

ENGAGEMENT OF FRANCHISE CHAINS CONSUMERS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS: THE DIGITAL CHALLENGE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Introdução

Franchise chains have a significant share in the Brazilian economy, manifested represented by the generation of more than 1.4 million jobs. Even though it is a mature sector, these entrepreneurs faced a great challenge in 2020 (Covid-19 outbreak). For retail, the impact of lockdowns and restrictions on the operation of trade led to the closure of a large number of enterprises, requiring changes in the mode of operation. Delivery practices, omnichannel, interaction in social networks have become imperative for the survival of businesses in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

This article aims to explore the relationship between the structuring factors of franchise chains and consumer engagement in social networks. These factors, such as age, size, brand reputation, franchisee satisfaction and franchise fees, constitute the foundations of franchising based on Agency Theory (AT) and Resources Scarcity Theory (RST). It seeks to understand which structuring factors are associated with the engagement of consumers of franchise chains in social networks and, in this sense, advance in the understanding of the structuring of franchise chains.

Fundamentação Teórica

Agency Theory (AT) is one of the classic foundational approaches used to understand the operation of franchise chains (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Additionally, considering the foundations of the Resource Scarcity Theory (RST), the restrictions faced by franchisors in the creation and expansion of their businesses must be recognized. (Oxenfeldt & Kelly, 1969) Focusing on the development of franchise chains, it is reasonable to infer that the growth of this type of business can be stimulated through consumer engagement, that is, from the implementation of the structured use of social networks.

Metodologia

The sample included the 100 largest franchise chains in number of units. The data, referring to the fundamentals of franchising, come from the Franchise Guide Yearbook (Serasa Experian). Consumer engagement measurement data were obtained through Facebook. The data extraction period covered from March 2020 to September 2021. Data processing involved descriptive and multivariate statistics, such as multiple linear regression.

Análise dos Resultados

Three hypotheses were confirmed: inverse correlation of engagement with age (H1), positive correlation with franchise chain size (H3) and positive correlation with franchise fee (H5). The variables franchisee satisfaction, initial capital and advertising rate proved to be predictors of consumer engagement. The developed model presented $R^2 = 0.273$. The research indicates the presence of a significant association between engagement on social networks of consumers of franchise chains and operating time, number of units and value of fees charged (initial capital, franchise fee and advertising fee).

Conclusão

The investigation of the relationship between consumer engagement in social networks and structuring characteristics of franchise chains sheds light on theoretically relevant associations between constructs that are managerially potentiating in the management of digital marketing in

these organizations. The present study contributes to the understanding of the operation of franchise chains in periods of exception, such as during the impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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