



Article Title

Web Reviews Influence on Expectations and Purchasing Intentions of Hotel Potential Customers

Citation

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to study the impact that hotel guests reviews posted on consumer-generated websites have on the consumer decision-making process and service expectations.

Methods

An experimental study has been conducted to test the hypotheses and the research question. 349 young adults were involved in an online survey that asked to imagine searching for a hotel and reading other customers' reviews of a hypothetical chosen hotel. Three scenarios were created by studying a few comments posted by customers on the main websites used by tourists.

Results

Results show a positive correlation between both hotel purchasing intention and expectations of the customers and valence of the review. On the contrary, the presence of hotel managers' responses to guests' reviews has a negative impact on purchasing intentions.

Conclusion

The paper demonstrates that purchasing intentions in the hospitality industry are influenced by valence (positive or negative) of online reviews posted on travel "non transactional" websites, providing further theoretical and practical knowledge on this topic. In particular, online travel reviews are confirmed to be an important source of information which influences customer decision-making process and purchasing intentions. Another interesting result is that the presence of hotel managers' responses to customer reviews is not considered a key factor by respondents. On the contrary, it has a negative impact on customer purchasing intention. The nature of information in this case is probably seen as not spontaneous and not independent from the organization. These results, in light of managerial implications described in the previous paragraph, can support hotel operators in defining integrated communications strategies based on a synergic use of new media and technologies, without forgetting the importance of personal relationships and service recovery when the customer is still at the hotel. In fact, service quality evaluation and customer satisfaction remain key factors that stimulate positive online customer reviews. Moreover, social media should be even more considered in the future to develop a more spontaneous interaction with customers,

understanding also their actual expectations and, as a consequence, the appropriate service standard to be offered.