

How Do Small Hotels Handle E-Complaints in Egypt?

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Abstract

This research aimed to assess the strategies implemented by small-sized hotels to handle e-complaints via website and TripAdvisor as a social media platform and to identify the most common reasons for online customers' complaints. To achieve research objectives, data were collected using a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, an online survey targeted 150 customers who had made e-complaints in the last year. Second, content analysis of 198 collected complaints from the hotels' websites and accounts on TripAdvisor site during the last 12 months. The findings have highlighted that the low quality of food and beverage service was the most common reason for online complaints. The results also revealed that the majority of hotels neither responded to nor monitored complaints via social media, so it was not surprising to find out that the respondents were not satisfied with the aspects of handling e-complain process that adapted by the investigated hotels.

The results pointed out that the surveyed hotels did not provide an explanation of what mistakes have been made and did not describe the action taken to ensure it won't occur again. One of the main finding that the small sized hotels did not make the required effort for investigating and collecting all relevant information surrounding the complaints to make the picture clear and determine the suitable taken action. These results will benefit small hotels management to develop better handle customer e-complaints system with precise procedures as well as, they will distinguish the major aspects that they should change and improve. Future research may consider each hotel category investigations deeply to find more about their complaint management strategies.

Keywords: E-complaints, Hotels, Handling

Introduction

Managing customers' complaints is an important issue for the hospitality enterprises that are keen to improve service quality and achieve customer satisfaction especially for organizations working in highly competitive environment. Currently, Customers are considered very internet savvy, they are using their mobiles and laptops to choose a destination or reserve a hotel room. Word of mouth and reviews of other customers on social media effect on their choices. With limited resources and budgets, social media is a cost-effective tool to reach out customers. Web sites and social media are playing an important role in managing complaints and maintain a high level of experience effectively. The social media has changed not only promotion, advertising formats and customer service, but also the relationship between companies and customers which has become a relationship of dialogue and discussion through comments and suggestions on the premises official pages. Social networking sites also have the ability to listen and its tools allow tapping the words about brands (Harte, *et al.*, 1990; O'connor and Frew, 2002; Tyrrell and Wood, 2004; Litvin *et al.*, 2008; Min *et al.*, 2014).

Unfortunately, many premises still instead of encouraging their clients to express their opinions and submit their complaints and work to solve them, they insist on accusing the customers and consider that spending a lot of time with the client in an attempt to understand his problem and reach a solution is unnecessary and will waste time, effort and money, and it will disrupt the work (Sparks and Browning, 2010; Malthouse *et al.*, 2013; Xia, 2013). Whatever its nature, the company must recognize mistakes and solve them in a satisfactory way for the customer, because that is the best way to maintain the company, the employees and customers together. Companies should not waste their time in justifying of making mistakes for their customers. Rather, they must quickly recognize and work to solve them;