Horizontal Loyalty and New Trends in Information Search

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Abstract

Tourists can visit different destinations and they can be loyal to multiple destinations at the same time (horizontal loyalty). Tourists seek information to choose a destination using different information sources. In recent years, these sources have evolved. Advances in the Internet and social media are changing the way that information about leisure travel and its experiences are disseminated. The main goal of this study is to explain the relationship between information sources and loyalty, paying attention to horizontal loyalty. These results are useful for making decisions in tourism policy on loyalty programs for tourist destinations.

Keywords: Horizontal Loyalty, Information Sources, Social Networks, Destinations

1   Problem Definition

Web 2.0 has transformed tourism methods of communication, interaction with social media, and overall tourist behavior concerning information sources. Increasingly DMOs are engaging with consumers through digital media, communicating with them in a long-term relationship. Numerous studies have shown that social media influence the intentions of travelers to visit a destination. However, the literature has given little attention to the relationship between information-seeking behavior and the development of destination loyalty. In that sense, the academic literature has shown that tourists are not only sharing more digital information, but they are also sharing their time within several specific social media, and their holiday time within a few destinations, becoming more loyal to multiple destinations at the same time (horizontal loyalty). However, this topic has not been stressed in the tourism context. Thus, the aim of this study is twofold: 1) to analyze the use of information sources used by loyal tourists; and 2) to explore the relationship between tourists' information-seeking behavior and subsequent loyalty. Thus, a segmentation of tourists according to the way in which they express their loyalty to tourist destinations is performed. Two groups were identified: tourists "loyal to a single destination (DL)" (Tourists are showing repeated visits to a single destination not having visited any other destination of a same set competitor) and tourists "horizontal loyal (HL)" (Share

your visits between various destinations in the same set competitor, showing repeated visits to multiple destinations at the same time).To achieve those goals, a wide survey with 6,964 questionnaires was developed, considering tourists from 17 European countries.

2 Literature Review

Previous studies have tried to understand how visitors use the Internet to gather information and the way in which the best tourism providers can leverage these channels (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Ho et al, 2012; Papathanassis and Knolle, 2011; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Much research has focused on analyzing the impact of the Internet on corporate brands (Ind and Riondino, 2001). However, it has omitted the study of the influence of Internet use, particularly the media and social networks, in the development of loyalty.

Earlier literature on loyalty has shown that customers can be loyal to a multiple brands, (Oliver, 1999; Olson and Jacoby, 1974; Brown, 1953; Sharp and Sharp, 1997; Yim and Kannan, 1999; Cunningham, 1956; and Dowling and Uncles, 1997). This fact has not been extensively studied in tourism, where tourists for example, can be loyal to different destinations at the same time, what has been called horizontal loyalty (McKercher et al., 2012).

Previous literature highlights many factors that lead individuals to revisit a destination. These include demographic characteristics and destination image (Assaker, Vinzi, and O'Connor, 2011; McDowall, 2010). Moreover, according to Oliver (1999), conative loyalty, defined as the intention and commitment to repurchase the brand (Harris and Goode, 2004), is the prior stage to behavioral loyalty. Recently, Sun, Chi, and Xu (2013) present a summary of the literature that has studied destination loyalty: motivations, image and behavior information search. However, the latter has not been paid special attention. Previous studies have not properly analyzed the relationship between using certain information sources and the development destinations loyalty. Far less, previous literature has not tried to understand what is the relationship between information sources and horizontal loyalty.

3 Conceptual Development

The research hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Information sources used by DL visitors are different from those used by HL

Hypothesis 2: Social networks used by DL visitors are different from those used by HL

Hypothesis 3: Information sources that determine DL are the same as those that determine HL.

Hypothesis 4: Social networks that determine DL are the same as those that determine HL.

4 Proposed Methodology

The data set were collected in January 2011 and consists of potential tourists to the Canary Islands, aged 16 years and older, from 17 European countries; Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Europe is the world's largest emitter region, a region which generates more than half of international arrivals, 52.1% in 2013 (UNWTO, 2014). The participants were 6,964

tourists. Stratified random sampling guaranteed proportional representation according to nationality, age, and gender. The work was conducted through online surveys (CAWI), a database of panellists in each country was used.

5 Anticipated Results

This study first explores the relationship between travellers' loyal behaviours and information-seeking behaviours. Table 1 shows the results. The Chi-Square statistical analysis showed that the use of Tour operator's brochures, the official website of the destinations and Friends and families were different in both cases. There were significant differences in terms of how these two groups seek travel information. However, there were not differences in the use of social media between both groups.

Table 1. Information Sources and Social Networks; Differences between HL and DL

	DL%	HL%	Chi-2	Sig
Tour operator's brochures	24.9	31.32	3.86	**0.049**
Tourist leaflets	13.47	15.01	0.35	0.555
Holiday guide books	12.24	15.81	1.9	0.168
News, articles, reports ...	16.73	18.53	0.4	0.527
Internet via the official website	15.92	22.96	5.81	**0.016**
Internet, other sources	26.12	28.8	0.76	0.385
Travel agents	13.88	14.1	0.01	0.942
Friends and families	19.18	24.87	3.55	**0.06**
None of the above	8.57	6.95	0.79	0.374
Tripadvisor	14.69	15.31	0.05	0.824
Facebook	25.71	23.26	0.64	0.425
Myspace	2.86	3.22	0.13	0.717
Linkedin	1.22	2.01	0.66	0.415
Xing	0.82	1.01	0.07	0.788
Flickr	2.04	1.91	0.02	0.892
Youtube	13.47	13.09	0.03	0.863
Panoramio	4.08	2.32	2.39	0.122
Twitter	4.9	4.23	0.16	0.692
Wikipedia	2.86	23.16	0.01	0.911

Table 2 summarizes the results of the estimation of the two proposed models. It was founded that there are variables that determine the HL and the DL and others that only determine either the HL or the DL. In the case of the information sources, they all have a direct influence on the HL. However, only three of them affect the DL (Tour operator's brochures, News, articles, reports ..., Travel agents). Moreover, with regard to social media, a direct and positive relationship between TripAdvisor and HL and a negative relationship between YouTube and HL were founded.

Table 2. Logit Binomial Models

Categoría	Ítem	DL β	DL e	HL β	HL e
Social Networks	Tripadvisor			0.321	0.141
	Youtube			-0.366	0.158
Information Sources	Tour operator's brochures	0.466	0.233	1.165	0.150
	Holiday guide books			0.577	0.197
	News, articles, reports ...	0.780	0.243	0.950	0.181
	The official website			0.925	0.164
	Travel agents	0.653	0.265	0.403	0.202
	Friends and families			1.015	0.152
Cognitive image	Sun, beach and lifestyle	-0.270	0.089	-0.224	0.055
Motivations	Relax			-0.101	0.046
	Knowledge	-0.211	0.077	-0.143	0.048
	Status	0.168	0.079		
	Interact with others			-0.098	0.046
Affective Image	Healthy and sustainable lifestyle			0.102	0.045
Sociodemographic	Income	0.007	0.003	0.012	0.002
	Age	0.120	0.053	0.238	0.033
Behavior	Number of holidays			0.123	0.022
	Likelihood future visit	0.392	0.186	0.122	0.028
General Image	General Image	0.215	0.076	0.198	0.047

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