

Customer Engagement with Tourism Brands on Social Media: An Abstract

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Abstract Customer engagement has gained much attention in the recent literature because it has been linked with numerous brand performance indicators including sales growth, customer involvement in product development, customer feedback and referrals (Bijmolt et al. 2010; Bowden 2009; Kumar et al. 2010; Nambisan and Baron 2007; Sawhney et al. 2005; van Doorn et al. 2010). In the tourism industry, customer engagement has been found to boost loyalty, trust and brand evaluations (So et al. 2014). Customer engagement is often facilitated by social media, but neither of these phenomena are well-researched, and there is a need for practical social media recommendations for tourism organisations (Mistilis and Gretzel 2013). Social media-based tourism brands include TripAdvisor, Airbnb and Booking.com and are growing in popularity and influence (Filiari 2015). For example, TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel review company and turned over \$1.246 billion in 2014, up 32% from the previous year and helps shape consumer preferences (Forbes 2015).

This research contributes in two ways. First, we test the customer engagement with tourism brands (CETB) scale proposed by So et al. (2014) for social media-based tourism brands, such as such as TripAdvisor, Airbnb and Booking.com. We develop a more parsimonious alternative to the 25-item CETB scale with a 20-item psychometrically sound scale that better reflects customer engagement in the social

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media-based tourism brands. Second, we test a model that suggests consumer involvement is an antecedent to building customer engagement and that a consumer's behavioural intention of loyalty is one outcome of positive customer engagement. These findings have implications for the social media-based tourism brands that include the need to focus on creating and maintaining customer involvement.

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