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PERCEIVED eWOM CREDIBILITY, eWOM EXPERIENCE AND eWOM MANAGEMENT: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HOTEL MANAGERS

ALGILANAN eWOM KREDİBİLİTESİ, eWOM DENEYİMİ ve eWOM YÖNETİMİ: OTEL YÖNETİCİLERİNİN PERSPEKTİFİNDEN

Dr. Ozan CATIR

Usak University, Vocational School of Ulubey, Tourism and Travel Services, Usak/TÜRKİYE

Ilknur MAZAN

Usak University, Vocational School of Banaz, Tourism and Hotel Management, Usak/TÜRKİYE



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the hotel managers' experiences, credibility perceptions, and management practices about eWOM. Interviews were conducted with the hotel managers of the city-hotels. The study examines whether the hotel managers find credible the online comments and whether their eWOM credibilities, eWOM experiences affect their eWOM management. Most of the managers express that they read online comments only in credible web-sites. The managers expressed that they were more willing to respond to credible comments and mentioned that they weren't willing to respond to negative comments before searching the reviewers. Interestingly, it is found that managers prefer to make a phone call instead of writing a response to the comments.

Key words: WOM, eWOM credibility, hotel managers, online comments, Tripadvisor.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, otel yöneticilerinin eWOM ile ilgili deneyimlerini, güvenilirlik algılarını ve yönetim uygulamalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Görüşmeler şehir otellerinin otel yöneticileri ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma, otel yöneticilerinin çevrimiçi yorumları güvenilir bulup bulmadıklarını ve algılanan eWOM kredibilitesinin ve eWOM deneyimlerinin, eWOM yönetimlerini etkileyip etkilemediğini incelemektedir. Yöneticilerin çoğu, yalnızca güvenilir web sitelerinde çevrimiçi yorumları okuduklarını ifade etmektedirler. Yöneticiler, güvenilir yorumlara cevap vermek için daha fazla istekli olduklarını ve yorum sahibini araştırmadan olumsuz yorumlara cevap vermek istemediklerini belirtmektedirler. İlginçtir ki, yöneticilerin yorumlara cevap vermek yerine telefon görüşmesi yapmayı tercih ettikleri sonucuna varılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: WOM, eWOM güvenilirliği, şehir oteli yöneticileri, online yorumlar, Tripadvisor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's technological developments and internet usage have made it possible for the consumers to obtain information from the others easily. The consumer reviews published via the internet are available to many other consumers. At this point, traditional WOM (word-of-mouth communication) becomes eWOM (Electronic word-of-mouth communication) in online environment. eWOM is spreading through various internet channels such as discussion forums, blogs, social networking sites and evaluation web sites. Since the tourism products and the services are products of experience, eWOM becomes an important tool for both costumers and

service providers.

With the emergence of the internet, people have begun to look for mouth-to-mouth marketing (e-WOM) information about products and services in virtual environments (Serra Cantallops and Salvi, 2014; King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). There is a significant impact of e-WOM on the experience of goods and services (Litvin et al., 2008; Lee & Youn, 2009). In order for the quality of hotel services to be understood, it is often necessary to consume the service. Therefore, in order to understand the quality of hotel services, customers are turning to e-WOM resources (Wirtz and Chew, 2002).

eWOM has a strong influence on hotel guests to obtain information about products and services, to make evaluations and to make purchases (Hudson & Thal, 2013; Browning, So & Sparks, 2013; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Websites where hotel customers can write their comments comfortably have been gaining popularity and everyone can see these comments. These websites become channels in which many customers make positive and negative evaluations about tourism products and are easily accessible (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Comments posted on these sites are created and scored by customers who experience the service directly (Flanagin & Metzger, 2013). Online reviews are becoming the most important sources of information for customers to make hotel reservations (Ye et al., 2011) Most of the customers do not prefer to make a reservation before searching through their website (Kim et al., 2011). Potential customers rely on online assessments and take purchasing decisions based on these comments (Flanagin & Metzger, 2013). However, some of the negative comments remain on the website for a long time and some of them do not reflect the truth. Such comments may damage the reputation of hotels, may negatively affect room sales performance and online bookings. (Ye, Law & Gu, 2009).

When the critical impact of e-WOM on the hospitality industry (Cantallops and Salvi, 2014) is examined, it is mandatory for hotel management to review online reviews of the hotel (Leung, Law, vanHoof and Buhalis, 2013). Hotel managers have become aware of the need to establish social media communication with customers (Odir Connor, 2010). Many hotel enterprises, taking into account the economic effects of the online comments on the internet and eWOM elements, have developed intervention methods (Levy, Duan and Boo., 2013, Luca 2011; Wei, Miao and Huang, 2013). Generally, this intervention is in the form of 'to offer promotional products' to the negative commentators. Researchers emphasized that executive interventions should not be seen as an individual intervention, and that the site would have a more social impact as it can be seen by all visitors. It was also stated that management interventions could determine the company's online corporate reputation (Luca and Zervas 2016). For example, a positive response to online comments can help to reduce the negative impact (Proserpio and Zervas 2017). Chan and Guillet (2011, p. 362) emphasized that hotel enterprises should follow and respond to customer generated comments. They stated that not responding to these comments could cause the hotel to lose customers. Leung et al. (2013) examined how managers respond to customer comments, how they respond to negative comments, and the effectiveness of these responses. While there are some studies on negative online assessments and hotel managers' interventions (Levy, et al., 2013; Park & Allen, 2013), few have explained the managers' actions against positive and negative comments (Park & Allen, 2013).

Negative comments made by customers can reduce future interest in hotels (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). Therefore, it is very important that hotel managers respond to customer complaints (Mattila and Mount, 2003). By addressing service-related problems, the elimination of factors causing failure can increase the likelihood that customers will have a positive comment on the hotel (Barsky and Frame, 2009). Nevertheless, previous studies have indicated that the simultaneous communication between hotel management and customers affects customers' purchasing decisions positively (eg Levy et al., 2013; Ye et al., 2010; Park and Allen, 2013).

In order to manage customer comments, hotel review sites such as Tripadvisor.com allow hotel managers to create administrator accounts. The managers can review and respond to these

comments by these accounts (Kim et al., 2011). Customers' comments and hotel managers' responses to these comments make two-way communication possible (Gu and Ye, 2014). Customer complaints are unavoidable, as it is difficult to achieve standards of service quality (Levy et al., 2013). Online comments are rapidly transforming to a situation that determines travel trends (Litvin et al., 2008). Solving this empirical problem may contribute to reputation management strategies in markets that are more dependent on EWOM, especially in the hotel sector.

In this study; it is aimed to determine how the hotel managers think about e-WOM comments created by the users, whether the managers comment on other hotels, how they manage the user reviews, the reliability of the evaluation sites, whether the comments are reliable, the impact of these comments on the hotel's image and reputation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of eWOM

Word of mouth (WOM) is a verbal-communication, which includes personal communication with a source of information about a product or service (Sharif, Ahmad & Ahmad, 2016: 151). Consumers use multiple sources for different purposes and different forms of WOM (word of mouth marketing) at various times. eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth marketing) emerges in modern tourist behaviours. The traditional WOM turn into a new communication form on the internet, known as eWOM.

eWOM communication can occur in different forms. Customers can share ideas, comments and critiques on discussion forums, weblogs, criticism web sites, retail websites, newsgroups and social networking sites. eWOM provides both real-time information and archive information. It also emphasizes the increasing importance and value of electronic proximity, despite geographical and social distances. eWOM reflects adaptation of technology and adaptation to technological changes as a combination of written word, spoken word (Skype), image, voting, emotional expression or all of them (Harris & Prideaux, 2017: 375-376; Cheung & Lee, 2012: 219, Sharif & Ahmad, 2016: 151).

eWOM is defined as “offering positive or negative comments of potential, existing and former customers about a product or business to people and institutions via the internet, in an accessible way (Hennig et al., 2004: 39). Adapted from the definition of Westbrook (1987); Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2006) describes the eWOM as “informal communication directed at customers about the features or usage of specific products, services and their sellers through the internet-based technology” (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2006:9).

It is possible to say that eWOM communication on the online comment platforms is a new and important e-marketing phenomenon (Cheung & Lee, 2012: 224). eWOM is an academically and administratively new concept. Generally, in academic studies, the effect of eWOM communication and the process of eWOM's influence on consumer purchasing decisions are examined (Cheung & Lee, 2012: 218).

eWOM is one of the most important factors which influence purchasing decisions of consumers (Chin, Wang, Hsu and Huang, 2013: 658). In their studies, Cheung and Lee (2012) found that factors such as “sense of belonging to the community, reputation, willingness to help” to be the factors that direct customers to share their experiences on the online platforms. For this reason, they suggest online commenting platform managers to give their consumers authorization to create personal profiles on platforms in order to increase their sense of belonging to the community. For example, like other users on Facebook, they should be able to add and communicate with other users as friends (Cheung & Lee, 2012: 224).

2.2. Tourism and eWOM

Developments in the Internet technology have also affected the tourism industry and have caused radical changes in the hotel consumers' purchasing behaviour. Opportunity of making reservations and hotel preferences through the internet led the tourism industry to give more attention to online marketing methods. The services provided by the tourism sector are additional products (such as food and fitness facilities) and core products (such as accommodation services) which enhance the customer experience. Hotel operators offer experience products in such a way that customers can examine the qualities of the products before purchasing. Commentary about the hotel affects many customers' hotel preferences. In this point, electronic word-of-mouth marketing methods are emerging as a necessary element for the tourism sector.

The desire to help the other people, affects customers' eWOM intentions. Customers can help other people make purchasing decisions. For example, by sharing their experience with a substandard restaurant, they can prevent other people from experiencing negative experiences (Cheung & Lee, 2012: 222).

It is possible to say that eWOM is very important for consumers and tourism enterprises in the tourism sector, because of the features of tourism products such as impossibility of experiencing product before purchasing and being abstract. According to the literature, comments on evaluation sites related to tourism play an important role in purchasing preferences of others (Kutlu & Ayyildiz, 2017). It can be mentioned that, managing online comments is very important for tourism industry and eWOM experience can change the perspective of hotel managers. Thus,

Question 1: Do hotel managers' eWOM experiences (reading and writing online comments about the products or services) affect their eWOM management practises in their hotels?

2.3. eWOM Credibility

The concept of "credibility" is defined as "the quality of being convincing or believable". (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/credibility>). Also, Fogg 1999 describes credibility as trustworthiness (Tseng & Fogg, 1999: 39). "Credibility" is used in relation to products, brands, people, and recently it is also used for eWOM comments. Adopting from literature, it is possible to define "eWOM credibility" as "the quality of being convincing and believable of online comments".

Cheung et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of eWOM credibility because of the presence of more participants and receiving online comments of users from users that they don't recognize. They state that credibility refers to only online interpretation, not the person or organization, and that while some information on a web site is reliable, other pieces of information on the same web site may not be reliable. They also argue that when a user finds the online comments reliable, they can learn from it and use it, but when people are in doubt about credibility, they argue that the effect of reviews will be reduced. (Cheung et al., 2007: 70). Thus,

Q2: Do eWOM experiences of the hotel managers affect their eWOM credibility perception?

Q3: Do eWOM credibility perceptions of the hotel managers affect their eWOM managing practises (reading and writing responses to online comments)?

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Numerous studies have been carried out in the tourism industry related to electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM). Rong, Vu, Law, and Li (2012) evaluated data from external tourism data and reviews on their web sites by using data mining methods and developed proposals for the selection of target customers for hotel management. Also in the context of electronic word-of-mouth marketing, hotel customers' expectations from travel types (Liu, Law, Rong, Li and Hall, 2013), comparison of online comments with hotel star classification (Martin-Fuentes, 2016), analysis of social media researches (Leung, Sun and Bai, 2017), impact of online

hotel reviews on booking intention (Tsao, Hsieh, Shih and Lin, 2015; Casalo, Flavian, Guinaliu and Ekinici, 2015; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015).

Also, Tan and Chang (2016) examined the relationship between credibility of an article about a destination on a travel blog and intention to adopt the expressions on the blog, the intention to suggest, the intention to visit there, and place familiarity. According to the results of the study, it is stated that blog readers should have a previous experience of the destination in order to recommend the article to others. It was emphasized that credibility perception of blog articles is related to the intention to visit the destination and the commitment to destination.

Ozgen and Kozak (2015) examined the social media practices of managers in Istanbul city hotels and found that comments on the internet were used by the five-star hotel managers as a quality and performance tool, while managers of those with municipal certifications prefer offline communication with commentators. Ozgen and Kozak stated in their studies that small hotels are more easily affected by the comments in the evaluation sites.

Searching the literature, it was obvious that most studies about perceived credibility were about the consumers. But this study examines the eWOM credibility, experience and management from the perspective of hotel enterprises. This study is expected to fill this gap in the literature. The study also aims to provide both theoretical and practical benefits with determining of hotel managers' thoughts and management practises about online comments. Beside these studies, Table 1 shows the previous studies about EWOM credibility.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1. Research Design and Sampling

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of eWOM experience and credibility perceptions of the managers of Usak city hotels on writing responses to the comments and on managing them. In order to determine the managers' thoughts and practices about eWOM, essential datas were obtained via making face-to-face interviews with hotel managers. Online comments were subjected to content analysis using qualitative analysing method. At the same time, explanations of the concepts related to eWOM were given in the study, and then investigations conducted in this area were examined. The findings of the content analysis and the interviews were discussed and suggestions have been developed for researchers and practitioners.

The study was conducted with the managers of the hotels in Usak and to determine the hotel managers' thoughts and applications about eWOM. The study was conducted with the managers of the hotels in Usak and to determine the hotel managers' thoughts and applications about eWOM. For this purpose, qualitative research methods have been used. Using face-to-face interview method, interviews with hotel managers were obtained. Usak is a small city and there are 8 city hotels in Usak. Because the previous studies revealed that small hotels were more affected by eWOM comments (Ozgen and Kozak 2015), this study aimed to evaluate the city hotel managers' eWOM credibility in Usak.

The glass canopy on the edge of the Earth's second canyon, located in Usak, has been visited by over 1 million tourists since 2015. This city, where many local products are offered, is also very rich in terms of eco-tourism opportunities. The recent development of tourism has necessitated the examination of the marketing activities of hotel enterprises in Usak on social media. In this respect, the managers of hotel enterprises were chosen as the universe. There are eight hotel enterprises in Usak and they are 2, 3 and 4 star-rated. Data were obtained by face-to-face interview technique with the managers of these hotels. One of the hotel managers rejected the interview.

Interviews were conducted with the aim of examining the opinions of hotel managers on eWOM. The study used a holistic one-state pattern model. Managers of eight hotels with tourism establishment certificate in Usak province constitute the universe of the research. Seven of the

hotel establishments that approved to participate in the study between April-May 2018 were selected as the sample. The hotel managers participated voluntarily to work. It has been determined that hotel managers are between the ages of 25-45 with 1-20 years experience in the sector. Four of the hotel managers received a tourism education at the undergraduate level and three of them did not receive any tourism education.

About semi-structured questions, opinions of three tourism marketing experts working in different universities were taken. In the direction of the suggestions on the scope and clarity of the questions and the result of a pilot implementation, seven themes were determined. Questions were adopted from the studies of Cheung et al. (2009), Wu (2014), Park et al. (2011), Duong (2016) and are based on personal eWOM experience, business eWOM management, eWOM credibility, eWOM response tendency, and eWOM perceived importance.

In order to examine the H1, the following questions were asked:

- "In which social platform or platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Blogs do you have an account / membership? How often do you share? "
- "What are your thoughts about "eWOM (Electronic Word Of Mouth)?"
- "When buying a product / service, do you search for comments on the product / service and do you comment on the product / service once you have purchased it? What are your thoughts about this topic?"

In order to examine the H2, the following questions were asked:

- "What are your thoughts about the credibility of evaluation sites or applications such as Tripadvisor, Forsquare, Trivago, and Otelpuan.com?"
- "What are your thoughts about the credibility of the comments made in these sites / applications? How does it affect your tendency to write answers that you think are realistic, accurate, and reliable? "

In order to examine the H3, the following questions were asked:

- How do you manage online comments about your hotel? (Is there someone in charge of reading and responding to comments, how do you follow the comments?)
- "How do you think responding to comments about your hotel or the hotel where you work affect the image and reputation of the hotel?"

4.2. Data Analysis

A pilot study was conducted with three of the hotel managers. Some unclear expressions were removed and more clear words were added. The interview form was finalized with demographic questions and with seven open-ended questions. The questions are written in native language of the hotel-managers. The semi-structured interview technique was used to collect research data. The negotiations took fifteen minutes at the shortest and thirty five minutes at the longest. The data collection process was conducted by recording the hotel managers' speeches with the voice recorder.

The interviews recorded on the voice recorder were listened and converted into written form to decode the data. Attention has been paid to transfer of the interviews in writing. In this study, which the descriptive analysis process is adopted, the thematic framework is established in the direction of the data obtained. The codes that emerged as the result of the interviews were listed under the appropriate themes. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the data, three of the hotel managers were consulted again and their confirmations and opinions were received as to whether the codes were expressed under the correct themes. In addition, codes were added to one side of the interview dossiers and the qualitative field continued with the help of a specialist researcher until they met at a common point.

5. RESULTS

Table 2 provides information from the hotel managers' responses examined in the study. The obtained themes, codes and opinions of the hotel managers from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted by the hotel managers shows that; '1. Social platforms, 2. Opinions on Electronic Word Of Mouth (eWOM), 3. Product research and comments, 4. Managing online comments, 5. Web site credibility, 6. Review Credibility, 7. Responding to reviews, 8. Hotel image and reputation, 9. Image booster activities' themes are presented in Table 2 below.

5.1. Social Platforms

The opinions of hotel managers about social platforms revealed Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Facebook and Blogs codes. The most preferred social platform for hotel managers is Facebook, followed by Instagram and then Twitter. (P1): "I have three accounts and I am actively using twitter, I also share something on Facebook every day" (P2): "I have Facebook, Instagram accounts but I don't update too much".(P7): "I'm sharing on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram on social platforms at 3-4 hours periodically. I can say that I don't use Youtube and use Blogs very little".

5.2. Opinions on Electronic Word Of Mouth (eWOM)

Hotel managers' opinions on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) revealed "promotion, feedback and credibility" codes. It has been found that all participants consider the topic of WOM in the electronic environment. Hotel managers stated that eWOM is an effective method of receiving feedback from guests. The participant 4 emphasizes the importance of feedback with these sentences; (P4): "We are very well known in the social media and people writes the names of the staff. Apart from the services and cleanliness, friendliness attracts our guests. I think that we are positive on that issue in social accounts, on social media".One of the participants explains that; (P2): "We follow the comments, we take into account them". Similarly, participant 6 supported this view with the expressions; (P6): "So I know how important it is, especially Trivago. We have our own review web site as a group and we get more comments from it."

eWOM can also be used for promotional purposes. One of the participants explains the importance of eWOM for promoting hotel with the expressions; (P6): "Of course, every human being cares about the ideas of others, we have to introduce ourselves in the best way". Participant 7 highlighted the importance of eWOM for publicity by expressing that "activities can be effectively used for publicity such as posters and advertisements in the social media."

It is possible to say that the hotel managers have some hesitation about the credibility of eWOM. Two of the participants were concerned about the credibility of eWOM. One of the participants (P1) emphasizes that the comments made on the social media are not realistic and are not true with the phrases; "I only follow the comments about the hotel, but I do not share on social media and I do not find it right".Similarly participant 5 emphasizes that customers can make misleading comments on issues that do not reflect reality in some cases reverse to their interest with these words; "I do not believe that comments are always true. If the customer finds something dissatisfying here, for example if we request for payment or if we have a demand, the customer reflects this differently and his/her comments can be not realistic".

5.3. Product Research and Comments

Opinions of the hotel managers regarding "product research and comment" theme revealed the codes: product research, reading comment, writing comment and do not write comment. It is observed that when the hotel managers buy touristic products on the internet, they intensively prefer the product research. For example; (P I) states: "When I decide to buy a product, I search for product information at first. When I go to the hotel and if we cannot find the same things that were initially offered to us, I tell it to the hotel management and also share on the social media".

(P4): "Yes, when buying a product or service I'm paying attention to the comments. I'm definitely trying to answer about positive or negative comments, because I'm doing the same comments where I go".(P6): "I'm obviously looking for comments for even the smallest thing".

5.4. Managing Online Comments

Hotel managers' opinions on managing online comments revealed the codes of "management by the front office, responding to negative comments, reaching by phone, writing answers from social media, reception - accounting, sales marketing". It is emphasized that most of the hotel managers took attention to negative comments. (P1): "I usually follow them myself, I am just looking to thank them for the positive comments, and if there are people who have negative comments, I will contact them again and apologize". (P2): "We are notified about them on the internet. We can instantly respond to messages from there". (P4): "I am definitely trying to make a positive return to all positive and negative comments. Or if it's negative, I'm trying to break that perception". It is often stated by the participants that the comments are controlled by the front office. Some hotel executives reported that when they receive a negative comment on the internet, they call the hotel guest on the phone and that they try to solve the problem in this way.

Hotel managers also told that positive and negative comments were answered via social media so that they were effective on all guests. (P4): "I answer both on social accounts and on the phone. I want to make an individual contact every time". Some participants indicated that the front office, the accounting and sales marketing departments were evaluating comments.

5.5. Web Site Credibility

Four of the hotel managers expressed that they found Trivago, four of them Otelpuan.com, four of them Otelpuan.com credible. It can be stated that the hotel managers didn't find all of the evaluation websites credible. (P3): "I think Trivago is credible". (P4): "TrivagoOtelpuan.com and Tripadvisor are credible".(P6): "I trust in the comments on Tripadvisor, on Trivago but I do not find the comments on Foursquare reliable".

5.6. Review Credibility

The views of hotel managers regarding the credibility of the comments revealed; "totally credible, not credible, behaving after searching" codes. Most of the hotel managers emphasised that they didn't totally trust the comments, they said that they researched and acted accordingly (6): "I saw someone who did not stay here commenting negatively on the web sites like that. So I usually search the reviewer".

It is stated that rival companies can make negative comments easily. (P1): "Sometimes, maybe because of the lack of these sites, for Usak province, a staff of another hotel can make an unreal comment as a customer. Also, he or she can make positive comments for his/her hotel as a guest with different name. So, I think it would be right to investigate the correctness of the comments".

5.7. Responding to Reviews

The opinions of the hotel managers on the theme of "responding to reviews" revealed "in the situation that believing in the truth of the review" and "in the situation that not believing in the truth of the review". Hotel managers explained that they usually searched the reality of comments about the hotel and, if they believed in the correctness of the comments, responded accordingly. (P1): "If it really happened in my hotel, I give the necessary response to the person; I thank or write a criticism for that comment". (P6): "If it is real, I answer; I do not answer if it is not real. Clearly, I do not answer most of them. If I am very uncomfortable with the comment, I just give a short and clear answer like 'Thank you for your interest, your warning has been taken into account'. It is obvious that they do not respond to comments which they do not believe in their reality. (P3): "I am writing a reply to the question that I take seriously, I do not answer all the questions if I do not take seriously, in fact I do not answer all of them, but I check the hotel records if a name is passed. If there is no record about the person, I don't reply".

5.8. Hotel Image and Reputation

Opinions of hotel managers regarding hotel image and reputation revealed; "reviews can not influence the image and reputation" and "reviews can influence the image and reputation" codes. Hotel managers generally emphasizes that comments made about hotels are important to hotel image and reputation and that they need to be managed. (P2): "If there are comments made to make the hotel worse, we reach the website managers and inform them that the comment is not realistic and request to remove them". (P3): "I think that comments have a positive effect. (P4): "I think comments are very important and effective". (P7): "If comments are not answered, the seriousness of the business is questioned".

5.9. Image Booster Activities

Opinions of the hotel managers regarding the theme of "image-booster activities" revealed; "to treat something (food, drink, etc.), responding to comments on social media, competitors, speaking face to face, deleting or making deleted negative reviews, evaluation of feedback" codes. It was found that hotel managers responded mostly via social media in order to increase their image. (P4): "The most effective platform for us is Facebook and Instagram". (P5): "As technology is rapidly advancing, we are constantly hearing about it because it focuses on it, but I am a bit behind in the way of the internet.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In summary, while previous studies examined perceived eWOM credibility of customers, this study provides a new perspective about eWOM from the sides of hotel managers. The interviews revealed that although most of the managers in the study give attention to eWOM, few of them are willing to respond to online comments.

When the opinions of the hotel managers about the social platforms are examined, it is stated that Facebook is the most preferred social platform, followed by Instagram and then Twitter. Hotel managers explained that when they wanted to buy tourist products over the internet, they carried out product research on these platforms. When hotel managers' views on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) are examined, managers have come to the conclusion that eWOM has generally used for getting feedback. According to the answers, the managers have some drawbacks about the credibility of eWOM.

When they saw negative comments about their hotel, they first point out that they are investigating the correctness of the account, if the writer is one of their hotel guests; they generally made phone calls and tried to solve the problem. They expressed that they themselves or the front office staff have followed these comments and responded to comments which they found to be reliable. Hotel managers find some of the hotel reviews websites, especially Tripadvisor, Otelpuan.com and Trivago, to be reliable. Nevertheless, they expressed that the comments on these evaluation sites should be investigated sufficiently. They think that there may be comments made by the other hotels' staff to discredit them and by unreal accounts. These results consist with literature (Wu, 2014), that information source credibility influences consumers' perceived risk negatively, and the higher the trustworthiness, expertness and objectivity of eWOM, the lower degree of perceived risk. This study reveals that; source credibility, trustworthiness and expertness of eWOM affect hotel managers as consumers.

One of the managers says that once when he examined an account that made a negative comment, he saw that the account belonged to another hotel's staff. Managers mentioned that they were more likely to respond to comments which they believed to be real. O'Reilly and Marks (2011) emphasise the importance of understanding customers' online interactions. In this context, they mention that enterprises need to specialize in managing and developing online communities in order to be ready for the future's young and technically conscious internet users (O'Reily & Marks, 2011: 349-350).

According to the literature (Chen, Law & Yan: 2016), in recent years more hotels have adopted in responding to eWOM. They examined how hotel managers manage the eWOM reviews from the perspective of luxury hotels in HonKong. They found that three response approaches were used by hotels that some hotel publicly respond to positive and negative eWOM, some of them make a private contact to reviewer and only one of them take no action to eWOM reviews. In this study, although the hotel managers emphasize that eWOM is important for the image and reputation of the hotel, it is revealed that most of the hotel managers in the survey don't respond the negative comments and prefer to communicate offline. Because the study's carried with four-star-hotel at most, the findings partly support the expressions of Ozgen and Kozak (2015) that especially the five-star hotel managers take attention to internet comments and use them as a tool for the quality and performance. It is possible to say that, luxury hotel managers and five-star-hotel managers are more willing to answer the reviews than others. According to this study's results, unanswered negative reviews of some hotels in evaluation web sites are the result of the hotel managers' being not willing to write back because they don't totally trust in eWOM. Some hotel managers stated that they didn't need to answer negative comments.

Hotel managers can use eWOM as a tool to increase sales of the hotel and to manage the image and reputation applications, taking into consideration that the hotel is constantly audited by all its customers and that they are shared in social media, hotel evaluation sites. It may be advisable for hotel managers to ensure that employees are aware of the importance of eWOM and provide information for them from seminars or publications about how to manage it.

Hotel companies need to have a qualified staff to follow evaluation web sites, or to get services from a company that is specialized in this subject. Nowadays, social media advertisements are being followed instead of TV advertisements. Consumers are buying goods or services from the internet and transmitting their opinions and criticisms from these media. In this respect, a professional "social media or reputation management team should be established and all comments should be followed carefully.

It is also suggested that eWOM evaluation sites should establish a system in which ensures the members to get information about the other members and the non-real accounts can be understood, as well as in the literature, in order to ensure both eWOM and web site credibility.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are some limitations about the study although it reveals important findings about eWOM credibility of hotel managers from a different perspective. First of all, in small cities, hotel managers have to help the staff besides their management duties. It was difficult to set up an interview with the managers. Secondly, this study is about to examining the management of eWOM in hotels. Because there weren't fully responsible employments to manage eWOM, the study had to be limited with the managers. Lastly, although most of the managers were willing to contribute to the study, some of them have a little knowledge about eWOM concept although they know it practically. This case resulted in explaining eWOM to the managers during the interviews.

8. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The study was carried out in small city hotel enterprises. A new study can also be conducted to determine managers' considerations about eWOM in different concept hotels or in different service enterprises. The factors which affect the managers' credibility can be largely examined by the future studies. The study can be further expanded to explore hotel department managers' and employees' views on this issue.

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Table 1: Previous Studies About eWOM Credibility

Authors	Title of the Study	Purpose of the Study	Results of the Study
Cheung, Luo, Sia, Chen, 2009	Credibility Of Electronic Word-of-Mouth: Informational And Normative Determinants Of On-line Consumer Recommendations	To investigate the determinants of perceived reliability based on information and standards	The reliability of the source, the validation of the prior opinion of the recipient, and the interpretations of the receiver, have significantly affected the perceived eWOM reliability.
Purcarea,Gheorghe, Petrescu, 2013	Credibility Elements of eWOM Messages in the Context of Health Care Services . A Romanian Perspective	To investigate the determinants of perceived credibility of eWOM messages in health care services for Romanian consumers	The strongest and most important influence on consumer decision is the power of argument.
Cheng, Zhou, 2010	Empirical Study on Credibility of Electronic Word of Mouth	The study aims to research eWOM Credibility .	Web site reliability, the sender's expertise, and the buyer's trust tendency have a positive effect on eWOM credibility and this situation has a positive effect on consumer purchasing decision.
López, Sicilia, 2014	eWOM as Source of Influence: The Impact of Participation in eWOM and Perceived Source Trustworthiness on Decision Making	Which eWOM participation can be considered as a determinant of the eWOM effect in individual decision making and explores the role of source credibility as a mediator.	The perceived resource reliability has been found to be fully mediated in the relationship between the eWOM effect and the behavioral search behavior in decision making.
Park, Wang, Yao, Kang, 2011	Factors Influencing eWOM Effects : Using Experience , Credibility , and Susceptibility	It is aimed at finding the factors that affect eWOM in China.	Customers who are susceptible to influence were found more likely to be affected by eWOM and also found that perceived eWOM credibility influences the eWOM effect sufficiently.
Reichelt, Sievert, Jacob, 2014	How credibility affects eWOM reading : The influences of expertise , trustworthiness , and similarity on utilitarian and social functions	The study presents the practical and theoretical validity of eWOM's utility and social benefit, eWOM reading intention, and its impact on eWOM reading.	According to the results, customers' attitudes towards eWOM reading have a strong impact on their eWOM reading intentions.
Chen, Law, Yan, 2016	Managing Negative Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) from The Perspective of Luxury Hotel Managers	In this study, hotels are examined how they manage customer reviews written in different eWOM channels.	According to the results, hotels are adapting to three approaches to positive and negative eWOM; public response, private contact, no response.
Wu, Mei-hsin 2014	Relationships Among Source Credibility of Electronic Word of Mouth , Perceived Risk , and Consumer Behavior on Consumer Generated Media	The study examines the relationships of perceived risk, eWOM credibility of customers and their behaviour intentions.	Information source credibility influences consumers' perceived risk negatively, and the higher the trustworthiness, expertness and objectivity of eWOM, the lower degree of perceived risk.
Cheung, Lee, 2012	What Drives Consumers To Spread Electronic Word Of Mouth In Online Consumer-Opinion Platforms	Factors that direct customers to comment on online review platforms	According to the results, belonging to the community, reputation and helping others have been found to be effective in sharing experiences on customers' online review platforms.

Sharif, Ahmad , Ahmad, 2016	Electronic Word Of Mouth: Investigating The Influence Of Electronic Message Source Credibility, Message Appeal And Brand Equity On Consumer Purchase Intention	The eWOM message buyer for the brand, the direct effects of source reliability, message attractiveness and equality of the brand; The indirect effects of eWOM were investigated.	message source reliability, message attractiveness and brand value have significant positive effects on customers' buying intentions and eWOM also has a significant positive indirect effect.
O'Reilly, Marx, 2011	How Young, Technical Consumers Assess Online Wom Credibility	To shed light on the motivation of customers to make online criticism; and to investigate how online customers evaluate online reliability.	In addition to relying on online customer reviews where participants exhibit more bricks to clicks than clicks to bricks, it is evident that participants agree to increase their personal values, avoid risk, and eliminate negative prejudice online eWOM.
Hansen, Lee, Lee, 2014	Consumer-Generated Ads on Youtube: Impacts of Source Credibility and Need for Cognition on Attitudes, Interactive Behaviors, and EWOM	The effect of consumer advertising on consumer attitudes and interaction with youtube features and its behavior on eWOM is examined.	Consumer advertisements, turned out to be the reliable form of consumer-generated content.
Zoghi, Bilgen, 2017	A Research On The Impact Of EWOM Source Credibility And Personal Innovativeness	To explore the relationship between eWOM credibility, expertise, reliability, objectivity and homogeneity, and the risk perceived by the customer in the procurement process.	eWOM and personal innovation seem to reduce the perceived risk of the client.
Chih, Wang, Hsu, Huang, 2013	Investigating Electronic Word-of-Mouth Effects on Online Discussion Forums: The Role of Perceived Positive Electronic Word-of-Mouth Review Credibility	Proposes a model to explain the impact on online discussion forums.	While the perceived positive eWOM comment credibility appears to have a direct impact on the buying intent, it appears to have an indirect effect on the intention to buy through product and web site attitudes.
Luo, Luo, Schatzberg, Sia, 2013	Impact Of Informational Factors On Online Recommendation Credibility: The Moderating Role Of Source Credibility	To find the effect on the causal outcomes between the credibility of the knowledge resource, the informative factors and the recommendation credibility.	It appears that resource credibility is mediated on the readers' credibility perceptions, with the effect of two informative factors on a separate basis.

Table 2. Opinions of hotel managers about eWOM (n = 7)

Themes	Codes	f
1.Social Platform	1.1.Twitter	4
	1.2.Instagram	5
	1.3.Youtube	
	1.4.Facebook	6
	1.5.Blogs	1
2.eWOM	2.1.Promotion	3
	2.2.Feedback	4
	2.3.Credibility	2
3.Product Research and Comments	3.1.Product Research	5
	3.2.Reading Comments	2
	3.3.Writing Comments	4
4. Managing Online Comments	3.4.Do not Write Comment	3
	4.1.Management by Front Office	6
	4.2.Responding to Negative Comments	7
	4.3.Telephoning to Consumer	4
	4.4.Responding via Social Media	3
	4.5.Management by Account Office	2
	4.6.Management by Sales and Marketing Office	1

Themes	Codes	f
5.Web Site Credibility	5.1.Trip Advisor is Credible	4
	5.2. Trip Advisor is not Credible	2
	5.3.Foursquare is Credible	2
	5.4.Trivago is Credible	4
	5.5.Trivago is not Credible	1
	5.6.Otelpuan is Credible	4
	5.7.Otelpuan is not Credible	1
6.Review Credibility	6.1. Totally Credible	1
	6.2.Not Credible	1
	6.3.Behaving After Searching	5
7.Responding to Reviews	7.1.In the Situation that Believing in the Truth of the Review	5
	7.2. In the Situation that Not Believing in the Truth of the Review	2
8.Hotel Image and Reputation	8.1.Reviews cannot Influence the Image and Reputation	2
	8.2. Reviews can Influence the Image and Reputation	4
9.Image Booster Activities	9.1.To treat something (Food, drink, etc.)	1
	9.2.Responding to Comments on Social Media	2
	9.3.Competitors	1
	9.4.Speaking Face to Face	1
	9.5.Deleting or making deleted Negative Reviews	1
	9.6.Evaluation of Feedbacks	1