite', whereas re-tweeting these values either are unnecessary or, in the case of 'contemporary', is a promising value. In this case, there are also a number of values that fall into the unnecessary value category, in particular, 'imaginative' and 'rigorous' stand out.

Figure 2

Table 6

4.2. DMOs' emotional brand communication and user reactions - Facebook

In this section, Facebook is analyzed on the basis of DMOs' communication strategies and user reactions. As seen in Table 6, there are two outstanding emotional brand values used in Facebook communication, namely, 'honest' and 'glamorous', followed by 'down-to-earth', 'fresh' and 'rugged'. Interestingly, eight values are not integrated at all, such as 'cool', 'non-confirmation' and 'hard-working'. The rest of the values exhibit more-or-less equal usage in DMOs' Facebook communication.

Table 7 illustrates which Facebook posts containing specific emotional values received the highest number of likes. In this case, it can be seen that 'honest' is the top runner, followed by 'glamorous' and 'original'. This aligns with Table 7 in terms of the frequency of use of these values. Other highly used values are 'original', 'down-to-earth', 'fresh', 'unique', 'contemporary', 'safe', 'innovative', 'rugged', 'leader' and 'calm'. A set of values can also be seen that are hardly communicated such as 'sentimental', 'get-away', 'wholesome' or 'luxurious'. Also notable in Facebook communications is the observation that DMOs do not include values such as 'family-oriented', 'quality of life', 'fashionable', 'cool', 'imaginative', 'reliable', 'hard-working', or 'non-conformist'. However, to understand the ratio between the numbers of posts containing a specific value versus the number of likes for a specific value, Table 8 provides more insight. Here, a different distribution can be seen, wherein the emotional brand value 'romantic' scores highest followed by 'technical' and 'exciting'.

Table 7

Table 8

Fig. 3 illustrates the matrix for Facebook communication based on the impact according to the number of likes. In this case, we can see one success value, namely, 'original'. DMOs failed by using a lot of words related to 'technical', 'exciting' and 'smooth' without creating a high level of impact in the Facebook community. However, there is only one relatively promising value, namely, 'leader'. As seen from the unnecessary values category, words such as 'rigorous', 'ambitious', 'young', and 'exotic' are not often used by DMOs and are also not wellreceived by Facebook users. Thus, such words do not add any strength to a social media message by a DMO and do not contribute to increased engagement with users. There are various words that are in the center of the matrix which implies that DMOs can integrate them, however, they are advised to balance them with more success and promising values in order to enhance the level of impact of their communication messages on Facebook.

5. Conclusion

DMOs need to successfully plan for future online campaigns by integrating emotional brand values into their social media presence in order to generate higher levels of user engagement and enhance the positive image of their destinations (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Munar, 2011; Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016(a,b). This study took a critical look at the social media communication of the DMOs that represent the 10 most popular European destinations in 2017 according to TripAdvisor. The study looked specifically at emotional brand communication levels across Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, in contrast to other studies, this study also integrated the impact of the DMOs' communication strategies by analyzing user reaction metrics across the two platforms. Consequently, a set of significant observations can be listed.

Figure 3

Firstly, DMOs tend to receive a higher level of user reactions (i.e. number of likes) compared to their activity on Twitter. However, the structure of the reactions is similar in both platforms. This finding is in line with studies such as Huertas and Marine-Roig's (2016(a,b)) that shows how Facebook is a very suitable platform for communicating a DMO's emotional brand values as well as generating user engagement.

Secondly, similarities can be seen in the communication of emotional brand values through Facebook and Twitter. For example, the following facts can be stated from the comparison of Table 2 (RTs) and Table 7 (likes): 11 of the 12 most liked emotional values are among the most highly re-tweeted (e.g. honest, glamorous, fresh). Six of the nine less popular emotional values in Facebook are hardly re-tweeted (e.g. hardworking, reliable). The top six popular emotional values are highly re-tweeted and nine of the remaining 12 popular emotional values in Facebook are often re-tweeted. Four of the six emotional values that are re-tweeted in an average way are rather popular in Facebook. In fact, there are only two out of 54 emotional values for which there is a difference of two columns between Tables 2 and 7: family-oriented and real. In contrast to other studies (Lalicic, Huertas, Moreno, Gindl, & Jabreel, 2018; Moreno et al., 2015), this study also demonstrates which emotional brand values trigger more user reactions and, thus, engagement. This study shows

a different distribution of successful emotional brand values that trigger responses across the two platforms.

Thirdly, the study developed an emotional brand value-impact matrix. The matrix visualizes how DMOs need to design different messages based on a set of emotional brand values in order to reach their target audience and create higher levels of impact online. Furthermore, the study shows how DMOs can, through the use of specific emotional values, trigger different engagement behavior per platform. For example, in the case of Twitter, DMOs need to integrate different emotional values in order to have their messages re-tweeted compared to users who mark a post as 'favorite'.

Fourthly, the matrix demonstrates a set of values that DMOs hardly communicate but users tend to share and like in great volume. Hence, such values are promising values that DMOs are highly advised to integrate into the design of their online communication strategies. The study also identified a number of values that appear to be somewhat popular, hence, DMOs are advised to find a good mix of these values and critically evaluate which values fit their strategies and align with their distinctive destination brand. The study also discovered values that are perceived to be failing even though DMOs tend to heavily communicate their brands with these values despite the lack of user response. Examples of such values are 'exotic', 'vital', 'rigorous' and 'non-conformist'. Furthermore, unnecessary values were identified, which are values that DMOs hardly used and users hardly respond to. Thus, such values should be reconsidered or even eliminated in order to successfully and effectively communicate destination brands on social media. Overall, the suggested matrix devised by this study provides DMOs with a structured overview to: (1) re-think their online communication strategies, (2) only integrate values that matter to them, (3) successfully engage with their users, and (4) create a high online impact with their messages.

5.1. Future research and limitations

The present study demonstrates how DMOs of the 10 most popular European destinations in 2017 according to TripAdvisor communicate to a more or less similar degree certain emotional values in keeping Fig. 3. Matrix of emotional brand values in Facebook (based on 'likes'). L. Lalicic, et al. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 16 (2020) 100350 9 with previous studies on the subject (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016(a,b); Lalicic et al., 2018; Moreno et al., 2015). Future studies should perform in-depth analysis at a destination-level. This would allow a greater understanding of which specific emotions are communicated per destination and how each destination is successful in aligning their online social media communication with their brand identity and destination characteristics. The study attempted to integrate emerging destinations following Uskali et al.'s (2017) suggestion, however, the lack of social media activity for emerging destinations did not provide a solid benchmark for this study. In this case, a longitudinal approach to this study could reveal insight into how DMOs develop over time and whether they are able to enhance their online image (e.g. number of followers, likes) and see if there is a difference between emerging and mature destinations.

Furthermore, more research is needed on the user-engagement perspective. For example, this study did not take the user profile into account. This would also generate a better understanding of which users respond to what kind of values and in which way. This is particularly important information as DMOs tend to target their messages to specific segments. Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that the selection of a particular social network certainly imposes a bias in the analysis,

so the results could have been different if other social media had been chosen (for example, it can be argued that Facebook is not a very popular platform for young people nowadays, as they prefer platforms based on pictures and videos, rather than text). Furthermore, where Facebook analysis is concerned, future studies should also integrate reactions like 'love', 'sadness', 'haha' and also comments and possible re-shares. Lastly, the study did not analyze how values co-occurred and which co-occurrences of values are successful and create higher levels of consumer engagement.

should encourage interaction with users through Twitter and be empathetic with victims in order to encourage favourable reactions and a positive image.

Another contribution of the study is the creation of a template of analysis which, from a crisis communication perspective, will assist with the evaluation and management of communication by destinations that suffer terrorist attacks. In addition, the application of the template to this case study has shown that it is capable of analysing whether a DMO's crisis communication is suitable for facilitating the appropriate recovery of the destination image.

This study also has some limitations. Firstly, a relatively small number of tweets have been analysed as few tweets were posted by the DMOs in any given month. Secondly, this is a crisis communication study that cannot verify whether the DMOs analysed did in fact recover their image after the attacks. Further research on the image of the two destinations studied, by analysing hashtags, the reactions of users, or data on tourist arrivals, would be useful to demonstrate that the template of analysis created does indeed help to produce crisis communication that effectively recovers destinations' images after terrorist attacks.

6. References

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