Chapter 16
Main Generators of the Electronic Word-of-Mouth in the Case of Hotels

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ABSTRACT

Web 2.0 has allowed the internet to be a space for the exchange of opinions and information between consumers. One of the topics with the most comments is tourist services. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role that service quality, emotional experience, and customer satisfaction play in the generation of eWOM in the context of lodging services, by using SEM. A survey was conducted among residents of Punta del Este in 2017, asking them about their last lodging in a hotel. The structural model has been tested using PLS technique. Among the results obtained, it is worth mentioning the importance of service quality for the evaluation of the client's experience, the explanatory power of service quality and emotional experience in customer satisfaction, and the main explanatory cause of the generation of online comments is the emotional experience. The main contribution of this chapter is the determination of the composition of satisfaction, experience, and generation of online comments, highlighting that there is no clear relationship between satisfaction and eWOM.

INTRODUCTION

Internet has allowed people to have better information as a consumer, and Web 2.0 has encouraged the exchange of information between consumers. At present, consumers are looking for a lot of information on Internet before making any decision. Among the multiple information available, the comments and opinions of other consumers are the most valued. Consumer-to-consumer (C2C) communication in social

media has become a critical element for companies, especially for service companies. One of the topics with the most comments is the tourist services. Therefore, knowing how these comments are generated is fundamental. For some tourist entrepreneurs, the Internet's comments made by customers are part of the experience and are a way of expressing the emotions experienced. The importance of C2C communication has made fundamental to analyze the causes of electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM) generation and the effects that the eWOM has on the potential consumers (Serra & Salvi, 2014).

The role of emotions has gained interest as a critical element in understanding human behavior (Han & Jeong, 2013; Mattila & Enz, 2002). Emotions are in all phases of human behavior, and specifically of consumers (Bagozzi, Gopinath & Nyer, 1999), and influence information processing, perceptions, behavior and loyalty (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Han & Jeong, 2013). Understanding the role of emotions is vital for hedonic consumption and tourism is a clear example of hedonic consumption. When traveling for leisure, experiences and emotions are sought. As Brunner-Sperdin, Peters and Strobl (2012) and Dong and Siu (2013) reported, cognitive models are limited in their ability to explain service encounter assessment. Service experience evaluation is both cognitive and emotional (Edvardsson, 2005; Han & Jeong, 2013).

Except in the case of business travel, the pursuit of emotional experiences can be defined as the main motivational driver when it is decided to travel to a different place, from our place of residence, for leisure reasons. Motives for holiday travel can be very different and varied: to breaking from daily routine, to relax, to visit friends and relatives, to see new places, to enjoy natural settings, to practice sports and outdoor activities, to experience new cultures, etc. However, in all these cases, the search for new personal experiences and emotions is the underlying motivational factor. It should be noted that, the temptation to share experiences lived with other people after trip is usually very strong.

Due to the increasing importance of eWOM, there is a need for the hotel industry to better understand their generating factors and how to generate positive eWOM. Emotional experiences could be one powerful generating factor and there is no conclusive previous research on the impact emotional experiences can have on the generation of eWOM in the hotel industry. The role of emotions in tourism has received an important recognition (Gnoth, 1997; Goossens, 2000). Emotions are studied in shopping (e.g., Yuksel, 2007), restaurants (e.g., Han & Jeong, 2013), theme parks (e.g. Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005) and adventure tourism (e.g. Faullant, Matzler, & Mooradian, 2011). These studies show emotions as antecedent of satisfaction and behavioral intentions (e.g., Bigné et al., 2005).

Tourism literature recognizes the importance of emotions, satisfaction and post-purchase behavior, but there are contradictory positions on the relationships between these three concepts (Bigné et al., 2005). For example, many studies have found a positive relationship between satisfaction and the intention to recommend (Han & Ryu, 2012; Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Del Chiappa, 2017), but other authors raise doubts about the existence of this relationship (Dolnicar, Coltman, & Sharma, 2015; Swanson & Hsu, 2009; Yang, 2017). With the emergence of Web 2.0 and various social media and recommendation Webs, eWOM has overshadowed the traditional WOM and created a new line of research. As noted in previous studies (e.g., Filieri & McLeay, 2013; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008) there is a need for more research that explores eWOM and tourist behavior.

Although some authors have identified emotions as precursors of positive word-of-mouth, nobody had previously assessed and measured it in the new electronic context. eWOM in comparison to traditional WOM (recommendations to relatives and friends) requires a plus to be generated. WOM are made through an 'unplanned' process when there is a chance to do it in casual meetings or somebody ask. However, eWOM requires a conscious, planned action with slightly more effort involved in uploading

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