



Article Title

Modeling consumer distrust of online hotel reviews.

Citation

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Abstract

The online reviews literature has tended to focus on exploring perspectives such as the recipient's attitude, reviews' message-based factors, reviews' trustworthiness, and hotel sales. But research fails to address the underlying processes of consumer distrust of online hotel reviews. Based on a rich stream of literature, this study offers a hierarchical-influence model of consumer distrust of online hotel reviews after a hotel service failure. The research model considers how consumers are influenced by two particular attributes of reviewers, how reviewers make attributions following a service failure, and the relational outcomes of distrust. After applying the model to hospitality consumers in China, we find that the reviewer attributes of fake identity and ulterior motivation directly influence distrust, which further leads to consumers' psychological discomfort and engagement in negative electronic word-of-mouth. Surprisingly, psychological discomfort positively affects repeat purchase intentions. Service failure attribution positively moderates the relationship between reviewer attributes and distrust. We discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of our study and close by acknowledging the research limitations. Future research directions to tourism and hospitality scholars are also provided.

Summary

The results of this study stress the importance of two online reviewer attributes, reviewer fake identity and ulterior motivation, in increasing distrust. We find a strong moderating effect of service failure attribution between reviewer attributes and consumer distrust. In other words, this study explains that influence of reviewer attributes on distrust depends on consumer attribution for post-purchase hotel service failure. These relationships show that consumers rely on reviewer attributes as heuristic cues to facilitate information processing and to decide whether to trust or distrust a particular hotel review. In addition, consumers use their attributions for service failure as a decisive factor in determining distrust attitudes. We provide further evidence that stimulated distrust predominantly creates negative consumer outcomes by increasing consumer engagement

in negative electronic word-of mouth and lowering repeat purchase intentions. Overall, our proposed hierarchical-influence model provides a detailed examination and useful insights on consumer perceived deception behavior in situations of online biases and web frauds, which have not been investigated in past.

In today's era of big data, our results have valuable implications for both hotel firms and online travel websites. By carefully following the suggestions of this study, industry practitioners can make better use of consumer information and reviews content and thereby offer value added services to both existing and potential customers. Consequently, customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty will increase, and the business will stand out from competitors.