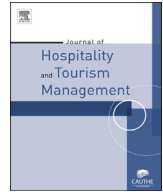




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Market orientation and SNS adoption for marketing purposes in hospitality microenterprises

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ABSTRACT

In a nowadays context where the social network sites (SNS) have a widespread use among users and enterprises, this paper aims to analyze the factors determining the adoption of SNS for marketing purposes by hospitality microenterprises. With this objective, our study develops a model that includes: 1) the two pillars of market orientation for companies (i.e. consumer orientation and competitor orientation); and 2) the factors of the widely used Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT): performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. The results from a sample of 200 hospitality microenterprises in a region of Spain show that the intention to use SNS for marketing purposes (in particular, business communication) is mainly determined by the expectancies of managers or owners about the performance and effort in the use of the technology, and by the social influence generated by users and professionals in the sector. Additionally, in contrast to competitor orientation, customer orientation has a positive influence on performance expectancy and social influence.

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1. Introduction

Technology and digital marketing are changing the way of doing business, moving from traditional to digital focus (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2016). In this context, the emergence of social media such as social networks sites, review websites, photo-sharing websites, microblogs, or video-sharing websites has revolutionized the use of the internet as a communication channel in business, because they represent a great opportunity for interactions between consumers and between providers and users (Herrero, San Martín, & Hernandez, 2015). According to Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2015), social media is growing as an important strategic tool among organizations that enables to build relationships with the online public, a primary characteristic of a consumer-oriented business. The influence of social media, and particularly the effect of social networks sites (SNS), has been especially important in the tourism and hospitality industry (Kwok & Yu, 2013; Law, Buhalis & Cobanoglu, 2014; Leung, Law, van Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) where individuals tend to share experiences with

other people through publishing photos, videos, or opinions on the internet (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

SNS, which have become one of Web 2.0's most used services during the last decade (Fang, 2014), are web applications that allow individuals to publish comments and multimedia content through a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008), thereby making them available to their contact groups (Chen, Tang, Wu, & Jheng, 2014). A paradigmatic example of a social network site is Facebook, the market leader among all social media with more than 1550 million users around the world in 2016 (Statista, 2016). Its increasing penetration among consumers has made social network sites an essential channel for business communication, with an increasing number of enterprises creating their own corporate pages in SNS in order to better communicate their offers to the market and manage relationships with their customers. In addition, SNS give place to a great amount of data and information about consumers (Fernandes, Belo, & Castela, 2016), which requires businesses to be more nimble and reactive (Hofacker & Belanche, 2016) in their marketing management. In a similar way, in the specific field of tourism and hospitality, Palacios-Marques, Merigo, and Soto-Acosta (2015) point out that the introduction of online social networks is a key aspect to give a better response to consumer needs.

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This phenomenon has attracted a great deal of attention from both practitioners and academics in many disciplines (Fu, Ju, & Hsu, 2015), engendering a productive line of research (Van Osch & Coursaris, 2014). Most studies have focused on consumer behavior and, more concretely, on their responses to communication and marketing campaigns based on SNS; however, there are few works about the *drivers* of the adoption of SNS in enterprises (Martins, Gonçalves, Pereira, Oliveira, & Pérez, 2014; Van Osch & Coursaris, 2014). Therefore, this paper intends to analyze the most important variables determining the adoption of SNS as a communication tool by enterprises in the hospitality sector. To better understand this phenomenon, the study focuses particularly on the market orientation of enterprises, one of the key theoretical concepts in marketing literature during the last two decades (Grinstein, 2008a, 2008b; Hult, Hurley, & Knight, 2004; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Verhees & Meulenbergh, 2004).

Previous research has failed to integrate internet and market orientation (Celuch & Murphy, 2010). Specifically, Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2011) point out the scarce amount of literature available on the influence of market orientation on e-marketing use in services. With the internet's ability to facilitate communication and transactions with both internal and external stakeholders, and market orientation's focus on obtaining, sharing, and responding to information associated with customers and competitors, it makes conceptual and managerial sense to explore the "marriage" of these two areas. Additionally, the few studies about the adoption of SNS by firms have focused on bigger enterprises (Martins et al., 2014), but much less research has been done regarding the adoption of this tool by small companies. This may be because small organizations are not usually considered very proactive in adopting e-commerce technologies to support their business activities (Al-Qirim, 2007). In this sense, Polo, Frias, and Rodriguez (2011) point out that, despite the importance of small-sized firms, the knowledge about decision-making processes in microenterprises is very limited, especially in the field of hospitality.

In order to fill this gap in the literature, this paper specifically focuses on the adoption of SNS by microenterprises (defined as enterprises with less than 10 employees and an income below 2 million euros by the European Commission (2003)) in the hospitality sector, with special attention paid to the manager's decision-making process. Given that the organizational structure is minimal in hospitality microenterprises, which have habitually a single manager/owner and a few employees mainly devoted to work related to keeping rooms and reception, we consider that it is the owner or manager who makes the decisions on innovation and marketing (Herrero, Collado, & García de los Salmones, 2013; Lee & Runge, 2001). Additionally, microenterprises have no functional departments to coordinate or disseminate information (Verhees & Meulenbergh, 2004), so this paper only takes into consideration the two dimensions theoretically proposed by Narver and Slater (1990) which are especially applicable to hospitality microenterprises (Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2013): customer orientation and competitor orientation.

Consistent with this focus, the paper uses the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) established by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) as its framework. The reasons for the use of this model are the following. First, it is explicitly aimed at explaining the adoption of technologies by individual decision-makers, as is the case in the use of SNS for communication in microenterprises. Second, it has a global and integrative approach, as it incorporates the main explanatory variables of previous theoretical models about technology acceptance and use. Third, it is highly parsimonious, in contrast to other models, as it only includes four explanatory variables. Fourth, it has proven to be a successful model for studying technology

acceptance and use in a variety of contexts (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012).

With this in mind, our study aims to make two main contributions to the hospitality research: on the one hand, we try to explain the role of market orientation in the use of SNS by microenterprises for marketing purposes and, more concretely, business communication. On the other hand, we provide empirical evidence on how the SNS adoption by managers or owners of microenterprises is influenced by the basic explanatory variables from the UTAUT.

2. Background

2.1. UTAUT and SNS as a communication tool in hospitality microenterprises

UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003) is a global and integrative model developed to explain the adoption of technologies by individual decision-makers. Accordingly, given that the adoption of new technologies in microenterprises is usually an individual decision of the manager (Herrero et al., 2013; Lee & Runge, 2001), we have used this theory as a framework. On the basis of an exhaustive revision of the diverse explanatory variables included on previous theoretical models, the UTAUT identifies the following four key drivers in the adoption of technologies or information systems (Venkatesh et al., 2003). First, *performance expectancy* refers to the degree to which an individual believes that using the technology will help him or her improve the performance of a task or piece of work. Second, *effort expectancy* is the degree of ease associated with the use of the technology. Third, *social influence* is considered the degree to which an individual perceives that important people believe he or she should use the technology. Finally, *facilitating conditions* refer to degree to which an individual believes that an organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the technology.

UTAUT considers two direct determinants of technology acceptance: (1) the intention to use the system, and (2) the facilitating conditions. On the one hand, Venkatesh et al. (2003) establish that the intention to use a technology is the main indicator of its effective use, and define it as a firm purpose to develop a behavior in the future. On the other hand, UTAUT also includes the facilitating conditions perceived by the individual as a direct determinant of technology use, with the logic that this factor reflects environmental limits or incentives for the individual's behavior (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Additionally, three variables are direct antecedents of the intention to use a technology: (1) performance expectancy, (2) effort expectancy, and (3) social influence associated with the use of the system.

UTAUT has been extensively used to analyze the use of technologies by individuals both in organizational settings (Al-Gahtani, Hubona, & Wang, 2007; Eckhardt, Laumer, & Weitzel, 2009) and personal contexts (Abushanab & Pearson, 2007; Wang & Wang, 2010). In the specific field of tourism, this theoretical framework has been used to explain users' acceptance of different technologies (Escobar-Rodríguez & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; San Martín & Herrero, 2012). Overall, the empirical evidence obtained in the above-mentioned studies supports the validity of UTAUT to study the adoption of new technologies in tourism, and confirm the significant effect of performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence on the adoption of new technologies by users.

Accordingly, this study postulates that the use of SNS as a communication tool by hospitality microenterprises is significantly influenced by: (1) the performance expected by managers in the use of SNS, (2) the effort perceived by managers in its use, and (3) the social influence exerted by users and managers on the use of SNS in microenterprises. Therefore, we propose the following

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