

Chapter 11

The Role of Relational Marketing in Specific Contexts of Tourism: A Luxury Hotel Management Perspective

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ABSTRACT

SMM (social media marketing) aims to produce content that users share in their various social media applications in order to increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach. There are numerous marketing techniques to apply in social media in order to involve the customer, some of which have costs and others do not. Digitization was a real challenge for any hotel company, requiring cautious and well-planned action to be successful. In this sense, the nature of social networks demands the adoption of a constructivist perspective, that is, a perspective that involves affirmations of knowledge based on individual and collective experiences. Presently, being present in social networks presents itself as a high value advantage, allowing to expose the brand, product, or idea, at a low cost, to a high audience. This chapter aims to systematize some relational marketing best practices that are identified in the luxury hotel segment in Europe (i.e., communication). Specifically, some examples of relational marketing (hotel/consumer) in terms of communication will be identified and analysed.

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INTRODUCTION

Brand attachment studies have a vital importance for marketing and tourism. There are few empirical studies that explicitly focus on the relation of brand attachment to other concepts, such as brand confidence, brand satisfaction, commitment and brand loyalty (Belaid & Temessek Behi, 2011; Sousa & Magalhães, 2019). For hospitality, such an approach can be very useful when operating within a global environment that sees companies often venture beyond their traditional geographical base into providing services to enhance tourist experience. Tourism, assuming itself as a multifaceted and geographically complex activity, increasingly originates new (and different) market segments with different individual interests (Ferreira & Sousa, 2019). These segments are characterized by the motivations that make them travel and, in turn, by the differentiation of the existing offer (Sousa, Malheiro & Veloso, 2019). Tourism is assumed as one of the major engines with more significant impact on the global development and growth of many economies. Year after year there has been an increase in competition in this sector, although this competition is established between tourism destinations (Becken & Simmons, 2002). Studies in tourism are increasing, although with different points of view and perspectives (Echtner & Jamal, 1997), for example on luxury hotel management perspective (Kimpakorn & Dimmitt, 2007; Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Li, Sanders & Frenkel, 2012) and on niche tourism perspective. According to Robinson and Novelli (2005) niche tourism has emerged in recent decades and is strongly associated with niche marketing theory. On the other hand, Dalgic and Leeuw (1994) state that niche marketing has been around for some time, what is new is the increasing diversity of markets, and the advanced technologies that allow new approaches to marketing and the deterioration of large companies and their traditional approaches. Focused marketing and micromarketing are other terms used interchangeably with niche marketing. Although they have similar characteristics, they differ to some extent (Dalgic & Leeuw, 1994). In the specific context of tourism, a review of the relevant literature (Atwal & Williams, 2017) suggests that luxury value involves experiential, symbolic and functional meanings, all connected with the brand. As stated by Veloutsou and Guzmán (2017), research has been given growing attention to the fact that *“brands have moved from being transactional tools to human-like engagement entities, that consumers experience, interact with and cocreate via multiple channels”*. Thus, the main goal of this study is to explore and understand luxury hotels' value and its impact on tourists' attitude and attachment (i.e. relational marketing) specifically through the use of Social Media Marketing approaches. According to Koch (2011), the changing face of luxury holds the power to turn classic luxury brands into losers. A fear of dramatic loss of importance seems to be looming over these brands. Academics and practitioners alike have developed frameworks to help formulate strategies for developing experiential and relational branding strategies.

SMM (Social Media Marketing) goal is to produce content that users share in their various Social Media applications in order to increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach. There are numerous marketing techniques to apply in Social Media in order to involve the customer, some of which have costs and others do not. Digitization was a real challenge for any hotel company, requiring cautious and well-planned action to be successful. In this sense, the nature of social networks demands the adoption of a constructivist perspective, that is, a perspective that involves affirmations of knowledge based on individual and collective experiences. Being active on social networks presents itself as a high value advantage for companies, allowing to expose the brand, product or idea, at a low cost, to a high audience. Thus, this chapter pretends to identify some relational marketing best practices that are identified in the

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