Virtual Word-of-Mouth and Its Influence on Resort Tourists' Total Guest Experience: The Malaysian Evidence

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ABSTRACT

Over the recent years, customer experience has paved its way into the global tourism industry which is generally viewed as an experience-intensive sector. However, the major forces of customer experience are still unclear and have been continuously debated amongst research scholars and industry practitioners alike. This study attempts to determine the extent to which virtual word-of-mouth (or vWOM) serves as one of the major driving influences on total guest experience, including both dimensions of escapism and aesthetic experiences respectively. Using a quantitative research method, questionnaire surveys were distributed to targeted respondents consisting of tourists who have stayed at any hotel, beach, and island resorts in Malaysia. Data analyses were carried out via a structural equation modelling technique using Smart PLS 3.0 statistical software in examining the hypothesized assumptions. The findings revealed significant hypothesized relationship between vWOM, and escapism experience. However, the hypothesized association between the vWOM and aesthetic experience was not supported. Several managerial contributions were subsequently observed.

Keywords: Virtual   Word-of-Mouth (vWOM), Total Guest Experience, Resorts, Tourist, Service Marketing