Content aspects valued by users of travel blogs. Insights from brazilian travelers

Aspectos de contenido valorados por los usuarios de blogs de viajes. Perspectivas de los viajeros brasileños

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ABSTRACT. Using a sample of 384 Brazilian respondents, the results of this quantitative exploratory study indicate that travel blogs are considered the second most important source of information in travel planning (after referrals from family and friends). Among 8 aspects evaluated, respondents attributed more importance to contents related to "itineraries and attractions" and "transportation and locomotion". These 8 aspects were reduced, with the use of the factor analysis technique, to 3 factors: the first, "General Information", was more valued by women, people with less education, less income range and lower frequency to travel. The second factor, "Stay", was more valued by people with higher income and who travel less alone. Finally, there were no differences between the groups analyzed in the third factor identified, "Itineraries".

RESUMEN. Utilizando una muestra de 384 encuestados brasileños, los resultados de este estudio exploratorio cuantitativo indican que los blogs de viajes se consideran la segunda fuente más importante de información en la planificación de viajes (después de las referencias de familiares y amigos). Entre los 8 aspectos evaluados, los encuestados atribuyeron más importancia a los contenidos relacionados con "itinerarios y atracciones" y "transporte y locomoción". Estos 8 aspectos se redujeron, con el uso de la técnica de análisis factorial, a 3 factores: el primero, "Información general", fue más valorado por las mujeres, las personas con menos educación, menos rango de ingresos y menor frecuencia para viajar. El segundo factor, "Estancia", fue más valorado por las personas con mayores ingresos y que viajan menos solas. Finalmente, no hubo diferencias entre los grupos analizados en el tercer factor identificado, "Itinerarios".

KEYWORDS: Travel blogs, User generated content, Tourism marketing, Integrated marketing communication, Digital business, Brazilian travelers.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Blogs de viajes, Contenido generado por el usuario, Marketing turístico, Comunicacion de mercadeo integrada, Negocio digital, Viajeros brasileños.

1. Introduction

The internet has profoundly impacted the tourism business, completely redesigning communication networks previously dominated by traditional media and by knowledge gatekeepers, such as guides, specialized publications and travel agents (Baniyai & Glover, 2012). Among the major changes, multilateral peer-to-peer communication and user generated content (UGC) have facilitated the sharing of information, opinions, experiences and evaluations, making it possible for consumers to inform themselves about products and services related to tourist destinations directly from other consumers (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007).

Blogs (reduction to the original "logging the web") are one of the various channels available for content production and distribution on the Internet, combining complementary characteristics that are (i) the credibility of word of mouth between peers, with (ii) the potential reach on a global scale, that surpasses traditional media such as radio, television, magazines and newspapers. This channel of information, education and entertainment, has become a new type of integrated marketing communication tool and deserves the attention of the academic and business community for the impacts it promotes on consumer behavior.

Regarding tourism marketing communication, travel blogs are recognized for the power of influence they have among the various players in this industry. Authors of travel blogs serve as opinion leaders capable to influence decisions of choosing destinations, itineraries, prices, lodging, ways of transportation, travel times; in fact, several studies show that the influence of blogs is considerable in the dynamics of opinions, with evident impacts on the demands and also influencing the configuration of the sector offers (Infante-Moro, Infante-Moro, Martínez-López & García-Ordaz, 2016); Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007; Puhringer & Taylor, 2006).

With the purpose of better understanding the value attributed by users to information and contents provided by travel blogs, this paper reports a survey conducted with 384 respondents located in the Brazilian market. The study sought to identify the attributes valued by the users of this type of communication tool, considering several possible aspects related to its contents. Comparisons were also made between groups defined by socioeconomic characteristics and also by the intensity of the number of travels made by the respondents and their frequency of traveling alone.

The study intends to offer insights for the debates, academic and managerial, in the field of tourism marketing, on the value that the users attribute to these initiatives. At the same time the findings may be relevant for studies on technology, strategic business administration and also for the field of social communication.

2. Literature review

2.1. Travel blogs: nature and importance

Since the 1990s, Internet has transformed communicative processes and business arenas in general. The main transformations are related to the reduction of distances, synchronization of times, the approximation between users and the expansion of access to sources of information, education and entertainment on a global scale (Belch & Belch, 2007). In its second stage of maturity, called Web 2.0, the Internet was marked by the decentralization of content generation, offering to users tools and space to express opinions, to provide information, to share experiences, in the form of text, image and audiovisual content, which can be observed in blogs and social networks as expressions of User Generated Content (UGC) modalities (O'Reilly, 2005; Akehurst, 2009).

According to Li (2005) blogs are a series of archived posts characterized by short texts published in reverse chronological order, which usually contain hyperlinks to other sites recommended by the author. Zago (2010) suggests that blogs can be understood by two dimensions: (i) the format of the publication, and/or (ii) the web publishing tool. For those who understand blogs as web publishing formats (Zago, 2010), a web page is often updated in reverse chronological order to be defined as a blog, which is independent of tool / publishing platform used by the author. For those who understand the blog as a tool, the characterization would imply the

obligation to publish in platforms such as Blogger or Wordpress and everything published before the emergence of these platforms could not be considered blogs (Zago, 2010).

Blogs, at first, were associated with personal diaries, whose function was to publicize reports of events that occurred in the lives of those who wrote them. The ease of creating a blog, from various platforms, applications and tools found online, has greatly expanded the number of active blogs in the world. Since the publication of the first initiative considered as a blog in 1994, it has been 25 years and estimates that there are around 500 million blogs in the world by 2019 (Softwarefindr, 2019). Only the WordPress blog publishing platform reports that more than 409 million people view more than 20 billion pages every month worldwide, considering only the sites that this platform hosts (Wordpress, 2019).

The growth of blogs in Brazil is also related to the evolution of the number of Internet users, especially in upper segments of the population. According to market data, the Brazilian Internet has 116.1 million users (about 56% of the population) (Grupo de Mídia, 2018), a more significant figure when considering higher income segments whose are the main consumers of tourism products and services.

Regarding travel blogs in Brazil, it has been observed that over time there has been a professionalization in search of greater credibility, influence and organization to explore economic opportunities. For example, the Brazilian Travel Blogs Network (RBBV - founded in 2011) currently has 856 associated blogs, serving as a directory of blogs related to travel and tourism, which follow certain common ethical objectives and guidelines (RBBV – Rede Brasileira de Blogs de Viagem, 2019). There is also the Brazilian Association of Travel Blogs (ABBV), a non-government association that among its purposes acts to professionalize blogs, promote tourism, conduct and disseminate studies and market research on the subject. In one of these surveys, conducted in 2012, the ABBV sought to analyze the influence of blogs in the decision-making of the travelers. According to the results of this survey, 70% of readers choose the destination of their trip by consulting blogs, 46% are referenced by friends and family and only 12% choose itineraries through travel agencies. In addition, travel blogs are seen as a more reliable source of information for respondents, as 68% of users said they "rely heavily" on travel blogs, at levels above travel magazines (32%) and travel agencies (13%) (ABBV, 2012).

2.2. Perceived value and involvement

One of the most important constructs in modern marketing theory is value. In the classic view of Churchill and Peter (2012), customer value is the perceived difference between the benefits of buying and using certain products and services when compared to the sacrifices required to obtain them. Sacrifice, in this case, is not only financial, but also has a temporal, social and psychological nature. In his review, Woodruff (1997) presents and discusses several theoretical consensus and divergences on the value construct, assuming that value can be established by evaluating the attributes of an offer when considered by the desired performance and by the consequences that the use satisfies or blocks the goals and purposes of consumers in situations of use. The same author proposes an important and positive relationship between perceived value and satisfaction, which leads to loyalty (Woodruff, 1997).

One factor that moderates satisfaction and perceived value is the consumer's involvement with a particular brand, category or offer (Olsen, 2007). In the field of consumer behavior, involvement can be defined as the level of psychological connection between the individual and an object (product, brand, advertisement etc.) (Solomon, 2016).

The different conceptualizations about involvement are important, because in the study proposed by Huang, Chou and Lin (2009) the authors noted positive impacts of involvement in advertising effects. According to the authors, when consumers have a high interest in products (in the study, products linked to travel), the personal association grows considerably. Finally, travel blogs communicate in a highly transparent network with high levels of social interaction, presenting itself as a relevant promotion channel with a high level of consumer involvement (Huang, Chou & Lin, 2009).

2.3. Travel blogs characteristics and its contents

Akehurst (2009) says that blogs, such as user-generated content, can be valuable in educating tourism consumers, facilitating tourism transactions, and serving as sources of information for managerial decisions. For Chen, Shang and Li (2014) the value of information available in blogs can be analyzed in three dimensions: (i) the quantity; (ii) quality; and (iii) relevance to the user. The same authors proposed a model in which the intention to visit (dependent variable) has as antecedent the enjoyment perceived in the use of a blog, a construct which, in turn, is supposed to be positively associated with novelty, reliability, understandability and the interestingness of the blog. In the model test, the second dimension (reliability) was not significant, but the authors did not analyze the direct impact on the dependent variable, which would be advisable.

Schmallegger and Carson (2008) identify in the blog format characteristics of value for the user: constant updating, flexible structure and the interaction between the author and his readers, so the users can participate in the exchange of information, which would not be possible in other ways. These characteristics fit the definition proposed by Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008) that blogs can be considered a "many-to-many" channel type that operates asynchronously.

In only one study found in the review, the authors evaluated content items for travel blogs. Camargo, Solbiati, Péccora and Pinheiro (2016) suggested and evaluated 10 types of information that respondents expect to find on travel blogs: information on roads and routes; information about cities and countries; how to travel cheap; region around the hotel; information on airlines and airports; information on the hotel business; photo and video gallery; experiences reported by other travelers; itineraries; and documentation. Another content proposition, taken in a generic way, was that of Schmallegger and Carson (2008), who suggest that blogs include topics related to destination, attractions, and activities.

3. Objectives and methods

The main objective of the study was to deepen knowledge about content aspects valued by users of travel blogs. In addition to sociodemographic characteristics, specific behaviors of tourists were also analyzed, such as the intensity of the number of national and international trips and the type of travel companion. Also, the importance attributed to travel blogs was compared to other options, among the various forms of information on the subject of tourist destinations and associated services. Furthermore, the researchers sought to understand which aspects of a blog's content are most valued by these respondents. Then, the study was oriented by the following objectives:

(i) evaluate the importance given to travel blogs among the various sources of information and content on the market;
(ii) evaluate the content aspects to which blog users assign more value;
(iii) to identify differences in the importance attributed to the various aspects of content of travel blogs when users are divided by sociodemographic characteristics, intensity of trips made and the propensity to travel alone.

Given the inexistence of similar prior studies, which implies the lack of a theoretical basis that would serve as a starting point for the research, it is possible to say that the study, although having a quantitative design, had an exploratory nature. According to Malhotra (2006), this conception of research is significant in situations which the researcher does not have sufficient understanding to proceed with the research project. In this case, there were no preliminary studies that addressed the present research problem with scientific criteria and could be used as a reference for the design of a conclusive research.

To obtain the data, a single cross-sectional descriptive survey was performed using the survey method. According to Walter (2013), survey research typically uses a single instrument for data collection, usually in the form of a questionnaire. The survey raises data in a significant sample to later, through analysis, provide insights and / or conclusions corresponding to the observed data.

The questionnaire was formatted and evaluated according to the literature review. It was then submitted to a group of experts in the subject (3 professors linked to higher education courses in Tourism, Marketing and Communication). For the evaluation of the functional aspects blogs, the authors used the proposition of several studies, such as those of Schamellegger and Carson (2008) and Camargo et al. (2016) with some adaptations after discussions with the experts. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a reduced number of respondents for questions of comprehension and language adequacy.

With the purpose to obtain the data sample, respondents that had affinity with the proposed subjects, several blogs associated to the Brazilian Network of Travel Blogs (RBBV) were contacted, requesting the publication of a link for their readers to respond to a questionnaire. At the same time, the researchers made a parallel effort through social networks using the snowball method, by which an initial seed initiates the dissemination process and after several replications of the questionnaire link, a universe of different profiles is reached (Handcock & Gile, 2011).

The questionnaire was published on a website for research forms on the Internet and was available for two months between September and October 2018. At the end of the process of data collection and debugging of invalid questionnaires (incomplete or inconsistent) a database was formed with 384 valid answers (users of travel blogs that completed the questionnaire), which were analyzed using SPSS software, a statistical package suitable for the treatment of database. The results are presented in the next section.

4. Results

4.1. Qualification of the respondents

The respondents' sample was characterized by a female predominance (72.9% of respondents), with a higher frequency of people aged between 25 and 35 years (49.7% of respondents, mean age of 33.5 years) and education higher education or postgraduate (90.7%). This more qualified socioeconomic profile is confirmed by the statement of the household income bracket of more than R$ 9,000.00 (or about US$ 2,500.00) of 44.0% of the sample, which can be considered high for the distribution profile of income of the Brazilian population.

A first information related to the objectives of the study was to describe the travel frequency of the respondents. Figure 1 below shows the distributions of the answers, by which it can be seen that only 16.1% of the respondents did not make any national trip (to Brazilian destinations) within one year prior to the response. 83.9% of respondents made at least one national trip, more frequently between two and three times (41.1%). International travelers are less frequent: 31.5% did not travel internationally, compared to 68.5% who made at least one international trip, more frequently in the range of once in the last year (36.5% of the answers). Only 6.2% (or 24 respondents) had not traveled (national or international tourism trips) within one year prior to the response. In terms of preferred regions for travel, the southeastern region of Brazil was allocated 58.9% of travel. The continent that represents the largest proportion of destinations is Europe, with 32.4% of the answers.
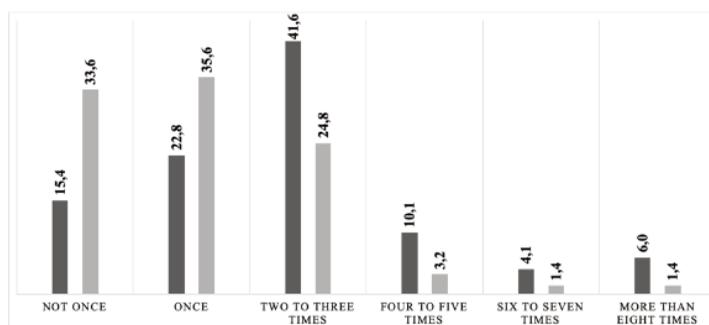

Figure 1. Comparative number of national vs. international travels (in %) n = 384. Source: Self-made.

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In an effort to reduce data, the authors divided the respondents into groups defined by intensity of travel, combining the number of national and international travel in the same dimensionality. Using factor analysis (principal components extraction method, Varimax type rotation and input variables being the number of national and international trips), one factor (eigenvalue> 1.0) was identified, which explains 58, 6% of the variance. Although data extraction showed a low KMO value (0.500, Bartlett = 0.000), which would indicate inadequacy of the sample for the procedure, examination of the data indicates that there was consistency in the organization of the groups. By this procedure a score was assigned to each respondent and then they were sorted by punctuation so as to be divided into 3 groups: lower, medium and higher intensity of trips over a year. These groups comprised 144 respondents (33.1% of the sample) with the lowest number of trips, 174 respondents (40.0% of the sample) with a medium level for number of trips and 117 respondents (or 26, 9% of the sample) with the highest number of trips among respondents.

In terms of the usual travel companies, the answers (by adding the "often" and "always" alternatives) are systematized in the last column of the Table 1. It is possible to visualize that the sample has a predominant profile of people traveling with the family (65.2% of the answers), followed by those who travel predominantly alone (25.8%).

Travel With		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Often + Always
Family	n	48	48	38	77	173	247
	%	12.5	12.5	9.9	20.1	451	65.2
Alone	n	178	53	54	48	51	99
	%	46.4	13.8	14.1	12.5	13.3	25.8
Friends	n	107	115	94	38	30	68
	%	27.9	29.9	24.5	9.9	7,8	17.7
Groups / Excursions	n	298	39	28	15	4	19
	%	77.6	10.2	7,3	3.9	1.0	4.9

Table 1. Type of company in travel (n=384). Source: Self-made.

A classification made for later analysis involved responses given to the intensity in which the respondents "Travel Alone", being the respondents divided among those traveling Few Times alone (sum of answers "never" and "rarely", corresponding to 231 cases or 60.2% of the sample), those who travel alone Sometimes (54 respondents or 14.1% of the sample) and those who travel Often alone (sum of answers "often" and "always", corresponding to 99 cases, or 25.8% of the answers).

When asked to choose among the 7 options offered the main source for travel choice information, about 30.5% of the respondents stated that they do so by indication of friends and family, followed by travel blogs (25.8% of the answers) and for ticket promotions (18.5%) (Figure 2).
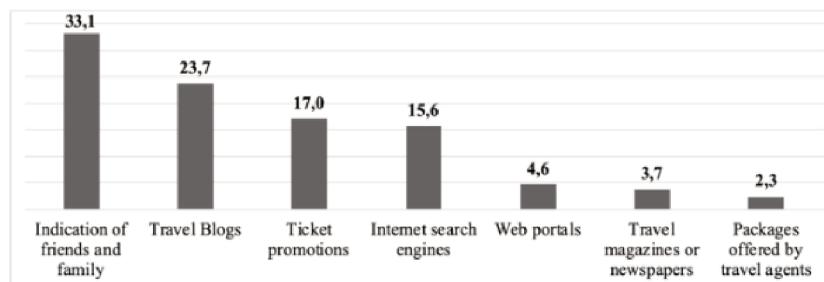

Figure 2. Main source for travel choice information and decision (in %) n=384. Source: Self-made.

4.2. Most valued attributes in blogs

Respondents were also asked to assign a degree of importance to several aspects proposed as the main types of content found on travel blogs. The data of the 8 attributes are presented in Figure 3, which represent

the sum of the responses "Very important" and "Total importance", with the frequencies organized from highest to lowest value.
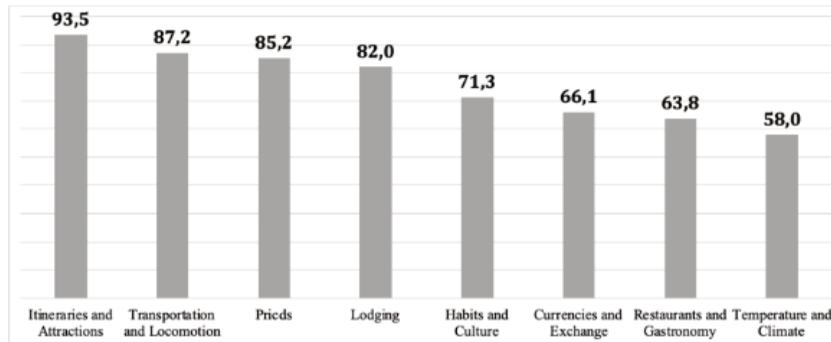

Figure 3. Most valued aspects in travel blog contents (sum of alternatives "Much Importance" + "Total Importance" in %) n = 384.
Source: Self-made.

It is possible to visualize that the aspects considered most important by the respondents are "itineraries and attractions" (93.5% of answers between "total importance" and "much importance"), followed by "transportation and locomotion" (87.2% of the two alternatives together). The least important attributes were "temperature and climate" (58.0% of responses for total and great importance) and restaurants and gastronomy (63.8% of the two alternatives added).

In order to better understand the nature of the aspects of travel blogs to which respondents attribute value, the researchers handled the data through a dimension reduction statistical procedure. With this, the authors tried to understand if there were correlations among the 8 variables proposed for evaluation, once again using the factor analysis technique. For the extraction of the factors, the main components method was used, with Varimax type rotation and acceptance of factors that presented eigenvalue > 1.0. The results were adequate for the treatment (KMO = 0.751, Bartlett = 0.000) and resulted in 3 factors that together account for 60.7% of the variance. Table 2 below shows the rotated components matrix and the allocated loads.

Content Attributes in Blogs	Factor		
	1	2	3
Prices	0.698	0.253	-0.314
Lodging	0.314	0.769	-0.170
Itineraries and Attractions	-0.096	0.478	0.500
Restaurants and Gastronomy	0,075	0.730	0.256
Transports and Locomotion	0.354	0.329	0.454
Temperature and Climate	0.701	0.146	0.357
Currency and Exchange	0.788	0.011	0.255
Habits and Culture	0.172	-0.009	0.776

Table 2. Rotated component matrix of travel blog content aspects. Source: Self-made.

When analyzing the factor loads, it is possible to propose three aspects that these factors express: (i) the first involves the aspects of General Information, as the correlations between prices, temperature and climate, and currencies and exchange are positively charged and highly correlated in factor 1; (ii) the second factor is the Stay, which correlates the lodging item with restaurants and gastronomy; and (iii) the last factor can be called Itineraries, which correlates the items of the habits and culture with transportation and locomotion and also with itineraries and attractions. It is necessary to carefully analyze the items "itineraries and attractions" and also "transportation and locomotion", considered the most important by the respondents (and, of course, with less dispersion of data). In the case of "transport and locomotion", their loads are distributed almost equally among the 3 factors, which indicates that this item is distributed by the 3 suggested aspects. In the case of "itineraries and attractions", the analysis is more interesting: its factorial load was distributed almost equally in the last two factors, but it is negatively associated with the first one. That suggests that there is a perception of the difference between experiential aspects of blog content (involving opinions about Stay and Itineraries) with those of a more objective nature (General Information), such as prices, exchange and temperature.

4.3. Differences in factor scores means by profiles

The next step was to analyze if there are differences between groups characterized by socioeconomic profiles and travel habits in the degree of importance attributed to the identified factors. In the factor analysis, a score corresponding to the three factors found was assigned to each case, which corresponds to a case positioning in a normal distribution with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.0. Therefore, it is possible to situate each respondent in a continuum that goes from the lowest degree of attribution of importance to the factor found to the greatest degree of importance. Following this reasoning, the cases were compared by means of the scores for each factor, in order to analyze if there are differences in terms of gender, age, educational level, travel intensity and habit of the individual traveling alone. The results are organized in Tables 3, 4 and 5, which present the categories of variables analyzed, the n and the factor score calculated for each category, the type of test performed (t, for independent samples of two categories and F ANOVA for variables with 3 or more categories), plus the value found in the test and its significance (S = statistically significant at a < 0.05 or 95% confidence level, and NS = statistically non-significant).

The Table 3 presents the results for Factor 1 (General Information, which aggregates the items prices, temperature and climate and currency and exchange). The results were significant for differences in all variables analyzed, except for the category that measured the intensity of the respondent for traveling alone. Overall, the data suggest that the lower the qualification of the respondent in socioeconomic terms, the lower the age group and the lower the number of trips, the greater the importance attributed to general information content of travel blogs. In the educational level, the results show that the higher the education level, the lower the importance given to the Information factor; the inverse occurs in the age group category, and the younger the respondents, the greater the importance attributed to the factor. In terms of gender, men attribute less value to the information factor than women. The household income range presents differences in which the group with the highest income (above R$ 9,000) has a lower average score than the others, which indicates less importance attributed to general information offered by blogs. The average scores of respondents divided by number of trips suggest that the higher the number of trips, the lower the importance given to General Information contents of travel blogs. There were no differences as to groups characterized by the habit of the respondent traveling alone.

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	n	Factorial Score	Test type	Value	Sig	
Education Level	Up to Highschool	36	0.375	F(ANOVA)	1.682	0.000	S
	Graduate	183	0.157				
	Posgraduate	165	-0.256				
Age Group	Up to 24 years old	68	0.391	F(ANOVA)	7.097	0.000	S
	25 - 35 years old	191	0.040				
	36 - 50 years old	90	-0.303				
	Above 51 years old	35	-0.196				
Genre	Female	280	0.103	t Test	3.075	0.002	S
	Male	104	-0.278				
Household Income Range	Up to R$ 3.000	48	0.217	F(ANOVA)	12.533	0.000	S
	R$ 3.001-R$ 9.000	167	0.221				
	Above R$ 9.000	169	-0.280				
Number of Travels	Few	121	0.219	F(ANOVA)	5.895	0.003	S
	Medium	157	-0.013				
	High	106	-0.231				
Travel Alone	Few	231	0.054	F(ANOVA)	2.043	0.131	NS
	Sometimes	54	-0.250				
	Often	99	0.010				

Table 3. Tests for mean differences of scores for factor 1 (general information) n = 384. Source: Self-made.

Back to the analysis, now focusing on the second factor identified (Stay, which gathers the evaluations of lodging, restaurants and gastronomy), the data systematized in Table 4 indicate that there are only differences in the factorial scores means that can be considered statistically significant of the categories: those that divide respondents by the household income range and by the intensity of traveling alone. The data of the first group, income range, show that the higher the income, the greater the importance attributed to this type of content of travel blogs. On the other hand, the more the respondent travels alone, the less important is this type of content. This may suggest that Stay information is more relevant for those who have more income and who traveled accompanied as important information for planning the trip.

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VARIABLE	CATEGORY	n	Factorial Score	Test type	Value	Sig	
Education Level	Up to Highschool	36	-0.230				
	Graduate	183	-0.018	F(ANOVA)	1.387	0.251	NS
	Posgraduate	165	0.070				
Age Group	Up to 24 years old	68	-0.006				
	25 - 35 years old	191	-0.066	F(ANOVA)	0.725	0.537	NS
	36 - 50 years old	90	0.108				
	Above 51 years old	35	0.093				
Genre	Female	280	0.027	t Test	0.768	0.443	NS
	Male	104	-0.071				
Household Income Range	Up to R$ 3.000	48	-0.125				
	R$ 3.001-R$ 9.000	167	-0.111	F(ANOVA)	3,.06	0.042	S
	Above R$ 9.000	169	0.145				
Number of Travels	Few	121	0.132				
	Medium	157	-0.045	F(ANOVA)	1.602	0.203	NS
	High	106	-0.084				
Travel Alone	Few	231	0.115				
	Sometimes	54	-0.065	F(ANOVA)	4.440	0.012	S
	Often	99	-0.234				

Table 4. Tests for mean differences of scores for factor 2 (stay) n = 384. Source: Self-made.

Finally, the last factor, called Itineraries (which aggregates assessments about aspects of itineraries and attractions, transport and locomotion, habits and culture), whose data are presented in Table 5, did not identify significant differences for the factorial scores means of the compared groups.

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	n	Factorial Score	Test type	Value	Sig	
Education Level	Up to Highschool	36	0,004				
	Graduate	183	-0,074	F(ANOVA)	1,052	0,350	NS
	Posgraduate	165	0,081				
Age Group	Up to 24 years old	68	-0,216				
	25 - 35 years old	191	0,010	F(ANOVA)	1,638	0,180	NS
	36 - 50 years old	90	0,138				
	Above 51 years old	35	0,009				
Genre	Female	280	0,034	t Test	1,084	0,279	NS
	Male	104	-0,091				
Household Income Range	Up to R$ 3.000	48	-0,078				
	R$ 3.001-R$ 9.000	167	-0,070	F(ANOVA)	1,267	0,283	NS
	Above R$ 9.000	169	0,092				
Number of Travels	Few	121	-0,056				
	Medium	157	-0,059	F(ANOVA)	1,697	0,185	NS
	High	106	0,152				
Travel Alone	Few	231	0,015				
	Sometimes	54	-0,091	F(ANOVA)	0,258	0,773	NS
	Often	99	0,015				

Table 5. Tests for mean differences of scores for factor 3 (itineraries) n = 384. Source: Self-made.

5. Conclusions, limitations and propositions for future studies

The results of the present study should be taken carefully, given the nature of the sample, obtained by convenience, in higher socioeconomic strata of the Brazilian population, with female predominance. However, they provide interesting insights for understanding the usage relationships and value assigned to travel blogs, which can be further explored in future studies.

The data suggest that the main source of information for choosing travel is the indication of friends and family, and blogs are in second position of preference. It worth to note the low importance given to traditional means such as tourism publications (guides, newspapers and magazines) and travel agencies. This indicates that tourism consumption is increasingly based on a disintermediation of knowledge and information, which can be acquired directly from peers or through influencers that can be recognized as a direct source in C2C type processes (Consumer-to-Consumer).

The contents with more importance attached in travel blogs are information about "itineraries and attractions", followed by "transport and locomotion". Contents about "temperature and climate" are considered less important among the information offered, perhaps due to the existence of others (than blogs) sources and channels to be consulted.

The statistical technique used for data analysis suggests that there are three dimensions that respondents identify in blog content: (i) an overall informational dimension (aggregating items of prices, temperature and climate, currencies and exchange); (ii) a Stay dimension (adding lodging with restaurants and gastronomy); and (iii) a Itineraries dimension (aggregating aspects of itineraries and attractions, transportation and locomotion, and habits and culture). Of these three dimensions, the one that presented the most statistically significant differences in the attribution of importance among the analyzed groups of respondents was the first. In general, greater importance is given to General Information by women, respondents with lower level of education, younger people, those with lower household income and fewer trips, which may mean that profiles expected to be less related with tourism experiences all along their lives are those who value the most basic information. On the other hand, the aspects of Stay (lodging, restaurants and gastronomy) are evaluated in a more important degree by segments of higher household income and by those traveling accompanied (respondents who travel less alone), which may also suggest that these segments have greater travel planning needs in these aspects considered. Finally, there were no statistically significant differences in the aspects of the Itineraries (which added itineraries and attractions, transport and locomotion, habits and culture) among the analyzed groups, two of these factor items that compound this factor being among the most important of the aspects evaluated by respondents.

The study, although based on quantitative data, had an exploratory nature, given the low production of research on the subject and the small specific theoretical basis on characteristics and effects of travel blogs. For this reason, its importance should be attributed to the insights that may serve to inform new researches that analyze the motivations and effects of this important communication channel in the destination market and tourism services scenario. New studies that expand the sociodemographic base of the sample, comparing cultural behaviors in different markets, that consider the involvement with technology as a moderator of the attitude towards the content of blogs, can be important contributions to the studies on consumer behavior of products and touristic destinations. Other initiatives can evaluate the content producers' understanding of the dimensions analyzed here, ie whether there is a greater or lesser degree of strategic elaboration in the formulation of blog content from the point of view of the sender, not the receiver of the messages. It would also be interesting to analyze the different natures of communication codes (imagery, audiovisual, textual) and whether there are different attitudes of users to the content and credibility of this information.

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