

Two faces of electronic Word-of-Mouth: The qualitative approach of amplified e-WOM Barbora

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Illes Balears

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Master's Thesis

Master's degree in Tourism Management and Planning (With
a speciality Tourism Business Management) at the

UNIVERSITAT DE LES ILLES BALEARS

Academic year 2015/2016

Date 30/08/2016

UIB Master's Thesis Supervisor: FRANCISCO REJÓN GUARDIA

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Planning

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Abstract

In tourism industry the competition is increasing, thus the companies need to find a new way of attracting more customers. One of the newest trend is amplified electronic word of mouth where companies are using social media platforms as part of their strategies. Even though in some of the sectors is popular, it is not clear if it is used in tourism. By creating questionnaire, we conduct 30 replies from hotels in Mallorca. The results show that indeed amplified e-WOM is popular and important for the companies, however only a few are implementing it in their strategies in any other form except of the classic Facebook or Twitter page. The results demonstrate that the hotel industry has gap in using e-WOM in his full capacity. Therefore, in this paper implications for the industry will be discussed.

Keywords: Amplified, electronic word of mouth, tourism, social media, blogs, marketing strategy

1. Introduction

For every company marketing is very important for selling their products and services, thus, every day they are investing lot of money in promotion and advertising. But nowadays, in the times of internet, company have to focus on needs of people. The most valuable form of marketing has been considered word of mouth, which means direct communication and recommendation between people. Therefore, in the time of internet and social media, the word of mouth gains even greater power in form of comments, as everything become viral. By Nielson, (2012), 92% of consumer prefer and trust to the recommendations from their closest friends and family as the strongest type of all marketing. The problem is that companies stop to focusing on quality customers but on quantity which doesn't allow really to connect with them (Hong & Park, 2012). Before, marketers were focusing on 4P's (Product, Promotion, Price, Place), but today's trend changed into three E's: Engage, Equip and Empower, thus, if the company is able to master these three, company can rapidly increase its popularity and market share. To master the 3 E's, is necessary to understand the meaning of them (Whitler, 2014):

- *“Engage”*: simply to engage with your online customers. Make them win some of your products, actively participate in the conversation on social media's about your mark, have high response are in all of the social networks, show the customers you care about each individually.
- *“Equip”*: put a “light” to your company. Make people talk about your new exciting product, quality services with no competition. In this part is really about the needs of the consumer and your understanding of them.

- “*Empower*”: the power of sharing. Enhance the importance of sharing by letting your customers know the importance of their opinion, and creating the options for sharing in the social network sites (SNS).

The power of word of mouth in today social media is big, thus the companies can use it for its own good as marketing strategy (Whitler, 2014). Is important to cooperate with the top influencer as journalists, bloggers and celebrities, which definitely bring the “Equip” to your company as important part of three E’s strategy.

In this work, we will enclose the importance of the electronic word of mouth not only from the relevance of the side of the consumers, but we will show, that how the e-WOM can be use as very effective marketing strategy. The e-WOM as marketing strategy is called amplified e-WOM and it occur when the companies are enhancing the WOM by creating campaigns and other promotion including outside influencers (Wordofmouth, 2008). Therefore, we will interview several hotel companies in Mallorca, in order to know if the amplified e-WOM strategies are used in tourism sector as well as in the other sectors. The interviews will be conducted by questionnaire where the questions will be mostly regarding to the importance of the e-WOM and if the company use it or not. The results will be commented ad concluded.

This paper is structured as follows: first, a literature review including a description of Word of mouth, and its categories as electronic which can be organic or amplified, furthermore application of the e-WOM as marketing strategy and its usage in the different sector; second, an explanation of the theoretical framework based on the theory conducted from the academic journals and internet sources specialized in the topic; third, a description of the method, analysis

and results of the study; and finally, a discussion of the findings and the subsequent managerial implications, as well as the limitations of the study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Word of mouth

2.1.1 Concept of WOM

The Word of Mouth (WOM) has several definitions. As in the English Dictionary, 2011 the WOM is “*spoken communication as a means of transmitting information*”, in the Business dictionary it is explain as “*Oral or written recommendation by a satisfied customer to the prospective customers of a good or service*” (BusinessDictionary, 2016). To sum up according to Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA, 2016) the WOM is “*any business action that earns a customer recommendation*”.

The WOM can be considered as well as the most effective way of marketing, because the customer enthusiasm for the company is part of their everyday dialogs (Blazevic et al., 2013). It is the least costly but the most powerful influencer of the customer behavior and purchase decisions. Because of people worries about the quality of product or service, they are most likely going to influence their purchase decisions by listening other people recommendations (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016). According to WOMMA (2016), the WOM marketing has to be credible, respectful, social, measurable, and repeatable.

- “*Credible*”: trustworthy, honest and original communication between customers and company and customers.
- “*Respectful*”: truthful and clear behavior reflecting into privacy between the company and the customer
- “*Social*”: Brand involvement into online or offline communication, quick responses and supporting the conversations.
- “*Measurable*”: The possibility of measure, classify and evaluate the outcomes.
- “*Repeatable*”: The ability of repeating marketing strategies in order to create buzz and become and brand everyone talks about.

2.1.2 History of WOM (Multi-stage model)

Since the 50s, WOM has attract both professional and scholar attention, as its trough personal conversations influencing purchase intentions of the customers (Arndt, 1967), enhance or lower expectations (Anderson & Salisbury, 2003) and perception of the product or product vary as well (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991). Several research has been conduct in order to understand better the influence and consequences of WOM. In order to do so, we will explain a multi-stage model of influence on decision making process by WOM (Bettman, 1979):

- “*Awareness stage*”: when the potential customer knows about the product or service, but probably doesn’t have enough information or just enough interest. In the study by De Bruyn & Lilien (2008), where the influence was measured by email messages, they describe stage as the moment when the recipient is wondering whether to open email and look for the offer send. It is crucial for the company to make email familiar, with the personalize content, simple

message without wasting time of possible customer, as well avoid the concept to look like virus or spam, which can to dissuade a client from opening it in the first place.

- *“Interest stage”*: the customer passed awareness stage, aroused interest and wants to learn more about product or service. According to De Bruyn & Lilien (2008) in this stage the recipients are aware and have connection and similar taste with the sender of the message. At this point the sender experience can provide benefits for customer from the recommended product or service
- *“Final decision stage”*: the customer has already examined all alternatives and decide whether to purchase or the company has to make an innovation process in order to change customer decision. According to De Bruyn & Lilien (2008), the recipient have enough information to decide if the purchase will be beneficial for him or not. The relationship from sender towards recipient can affect the purchase decision.

2.1.3 Electronic word of mouth

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is *“any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customer about a product or a company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via Internet”* (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Thanks to the previous studies, it had been empirically shown that the e-WOM has an impact on purchase intention of the customers. However, the impact vary depends on positivity or negativity of the e-WOM. As well, it has been demonstrated that customer’s confidence had been significant part of the purchase decision and e-WOM could impact it (Harrison McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002). As the customers are writing their experiences, rate the performance of the company or the behavior of the firm towards customers, which the potential

clients are using for making the purchase decisions. Thus, if the e-WOM increase trust, the purchase intention have tendency to rise (See-To & Ho, 2014).

Thanks to social network sites (SNSs), as Facebook, Twitter, etc., the landscape and functioning of the firm have change by creating their own brand images in the Internet world. Firms started to creating their own fan pages, where they want to propagate their marketing information's, but this allowed to the customers discuss their experiences, review, subscribe and share, thus, increasing the brand awareness towards other potential customers (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009).

Social media is “*a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0, and that allow the creation of user generated content*” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Latest trends and fast development are bringing in the usage of the social media, as it becomes a phenomenon which create big impacts in our lives. If divide social media, would be into 5 categories (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008):

1. “*Blogs*”: one to many communications with personal opinions or professional firm’s blog.
2. “*Social network sites*”: many to many communication, sites as Facebook, Twitter. Personal accounts for sharing opinions and interpersonal communication used for searching recommendations, as well firms using SNS for promoting products and services and to connect with customers in closer more personal levels
3. “*Content communities*”: one to many, may to many, communities with shared interests, as YouTube, Wikipedia.

4. “*E-Forums*”: posted online discussion or various topics, including also chat rooms
5. “*Content aggregators*”: are people or organizations gathering web content from other websites to one with a purpose of resale (See-To & Ho, 2014).

The importance of the internet in the last few years change the scheme of the businesses. People start to using internet to buy things online, finding information and recommendations about their interests and brands and for connecting to similar interest groups on social medias (Lee & Shin, 2014). The remarkable growth of social media importance has change the view of how information can be received (Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014). SNSs become popular, as they help to stimulate e-WOM and become powerful tool, where customers can share their opinions and ideas through interpersonal communications online (O’Donohoe, 2008). Customers themselves are enhancing brand awareness and increasing e-WOM effectiveness, by sharing or liking the posts, becoming friends or follow the pages and involving in the conversations connected to the brand. This is often caused by motivation and support towards the company for the positive experiences (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This attitude is the reaction of customer to the SNS strategies of the company (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

By Chu & Kim (2011) and Jalilvand et al., (2011) e-WOM communication is composed of three keys dimensions: “*Opinion leadership*”: often occurs in blog and influencer pages. When individual is influencing other’s behavior based on their opinion. For the point of the company, each customer can be opinion leader, when is posting opinions or commenting on their social media profiles and thus, effecting their friends and followers. “*Opinion seeking*”: are the friends or followers of the opinion leaders. People who are looking for the advice and recommendations on the social media websites. The opinion leaders can be as well seekers as they could get their

shared opinion from other webpages or friends. “*Opinion passing*”: the passing, from the point of view of the company, is very important. It could be just basic “like” in the Facebook or Instagram page or sharing and retweeting the posts in Twitter and Facebook profiles. This kind of behavior can affect the post of the people and is most likely to occur in SNS contexts. When consider the influence of opinion passing by recognition of existing customer and by approaching many new, as e-WOM dimension is the rising quickest and the companies ascribe highest importance.

Even though WOM brings the greatest trust through family and friend recommendations, social networks creating quick spreading among people, who are strangers and never been involved together with any context (Kennett & Matthews, 2008). Therefore, social media networks are connecting people and bringing new mean for WOM by joining similar interests and needs. Because of the impersonal communication, the higher credibility is accredited to classic WOM compare to e-WOM (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013). However, thanks to e-WOM great spread among internet, there is high chance of appearance of expert for the specific topic compare to the closest friends and family and that could bring high credibility for customers who is involved in the trusted websites (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). Thanks to e-WOM widespread and written form, many firms start to participate in online social networks (OSN) in order to better communicate and positively influence their customers (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013).

Even though many companies are using social media in order to enhance usage of the WOM, they are failing on low connection with customer and engagement in conversations because of the almost not existing online marketing strategies. Therefore, there are four stages of maturity of the social media strategies (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013; Van Luxemburg & Zwiiggelaar, 2011):

- “*Pre-social*” or “*ad hoc*”: firms without any basic strategies established, only developed websites and emailing to customers. Company consider one-way communication as sufficient and social media network sites are not necessary.
- *Connection* or *experimental*: those firms moved from only website to establishing Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages, but without any OSN strategies and without any cooperation with important departments as public relations and human resources.
- “*Engagement*” or “*functional*”: the firms are involved in social media strategies with two ways communications as creating interesting posts, responding to comments and showing interest into customer’s opinions. At this stage of maturity companies have integrated marketing strategies and campaigns by cooperating with other departments.
- “*Social advantage*” or “*transformation stage*”: in this most advance stage of maturity, firm is involved in problem solving by creating cooperative network and integrating crowdsourcing projects where internal and outside stakeholders can participate.

Therefore, the companies have higher possibility to succeed in social media maturity when involving customer into their OSN strategies, such as creating campaigns where customer can participate in product development and designing of the products. This kind of campaign should enhance customer interest and relationship with the company, which will lead to the support and promoting through-out other customers (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013; Van Luxemburg & Zwiggelaar, 2011).

2.2 Amplified word of mouth as last development: WOM as marketing strategy

2.2.1 WOM marketing strategies in online platforms and different sectors

WOM is very important tool for creating brand awareness, which is enhancing popularity of the brand and finally its market share. Since the internet create new ways of delivering information, the classic advertising one-to-many stop being so effective, thus, in order to enhance popularity, marketers can use these SNSs to creating buzz. The Rouse (2016) define buzz as “*A viral marketing technique that is focused on maximizing the word-of-mouth potential of a particular campaign or product, whether that is through conversations among consumers' family and friends or larger scale discussions on social media platforms*”.

Lee & Koo (2012) demonstrate that the customers are trusting more other customer's reviews than what the company say about itself and prefer to use the recommendations of people for their purchase decisions. As company itself doesn't have such a trust, they need to create marketing strategies including e-WOM and the influencers on the social media platforms. To understand difference between normal WOM and its marketing form Wordofmouth (2008) have describe it as follow *organic* word of mouth: "*organic WOM occurs naturally when people become advocates because they are happy with a product and have a natural desire to share their support and enthusiasm*", and *amplified* word of mouth: "*amplified WOM occurs when marketers launch campaigns designed to encourage or accelerate WOM in existing or new communities*".

Furthermore, not only consumers can use social media platforms to share the experience of the purchase and passing the information about products and services, but also companies can use online social networking sites as online platforms, websites, blogs, etc. to promote their products (Abendroth & Heyman, 2013). In order to make online marketing strategies more effective, the online consumer reviews can become sponsored recommendation post, such as post in personal blog or anonymously share product photos and videos with positive reviews. Customers then read reviews and these evaluations are changing purchase decisions. The firm can offer some compensation, in form of free product or discounts on products, etc., for sharing or posting review in SNSs. The question is that even though sponsored recommendations on SNSs are common way of marketers strategies, the perception could be perceived as bias and such review could be questionable (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014).

Majority of the sponsored recommendations are in the personal blogs, but how the product is perceived and whether the fact that the blogger being compensated influence customer's purchase decision, depends on the sponsorship and product type, as well as brand awareness (Chen & Xie, 2008). It is well known that if the brand awareness is high, the credibility of the brand increases and the customer is willing to trust more to the brand. The customers normally or provide information about the products or are recommending the product based on own experience. The recommendations usually cover as well the strength and weaknesses of the product or service and being useful for influencing purchase decisions of the potential customers and enhancing brand awareness (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008). The sponsored recommendations are a type of the online review and usually those posts also include pictures and hyperlinks directly to the company offering mentioned product (Forrest & Cao, 2009). The difference between sponsored and customer online review is normally in the place of posting the sponsored recommendation is

usually in personal profiles, blogs and other social websites, when customer online review is normally in the webpage or any online platform page of the product itself (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007), as well as the sponsored behavior is more positive and active towards the marks thanks to its compensations (Lu et al., 2014). Therefore, sponsored recommendations or online customer reviews are part of e-WOM, as it is providing recommendations on online platforms available for other users (Lee & Koo, 2012).

The positive behavior of the sponsored person may be able to enhance interest through other customers, but the attitude cannot be seen as bias otherwise, the credibility of the blogger or sponsored person can be compromised and can harm to their status (K.-T. Lee & Koo, 2012). The sponsored recommendations should be clear and show the relationship between the company they are promoting, which in return can increase the credibility and trust of customers towards the recommendations. It should be considered as advertising not just as personal review posts based on experiences (Lee & Koo, 2012).

In the study by Sprague & Wells (2010) was shown there are two types of compensations for sponsored recommendations: *direct-monetary* and *indirect monetary*. The direct compensations are in the form of cash payments and indirect are in form of free products, coupons or discounts. Study conducted by Lu et al., (2014) was found that if the sponsored connection between the blogger and the company is shown and clear, the relationship between blog reader and blogger stay untouched and the perception of sponsored posts doesn't become negative. As well, for the customer was not important whether the type of the compensation was direct or indirect monetary, when the sponsorship was clear from beginning. As last was found that the high brand awareness is enhancing trust and positive reaction to such a recommended post, and if the

customer doesn't perceive the post as bias, the purchase intention towards such recommendation will increase.

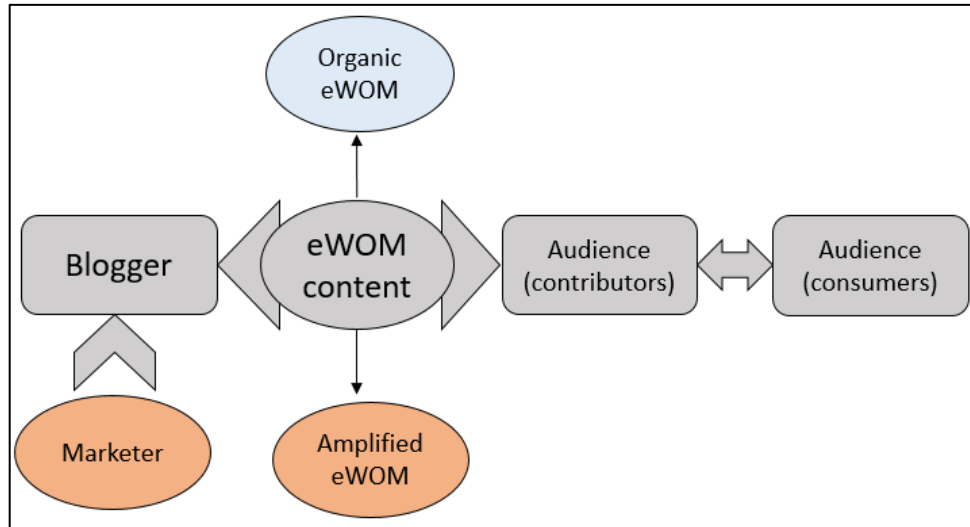


Figure 1. Organic and Amplified WOM in Blogs, original. Adapted from Kulmala, Mesiranta & Tuominen (2013:22).

The most common amplified e-WOM in blogs is in the fashion industry (Kulmala et al., 2013). The posts can be combination of organic and amplified e-WOM. Organic e-WOM is naturally occurring when the blogger writes about personal style, advices and purchase. The advice section is very important part, thanks to rich comment area in the blogs where readers can participate and communicate with blogger or between themselves. The amplified e-WOM is interfering all of the part of the blogger writes, company many times send the blogger free products or discounts, which later the blogger composes into their posts. As well, the product will have their own link to purchase for the readers. The language of the blogger is different than from the marketers and thus it is perceived as more authentic and believable, so the customers have higher purchase intentions. Bloggers are often consider as the role models, that's why is strategic marketing tool for the companies (Kulmala et al., 2013).

However, blogs are not only way how to promote product and enhance e-WOM by creating buzz. For example, New York Times (NYT) has become with excellent e-WOM strategy (Oh, Animesh, & Pinsonneault, 2016). In the time of the newspapers the sales were decreasing, as first company create website, but the customer had to pay in order to read articles and as the sales strategy was not working because the company couldn't get enough paying subscribers. Thus, they came with following solution: for each first 20 articles person wanted to read for free it was necessary to share it on the customer's personal social media platform. As well as many other benefits the person can obtain when they liked or followed NYT on the SNSs (Oh et al., 2016).

2.2.2 e-WOM Marketing in tourism

Tourism nowadays is a popular activity enhancing economy by creating opportunities for in all sectors of the industry (Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014). Thanks to its increasing popularity, the competition rise as well, and thus, it is difficult for the companies to keep attracting customers (Hornig, et al , 2012). Thanks to its high competition people tend to spend lot of time researching on the internet, collecting all information possible in advance to their travel (Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Díaz-Armas, 2011). As tourism is intangible product, tourists have to rely on the external information which they find (Hyde, 2008). Before the great expand of the social media, tourists were conducting information mostly from commercial websites, and firm's promotion which many time had tendencies to be misleading (Beerli & Martín, 2004). In case of the tourism, companies has to not only trying to promote their firm's but also perception of the tourism destination image is playing a big role in purchase decision of the tourists (Enrique Bign & Isabel, 2001). For such a risk people are feeling before choosing its vacation, WOM become a powerful tool to help with decision, as have more trust than commercial

sites. Positive WOM is reducing possible risks and people feel more open towards destinations and its businesses (Jeong & Jang, 2011).

Recently, e-WOM related to travel information is mostly happening through personal blogs (Yoo & Gretzel, 2012). In these blogs tourists can post their experience, opinions where other tourists can read and thus help themselves with choosing the right option for their vacation (Chen et al., 2014). The blogs usually consist of “stories”, which contains not only detail descriptions but also a photos, films and audios (Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007), so the readers can unite the whole experience. When bloggers write, it is reflecting their personality and opinions, but thanks to pictures, films and audios of the recommended hotels, restaurants and attractions, they are bringing certain tangibility into their trips and thus, lowering the risk of uncertainty when choosing the destination (Chen & Xie, 2008). For reason of difficulty to evaluate intangible products and services, blogs have to consist even higher quality of information, credibility and accuracy in order to fulfil the complexion of the tourism (Grant, Clarke, & Kyriazis, 2007). Even though the high popularity of the tourism personal blog review, there are several other platforms which are evaluating tourism destination and its companies thanks to customer reviews. Between the most popular platform belongs TripAdvisor, Expedia, Hotels.com, Yelp and Orbitz (Molinillo et al., 2016).

3. Methodology

Our study has been based on qualitative approach, and will be explanatory and descriptive. The methodology was conducted by questionnaire¹. The questionnaire was design for managers and marketing departments of the 30 hotels in Mallorca. It consisted from in total 19 questions, which were combination of open and close. Closed questions were structured, mostly multiple choice or agreement status in the scale of 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). They were trying to find out if the companies are using social media platforms, amplified e-WOM and if they are important for their marketing strategies. Open questions brought closer look to how and why the hotels are using these special marketing strategies.

The questionnaire had been conducted in period July-August and it been created in two languages, Spanish and English. Federacion Empresarial Hotelera de Mallorca (FEHM) and its President Inmaculada de Benito Hernández, who have been big help, ask for cooperation several hotels in the Mallorca in order to participate in the study and help our research. Furthermore, cooperation with the ex-Balearic Ministry of Toursim Jaime Martínez Llabrés, which as well help us by contacting hotels in Balearic Islands.

The questionnaire was anonymous and used only for academic purposes. The interviews was carried out by email, and the sample was random. All the questions are added to appendix. The results are commented and several showed graphically for better understanding. The qualitative approach we consider as most suitable for exploratory and qualitative purposes of this

¹<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeCVRTkDL7-k7z5IAxEo-tfiINfUJUPMRslcQEodVQIqTtQog/viewform?c=0&w=1>

study, in order to better look on the amplified strategies and importance of social media platforms in hotel industry in Mallorca.

4. Results

The objective of the study was to discover the usage of the social media platform and its importance in the marketing strategies, as well as usage of amplified e-WOM for the company's benefits in Mallorca. At first, we will enclose the close questions. We were trying to discover more about the hotel type and its size. The respondents were in the similar layout in all categories, when 30,8% were medium size hotels with 51-140 rooms, 38,5 % were big size hotel 141 and more rooms and finally small hotels under 50 rooms covered around 28% of the respondents. All of the hotels are situated in Mallorca and are mostly 4 stars' hotel (52%) and 5 star hotels (44%). The respondents are the managers, directors and marketing directors with many years of experience in the hospitality sector, thus their opinions are very valuable.

Regarding to the sociodemographic data, the respondents were 50% male and 50% female, in the age of 26-40, 50% and age of 41-55, 42.9% and with the university studies.

As significant we consider, that 28 of respondents consider e-WOM important for their companies, as shows Figure 2. The most used social media platform in the hotel's strategies is Facebook, used by all companies, continuing with Twitter, 21 companies, and Instagram used by 19 companies. Hence, the 56% of hotels are using these SMP every day, while 30,8% is using some days a week and almost 8% less than one time per month. In 22 hotels, the companies have a specific employee taking care of the SMP, and the employee has the education regarding to the

SMP. More than 85% of respondents think that there should in future exist a department dedicated to e-WOM.

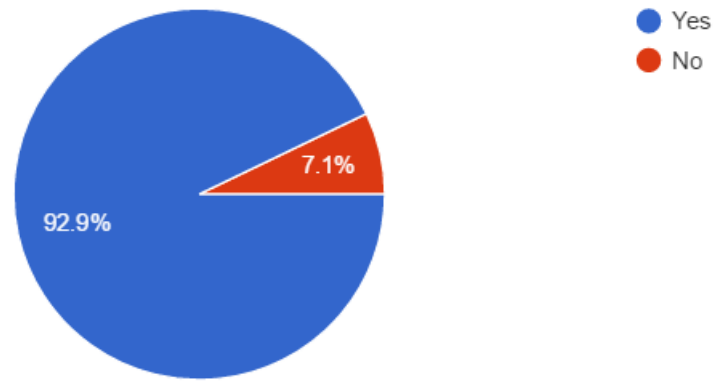


Figure 2 Do your company put importance to the electronic word of mouth?

Only 15 respondents are using bloggers as their media strategy and all of the compensation is indirect, mostly through offering a free product or service and through discounts. 21 of the respondents believe that e-WOM are bringing clients who would not come otherwise, later 20 respondents consider e-WOM as important tool in their marketing strategy and 23 of respondents believe that creating e-WOM strategy in hotel will get competitive advantage to obtain clients.

In the questionnaire we asked two open questions. First was encluse why the company put the importance to the e-WOM. Majority of the responses were claiming that it is for promotion and enhancing the brands image, as well as directly affecting future buying decisions of clients. As well the responses claim that whether positive or negative comments, it helps to the hotel to grow and improve everyday more. Figure 3 shows the percentage proposition of the most common e-WOM benefits.

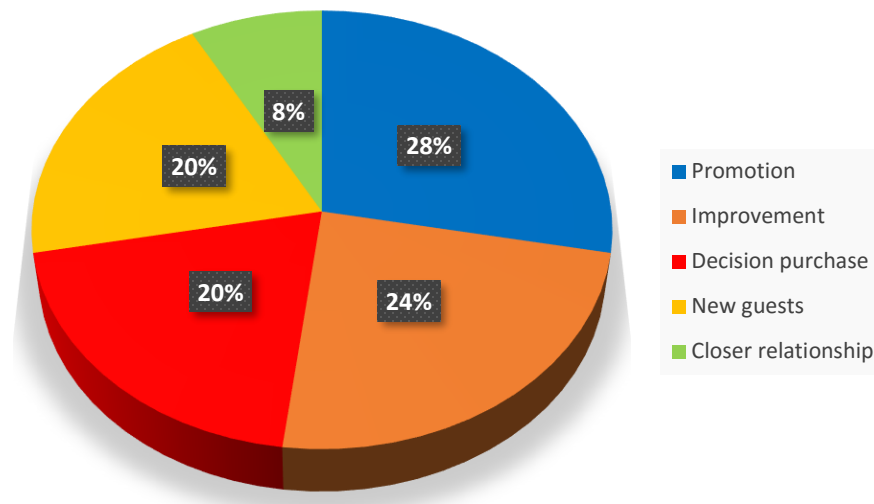


Figure 3. Do your company put importance to the electronic word of mouth?

As second question, the hotels was saying if they use the e-WOM as part of their marketing strategy and why, 12 respondents confirm, that the company is not using e-WOM in the marketing strategies which, considering the sample, is a significant amount. The rest is using the e-WOM to promote and increase brand image to finally increase reservation numbers, to give personal approach towards clients and respond to all their comments and thoughts whether positive or negative. Some of the respondents are thanks to e-WOM including the customers and society in the event and special programs. Some even consider the marketing strategy as the overall goals of the company and this is always the goal of the customer's voice.

- *“It is very important to respond to all comments, whether they are good, as if they are bad. Sometimes, responding to a bad comment, you can turn it around and talk about other services offered by the hotel”*: Manager 3
- *“Yes, we have specialized tool and perform weekly checks and improvement strategy with the operational management of the hotels”*: Manager 16

- *“The target is through ads and influencers to expand reach and capture the attention of the community that is target”*: Manager 25

5. Conclusions

In the study we have enclosed importance of the amplified e-WOM and its usage as part of the marketing strategy. We took closer look to the tourism sector in Mallorca, by creating questionnaire for 30 hotels, and we enclosed their knowledge of this new trend. Even though almost all of the companies recognize the importance of the e-WOM and its possible utilization for future benefits of the company, only half of the respondents are really using the amplified e-WOM as part of the long term marketing strategy. Which is also notable, that those using the marketing strategy are still using mostly social media sites as Facebook and Twitter, but the blogger and internet influencers in the minimum quantity. As positive we can consider that respondents think of companies with higher possibility of getting future clients those with developed amplified e-WOM strategies.

Thanks to our results, we can see that this trend is still at its beginning in the tourism sector. Even though managers are aware of the importance of the e-WOM, not a lot of hotel is using it as the strategy. With notice of the gap in this industry, this paper can have implications in the tourism, as well from managerial point of view because it could enhance benefits and competitive advantage of the companies using this new trend.

Considering the nature of our research, it has a few limitations. First, the sample of 30 hotels is small and could not reflect the whole industry in Mallorca. Second, qualitative analysis has its

limitations. Further research should focus on the companies in tourism, which did implement the amplified e-WOM in their marketing strategies and find out at what size it affects the company benefits.

For finalization of the work, I would like to thank for his patience and help to my tutor Francisco Rejón Guardia, for his comments and observations which helped me to accomplish this study and showed me new perspective on this issue. As well I would like to thank Inmaculada de Benito Hernández and Jaime Martínez Llabrés for their contribution in contacting hotels and making the research possible, and of course all the hotel managers for their cooperation. Last but not least, I would like to thank Jaime Campaner Muñoz for making the touch with the hotel managers achievable.

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APPENDIX

Electronic word of mouth in Tourism

Ha sido usted seleccionado para participar en un estudio sobre el estado del “boca a boca” electrónico. Con su ayuda esperamos contribuir a mejorar el conocimiento científico en la especialidad de marketing y administración y dirección de empresas online / You have been selected to participate in a study on the state of the word of mouth online. With your help we hope to contribute to improve scientific knowledge in the field of marketing and management online.

Le pedimos su colaboración en los próximos minutos contestando una serie de preguntas. Toda la información que proporcione será tratada de modo confidencial y archivada, utilizándola exclusivamente para usos académicos / We ask for your cooperation so that in the next few minutes to answer a series of questions. All information will be treated confidentially and aggregate, we used this information for academic purposes.

El tiempo estimado para completar el cuestionario es de unos 5 minutos. Está estructurado en diferentes secciones / The average time to complete the questionnaire is about 5 minutes. It is structured in different sections.

Muchas gracias por su ayuda / Thank you very much for your help

1. ¿Cuántas habitaciones tiene su hotel? / How many rooms your hotel have ?

- <50
- 51-140
- 141<
- Other :

2. Qué puesto desempeña y durante cuántos años de experiencia / Your position and how long experience you have?

- Your answer

3. ¿Dónde está localizado su Hotel? / Where is your Hotel Located?

- Península / Mainland
- Costa / Coast
- Islas / Islands

4. ¿Cuántas estrellas tiene su Hotel? / How many stars has your Hotel?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-Wom):

Es cualquier comentario positivo o negativo realizado por usuarios de internet sobre un servicio o producto de la empresa / Is any positive or negative comment of the Internet users about the company's product or service

Electronic Word of Mouth Marketing:

Consiste en utilizar e-Wom como herramienta de promoción de los productos o servicios de la empresa / Is using e-WOM as tool for promotion of company's products or services

5. ¿Considera que el e-WOM es importante para su empresa? / Do your company put importance to the electronic word of mouth?

- Yes
- No

6. ¿En caso afirmativo, por qué? ¿De qué manera? / If yes, why? how?

- Your answer

7. ¿Su hotel emplea el e-WOM como parte de su estrategia de marketing? En caso afirmativo, ¿cómo? / Are you using eWOM as a part of your marketing strategy? If yes,how? Nota: (estrategia de marketing: objetivos a largo plazo de la empresa) / Note: (marketing strategy: long term marketing goals of the company)

- Your answer

8. ¿Utiliza alguna red social como parte de su estrategia de marketing? / Are you using any social media platforms(SMP)as part of your marketing strategy?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Other:

9. ¿Con qué frecuencia utiliza estas redes sociales ? /How often you use these SMP?

- Cada día/ Everyday
- Algunos días a la semana / Some days a week
- Una vez a la semana / Once a week
- Cada dos semanas / Every two weeks
- Menos
- Other :

10. Tienen personal específico encargado de gestionar las redes sociales / Do you have an specific employee taking care about SMP?

- Yes
- No

11. Tiene este empleado una formación específica o experiencia previa en materia de redes sociales? / He/She has an special education or experience of SMP?

- Si
- No

12. Considera que en el futuro debe existir un departamento en su empresa dedicado a la gestión de comentarios on-line / You consider that in the future there should be a department in your company dedicated to managing online comments

- Si
- No

Indique su grado de acuerdo con la siguiente proposición. Siento 1 totalmente en desacuerdo y 7 totalmente de acuerdo:

13. ¿Utilizan en sus estrategias alguna vía por lo que infuenciar a los bloggers, con la intención de mejorar las críticas y comentarios on-line? En casoafirmativo, cómo? / Are you using bloggers influences as a strategy in your company? If yes, how?

- Pago en dinero / Money compensation
- Cupones / Coupons
- Descuentos / Discounts
- Oferta de productos o servicios gratuitos / Offers of free product or services
- Other:

14. Considero que el e-WOM le ha proporcionado clientes que de otra manera no hubieran venido al Hotel. / Do you really think e-WOM is bringing you guests that would not come to your Hotel otherwise?

Totally disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Totally agree

15. El e-WOM es importante en mi estrategia de marketing / e-WOM is important in my marketing strategy

Totally disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Totally agree

16. Aquellas empresas que cuentan con un e-WOM desarrollado juegan con ventaja en lo que ala captación de clientes se refiere / Those companies which developed e-WOM, have advantage to get clients

Totally disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Totally agree

Datos sociodemográficos / Sociodemographic data

17. Género / Gender

- Mujer/ Female
- Hombre/Male

18. Edad / Age

- 18-25
- 26-40
- 41-55
- 56<
- Other :

20. Nivel de Formación /Education level

- PRIMARIOS
- BACHILLERATO/ESO
- UNIVERSITARIOS
- POSTGRADO
- DOCTORADO
- Other :

Muchas gracias por su participación / Thank you very much for your participation