

A relativistic value-based approach to interpreting e-rating and e-complaining behaviour in the hospitality sector

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Abstract

This study broadens the understanding around the topics of e-rating and e-complaining by adopting a value-based approach. In the consumer behaviour literature, value is understood as a “relativistic preference experience” (i.e. an evaluation outcome that varies across subjects, objects and contexts). E-ratings and e-complaints can be analysed through this theoretical lens to investigate whether any significant differences exist relating to tourists’ socio-demographic characteristics (variation across subjects: gender and nationality), the characteristics of the hotels rated (across objects: hotel category and size) and the party with which the tourists are travelling and the time of their stay (across contexts). This study measures and interprets these differences in a sample of 727 reviews in which tourists expressed their experience of hotels located in Arzachena-Costa Smeralda (Sardinia, Italy). The findings reveal that significant variations in travellers’ rating behaviour exist only across objects (i.e. hotel category and size) and contexts (i.e. time of the stay). However, when complaining behaviour is considered, significant variations are reported to exist across subjects (i.e. gender and country of origin), objects (hotel category and size) and contexts (i.e. travel party). Contributions to the theory and managerial implications are discussed, and suggestions for further research are made.

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