



Ph.D. Programme in Economics and  
Business Management. University of Malaga  
Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences.  
Faculty of Commerce and Management.

---

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Customer orientation of family businesses in the hotel sector**

**Doctoral Thesis presented by:**

**Mr. José Luis González Porras**

**Director:**

**Dr. José Luis Ruiz-Alba Robledo**

**Tutor:**


**Dr. María del Mar Muñoz Martos**

March 2021



UNIVERSIDAD  
DE MÁLAGA

AUTOR: José Luis González Porras

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0678-0883>

EDITA: Publicaciones y Divulgación Científica. Universidad de Málaga



Esta obra está bajo una licencia de Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial-SinObraDerivada 4.0 Internacional:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>

Cualquier parte de esta obra se puede reproducir sin autorización pero con el reconocimiento y atribución de los autores.

No se puede hacer uso comercial de la obra y no se puede alterar, transformar o hacer obras derivadas.

Esta Tesis Doctoral está depositada en el Repositorio Institucional de la Universidad de Málaga (RIUMA): [riuma.uma.es](http://riuma.uma.es)





## DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y ORIGINALIDAD DE LA TESIS PRESENTADA PARA OBTENER EL TÍTULO DE DOCTOR

D./Dña JOSÉ LUIS GONZÁLEZ PORRAS

Estudiante del programa de doctorado EN ECONOMÍA Y EMPRESA de la Universidad de Málaga, autor/a de la tesis, presentada para la obtención del título de doctor por la Universidad de Málaga, titulada: CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF FAMILY BUSINESSES IN THE HOTEL SECTOR.

Realizada bajo la tutorización de MARIA DEL MAR MUÑOZ MARTOS y dirección de JOSE LUIS RUIZ-ALBA ROBLEDO (si tuviera varios directores deberá hacer constar el nombre de todos)

DECLARO QUE:

La tesis presentada es una obra original que no infringe los derechos de propiedad intelectual ni los derechos de propiedad industrial u otros, conforme al ordenamiento jurídico vigente (Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1996, de 12 de abril, por el que se aprueba el texto refundido de la Ley de Propiedad Intelectual, regularizando, aclarando y armonizando las disposiciones legales vigentes sobre la materia), modificado por la Ley 2/2019, de 1 de marzo.

Igualmente asumo, ante a la Universidad de Málaga y ante cualquier otra instancia, la responsabilidad que pudiera derivarse en caso de plagio de contenidos en la tesis presentada, conforme al ordenamiento jurídico vigente.

En Málaga, a 19 de MARZO de 2021

Fdo.: JOSÉ LUIS GONZÁLEZ PORRAS



**INFORME DEL DIRECTOR PARA LA AUTORIZACIÓN DE LA DEFENSA DE LA  
TESIS DOCTORAL**

Dr. José Luis Ruiz-Alba Robledo, director de la Tesis Doctoral de D. José Luis González Porras, informa favorablemente la solicitud de autorización de defensa de la tesis con título “*Customer orientation of family businesses in the hotel sector*”, presentada por dicho doctorando.

La citada tesis se ha realizado en la modalidad de compendio de publicaciones, y opta por la mención internacional. Mediante la presente, declaro que reúne todos los requisitos que exige el Programa de Doctorado en Economía y Empresa de la Universidad de Málaga.

Málaga, a 19 de Marzo de 2021



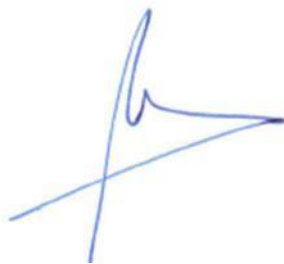
José Luis Ruiz-Alba Robledo

## **INFORME DE LA TUTORA PARA LA AUTORIZACIÓN DE LA DEFENSA DE LA TESIS DOCTORAL.**

Dña. María del Mar Muñoz Martos, tutor de la Tesis Doctoral de D. José Luis González Porras informa favorablemente la solicitud de autorización de defensa de la tesis con título “*Customer orientation of family businesses in the hotel sector*”, presentada por dicho doctorando.

La citada tesis se ha realizado en la modalidad de compendio de publicaciones, y opta por la mención internacional. Mediante la presente, declaro que reúne todos los requisitos que exige el Programa de Doctorado en Economía y Empresa de la Universidad de Málaga.

En Málaga, a 19 de Marzo de 2021.



María del Mar Muñoz Martos









UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA



Escuela de Doctorado

**CERTIFICADO DE ESTANCIA EN UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EXTRANJERO PARA LA OBTENCIÓN DE LA MENCIÓN INTERNACIONAL Y PARA TESIS REALIZADAS EN RÉGIMEN DE COTUTELA**

**A CUMPLIMENTAR POR LA UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EXTRANJERO DONDE EL DOCTORANDO REALIZÓ LA ESTANCIA:**

APELLIDOS:BUSCHA	NOMBRE:FRANZ
D.N.I./PASAPORTE:	
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO:f.buscha@westminster.ac.uk	
UNIVERSIDAD / CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN:UNIVERSIDAD DE WESTMINSTER	
VINCULACIÓN CON LA UNIVERSIDAD / CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN: DIRECTOR DE INVESTIGACIÓN	

**CERTIFICA QUE EL DOCTORANDO CUYOS DATOS FIGURAN A CONTINUACIÓN HA REALIZADO UNA ESTANCIA EN LA UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN MENCIONADO ANTERIORMENTE, REALIZANDO ACTIVIDADES DE FORMACIÓN E INVESTIGACIÓN RELACIONADOS CON LA ELABORACIÓN DE SU TESIS DOCTORAL:**

APELLIDOS:GONZÁLEZ PORRAS	NOMBRE:JOSÉ LUIS
D.N.I./PASAPORTE:	
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO:joseluisgonzalezporras@gmail.com	
FECHA DE INICIO DE LA ESTANCIA: (DD/MM/AAAA) 1/05/2018	
FECHA DE FIN DE LA ESTANCIA: (DD/MM/AAAA) 31/05/2018	

En Londres, a 31 de Mayo de 2018

*Franz Buscha*

Fdo:FRANZ BUSCHA



EFQM AENOR





UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA



Escuela de Doctorado

**CERTIFICADO DE ESTANCIA EN UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EXTRANJERO PARA LA OBTENCIÓN DE LA MENCIÓN INTERNACIONAL y PARA TESIS REALIZADAS EN RÉGIMEN DE COTUTELA**

**A CUMPLIMENTAR POR LA UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EXTRANJERO DONDE EL DOCTORANDO REALIZÓ LA ESTANCIA:**

APELLIDOS:BUSCHA	NOMBRE:FRANZ
D.N.I./PASAPORTE:	
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO:f.buscha@westminster.ac.uk	
UNIVERSIDAD / CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN:UNIVERSIDAD DE WESTMINSTER	
VINCULACIÓN CON LA UNIVERSIDAD / CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN: DIRECTOR DE INVESTIGACIÓN	

**CERTIFICA QUE EL DOCTORANDO CUYOS DATOS FIGURAN A CONTINUACIÓN HA REALIZADO UNA ESTANCIA EN LA UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN MENCIONADO ANTERIORMENTE, REALIZANDO ACTIVIDADES DE FORMACIÓN E INVESTIGACIÓN RELACIONADOS CON LA ELABORACIÓN DE SU TESIS DOCTORAL:**

APELLIDOS:GONZÁLEZ PORRAS	NOMBRE:JOSÉ LUIS
D.N.I./PASAPORTE:	
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO:joseluisgonzalezporras@gmail.com	
FECHA DE INICIO DE LA ESTANCIA: (DD/MM/AAAA) 1/05/2019	
FECHA DE FIN DE LA ESTANCIA: (DD/MM/AAAA) 31/05/2019	

En Londres, a 31 de Mayo de 2019

*Franz Buscha*

Fdo:FRANZ BUSCHA



Edificio Pabellón de Gobierno, Campus El Ejido, 29071  
Tel.: 952 13 10 28 / 952 13 14 61 / 952 13 71 10  
E-mail: doctorado@uma.es





UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA



Escuela de Doctorado

**CERTIFICADO DE ESTANCIA EN UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EXTRANJERO PARA LA OBTENCIÓN DE LA MENCIÓN INTERNACIONAL y PARA TESIS REALIZADAS EN RÉGIMEN DE COTUTELA**

**A CUMPLIMENTAR POR LA UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EXTRANJERO DONDE EL DOCTORANDO REALIZÓ LA ESTANCIA:**

APellidos:BUSCHA	NOMBRE:FRANZ
D.N.I./PASAPORTE:C	
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO:f.buscha@westminster.ac.uk	
UNIVERSIDAD / CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN:UNIVERSIDAD DE WESTMINSTER	
VINCULACIÓN CON LA UNIVERSIDAD / CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN: DIRECTOR DE INVESTIGACIÓN	

**CERTIFICA QUE EL DOCTORANDO CUYOS DATOS FIGURAN A CONTINUACIÓN HA REALIZADO UNA ESTANCIA EN LA UNIVERSIDAD O CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN MENCIONADO ANTERIORMENTE, REALIZANDO ACTIVIDADES DE FORMACIÓN E INVESTIGACIÓN RELACIONADOS CON LA ELABORACIÓN DE SU TESIS DOCTORAL:**

APellidos:GONZÁLEZ PORRAS	NOMBRE:JOSÉ LUIS
D.N.I./PASAPORTE:	
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO:joseluisgonzalezporras@gmail.com	
FECHA DE INICIO DE LA ESTANCIA: (DD/MM/AAAA) 1/08/2019	
FECHA DE FIN DE LA ESTANCIA: (DD/MM/AAAA) 31/08/2019	

En Londres, a 31 de Agosto de 2019

*Franz Buscha*

Fdo:FRANZ BUSCHA



EFQM AENOR





**AUTORIZACIÓN DE LOS COAUTORES PARA INCLUIR LOS ARTÍCULOS EN LA TESIS DOCTORAL POR COMPENDIO DE PUBLICACIONES.**

Yo, José Luis Ruiz-Alba Robledo, como coautor de la publicación que se titula:

- “Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector”, publicada en la Revista de Estudios Empresariales.
- “International management of customer orientation” publicada en la revista European Journal of International Management.
- “Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector” publicada en la revista International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising.

Acepto que esta publicación se presenta como parte de la tesis doctoral **“Customer orientation of family businesses in the hotel sector”** cuyo autor es **José Luis González Porras**, y renuncio a presentarla como parte de otras tesis doctorales en la Universidad de Málaga o en cualquier otra universidad.



Firmado: José Luis Ruiz-Alba Robledo

**AUTORIZACIÓN DE LOS COAUTORES PARA INCLUIR LOS ARTÍCULOS LA TESIS DOCTORAL POR COMPENDIO DE PUBLICACIONES.**

Yo, Vanesa F. Guzmán Parra, como coautora de la publicación que se titula:

- “Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector”, publicada en la Revista de Estudios Empresariales.
- “International management of customer orientation” publicada en la revista European Journal of International Management.

Acepto que esta publicación se presenta como parte de la tesis doctoral **“Customer orientation of family businesses in the hotel sector”** cuyo autor es **José Luis González Porras**, y renuncio a presentarla como parte de otras tesis doctorales en la Universidad de Málaga o en cualquier otra universidad.



Firmado: Vanesa F. Guzmán Parra

**AUTORIZACIÓN DE LOS COAUTORES PARA INCLUIR LOS ARTÍCULOS EN LA TESIS DOCTORAL POR COMPENDIO DE PUBLICACIONES.**

Yo, Javier Morales Mediano, como coautor de la publicación que se titula:

- “Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector” publicada en la revista International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising.

Acepto que esta publicación se presenta como parte de la tesis doctoral “**Customer orientation of family businesses in the hotel sector**” cuyo autor es **José Luis González Porras**, y renuncio a presentarla como parte de otras tesis doctorales en la Universidad de Málaga o en cualquier otra universidad.



Firmado: Javier Morales Mediano

**AUTORIZACIÓN DE LOS COAUTORES PARA INCLUIR LOS ARTÍCULOS EN LA TESIS DOCTORAL POR COMPENDIO DE PUBLICACIONES.**

Yo, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Molina, como coautor de la publicación que se titula:

- “International management of customer orientation” publicada en la revista European Journal of International Management.

Acepto que esta publicación se presenta como parte de la tesis doctoral “**Customer orientation of family businesses in the hotel sector**” cuyo autor es **José Luis González Porras**, y renuncio a presentarla como parte de otras tesis doctorales en la Universidad de Málaga o en cualquier otra universidad.



Firmado: Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Molina.







**Dedicatoria:**

A mis padres, sin vuestro apoyo constante a lo largo de toda mi vida, nada de esto hubiera sido posible.



## Agradecimientos

Dijo José Enrique Rodó algo tal que así, “Cada uno de nosotros es, sucesivamente, no uno, sino muchos. Y estas personalidades sucesivas, que emergen las unas de las otras, suelen ofrecer entre sí los más raros y asombrosos contrastes” (Rodó, 1993).

Y, efectivamente, así es. Somos el resultado de aquellas personas con las que nos hemos cruzado y de las que hemos aprendido a lo largo de nuestra vida. Ya sean profesores, profesionales, familiares, amigos e, incluso, enemigos. Personalmente, a mis cortos 28 años, he tenido la suerte de cruzarme con muchas personas que me han hecho crecer y mejorar en el ámbito personal y en el profesional. Por lo que, llegado este momento, el cual considero el final de mi etapa académica y, en consecuencia, el fin de nueve años de Universidad, quiero hacer mención a una serie de personas que han tenido especial influencia y relevancia:

En primer lugar, quiero agradecer a mis padres, **Pepe** y **María José**, todo el apoyo que he recibido de ellos desde que me trajeron a este mundo. Gracias por enseñarme a no rendirme nunca y a buscar siempre la excelencia y a poner el corazón en todo aquello que hago. Gracias a vosotros hoy puedo contar con valores como el espíritu crítico y la disciplina. También, tengo que agradecer a mi hermana **Gloria** la complicidad, el cariño y su amor de hermana incondicional, correspondida por el de su hermano pequeño. Y a mi cuñado **Cecilio**, el cual considero un hermano más. Sin duda alguna, los cuatro sois un referente diario para mí.

En segundo lugar, me gustaría hacer una mención muy especial a mi director de tesis, el **Profesor Dr. José Luis Ruiz-Alba** (Universidad de Westminster), al que considero mi padre académico. Desde estas líneas, quiero agradecerle todo lo que a día de hoy hemos conseguido juntos, la confianza que deposita en mí cada vez que nos embarcamos en un nuevo proyecto y la amistad que hemos forjado después de nueve años. Espero que el futuro nos siga deparando lo mismo que hasta ahora.

Desde el punto de vista académico y profesional tengo que agradecer:

A la **Profesora Dra. María del Mar Muñoz** (Universidad de Málaga) por la tutorización de la tesis doctoral, así como su apoyo y cariño constante durante estos tres años de doctorado.

Al Programa de Doctorado en Economía y Empresa de la Universidad de Málaga, en especial, a los coordinadores que he conocido: **Dra. María Rubio Misas** y **Dr. Salvador Pérez Moreno**, por guiarnos a los doctorandos y por velar por el buen funcionamiento del Programa.

Al **Profesor Dr. Miguel Ángel Rodríguez** (Universidad de Granada), y a la **Profesora Dra. Vanesa Guzmán-Parra** (Universidad de Málaga) por colaborar y contribuir con especial rigor académico en las distintas fases que han conformado esta tesis doctoral.

Al **Profesor Dr. Javier Morales** (Universidad Pontificia Comillas, ICADE), por su compañerismo durante estos años doctorales y la actual amistad que nos une.

A mis jefes y a la vez compañeros del equipo directivo de iWorld Cambio, **Miguel Ángel Sánchez-Apellaniz** y **Francisco Sánchez-Apellaniz**, por confiar en mí y por apoyarme personal y laboralmente mientras realizaba el programa de doctorado.

A todos los directivos de **Empresas Familiares** que me abrieron las puertas de sus empresas y me prestaron su tiempo para poder hacerles partícipes de lo que hoy es esta tesis doctoral.

Desde el punto de vista personal tengo que agradecer:

A **Álvaro Salido**, **Álvaro Porras**, **Pablo Vega** y **Carmen Reino** cuya amistad forjada después de tantos años ha supuesto un gran apoyo para mí en todos aquellos retos que personalmente me he propuesto y, en especial, en este.

A **Emilio Romacho**, **José García**, **Felipe García**, **Antonio Lanzat**, **Kevin Jiménez** y **Juan Antonio López** que, aunque no pueda convivir con ellos de manera tan cercana, siempre puedo disfrutar de nuestra amistad y han sabido cuando dedicarme su apoyo.

Por último, me gustaría agradecer a la **Universidad de Málaga** como institución y a todos los profesores que la forman, por estos nueve años en los que he podido crecer como profesional y académico. Sé que ha sido y será, una de las mejores etapas de mi vida.



## **Resumen Tesis Doctoral “Customer Orientation of Family Business in the Hotel Sector” (La Orientación al Cliente de la Empresa Familiar en el Sector Hotelero).**

La presente tesis doctoral se ha realizado a través de la modalidad de compendio de publicaciones. En ella, tres artículos de investigación han sido publicados en diferentes revistas científicas (Revista de Estudios Empresariales, European Journal of International Management y International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising).

El tema principal sobre el que versa la tesis y el cual une a las tres publicaciones, es el concepto de la Orientación al Cliente que tienen los empleados de servicios, que se encuadra principalmente dentro de las teorías del Marketing Relacional, el estudio de la empresa familiar es otro tema central en las investigaciones. La Orientación al Cliente, forma parte del marco teórico y conceptual de la Orientación al Mercado. Es decir, se analiza específicamente la Orientación al Mercado Externo canalizado a través de la Orientación al Cliente (Customer Orientation, CO). En la revisión de la literatura, se identificó la carencia de investigaciones previas sobre este constructo, en el ámbito de la empresa familiar, lo cual supuso una oportunidad para abrir un nuevo debate académico y contribuir al enriquecimiento del conocimiento en la disciplina de la empresa familiar.

A raíz de esa investigación se formulan dos principales preguntas de investigación: 1) cuál es el papel que desempeñan los antecedentes de la orientación al cliente en la empresa familiar y 2) qué influencia tiene la orientación al cliente en dos consecuencias: -a- satisfacción de cliente y -b- boca oreja electrónica (electronic Word of Mouth, e-WOM). Estas dos preguntas generales que se han denominado como overall Research questions (ORQ) han sido desarrolladas específicamente y en profundidad mediante 10 preguntas de investigación (Research questions, RQ1 a RQ10). Es interesante ver cómo en la Tabla 1 de la tesis (página 5) se muestra la relación entre cada una de las preguntas generales, las específicas y los artículos concretos donde se desarrollan y responden a cada una de ellas. Esta Tabla evidencia de por sí la unidad temática de los distintos estudios que conforman esta tesis doctoral.

Esta tesis presenta una estructura de seis capítulos. En el primero es la introducción y consta del propósito, las preguntas de investigación, los objetivos, se muestran las publicaciones de la tesis así como los detalles que no han sido incluidos en las publicaciones. Los capítulos 2, 3 y 4 recogen las tres publicaciones respectivamente que conforman esta tesis. El capítulo 5 contiene los descubrimientos y la discusión de los resultados así como la respuesta a cada una de las preguntas de investigación. Finalmente el capítulo 6 presenta las conclusiones.

### **1. Presentación de las publicaciones y justificación de la unidad temática.**

Los artículos publicados son los siguientes:

González-Porras, J. L., Ruiz-Alba, J. L., and Guzmán-Parra, V. F. G. (2018) ‘Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in the hotel sector’, *Revista de Estudios Empresariales. Segunda Época*, (2), 73-85.

González-Porras, J.L., Ruiz-Alba, J.L., Rodríguez-Molina, M.A. and Guzmán-Parra, V.F. (2019) ‘International management of customer orientation’, *European Journal of International Management*. (Doi:10.1504/EJIM.2020.10022183).

González-Porras, J.L., Ruiz-Alba, J.L., Morales Mediano, J. (2020). Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector, *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*. (In press)

Desde el punto de vista del objetivo de las publicaciones, el primer artículo “*Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector*”, publicado en la *Revista de Estudios Empresariales. Segunda Época* (Emerging Sources Citation Index) es un estudio conceptual que desarrolla un marco teórico, realizando una revisión crítica de la literatura existente sobre orientación al cliente de empleados de servicios (Customer Orientation of Service Employees, en adelante, COSE). Se encuadra dentro de la empresa familiar y dentro del sector hotelero. Sin embargo, partiendo de la base de este soporte teórico, se propone un nuevo modelo que dará lugar a un futuro estudio empírico. En el modelo propuesto, (Electronic Word of Mouth, en adelante, e-WOM) considerado como el “boca-oreja

electrónico”, se propone por primera vez como una de las consecuencias del modelo teórico de Henning-Thurau (2004), también se propone un cuestionario que consta de escalas validadas para poder medir las relaciones causales expuestas en el modelo.

El segundo artículo, “*International management of customer orientation*” publicado en la revista *European Journal of International Management* (Journal Citation Reports, JCR), consiste en el estudio empírico que se había propuesto en el citado artículo conceptual. Aborda la investigación del papel que juegan la orientación al cliente en empleados de servicios (COSE), y la influencia que tiene sobre la satisfacción al cliente y el boca-oreja electrónico (e-WOM), haciendo especial hincapié en la gestión internacional (International Management) de los hoteles analizados. También, se realizó un análisis disociando los distintos hoteles analizados, dependiendo de si presentaban la estructura de empresa familiar o no familiar.

En el tercer artículo, “*Customer Orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector*”, publicado en la revista *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising* (Scopus), es un artículo de metodología cualitativa en el que se analizan cómo las diferentes dimensiones de la Orientación al Cliente (Habilidades Técnicas, Habilidades Sociales, Motivación y Autoridad en la toma de decisiones) impactan sobre los diferentes tipos de e-WOM (e-WOM positivo, e-WOM negativo y e-WOM neutral).

Todos los artículos están conectados entre sí, debido a que el modelo teórico que se propone en el primer artículo es el que se desarrolla empíricamente en el segundo y tercer artículos, que versan sobre el mismo tema: la orientación al cliente en empleados de servicios (COSE). Es preciso destacar que, mientras el primer artículo es un artículo conceptual, en el que se propone un modelo y un cuestionario para testarlo empíricamente, el segundo y el tercero están enfocados en estudio de las relaciones causales entre las variables. De hecho, en el segundo artículo se emplea una metodología cuantitativa para testar el modelo propuesto, y el tercer artículo se emplea una metodología cualitativa para analizar las relaciones en tre COSE y e-WOM.

De esta manera, las tres publicaciones se consideran íntimamente relacionadas entre sí y cuentan con una sólida línea argumental. Es más, todos los artículos se encuadran dentro de



las relaciones trabajador-cliente que Grönroos, (1996) determinaba en su teoría del triángulo del marketing relacional, que será desarrollado en el siguiente apartado de revisión de la literatura.

## **1.2 Revisión de la Literatura.**

### **1.2.1 Empresa Familiar.**

Esta tesis doctoral, como se ha comentado anteriormente, presenta un análisis de la empresa familiar en relación a las distintas variables que se han analizado en los tres artículos publicados.

La empresa familiar es un tipo de empresa que ha recibido menos atención académica que otros tipos de empresas, es por ello por lo que presenta muchos campos aun por investigar (Gallo, 2009). Para determinar teóricamente qué tipos de empresas se pueden considerar como empresa familiar y qué tipos no, se ha adoptado la definición propuesta por European Commission (2008) y utilizada también por Rojo et al. (2011), en la que se considera como empresa familiar a aquellas empresas en las cuales:

- La propiedad de la empresa está controlada por una o más familias.
- Algún miembro de la familia debe participar activamente en la gestión de la empresa, así como pertenecer al comité de dirección de la misma.
- Debe de haber un deseo de transferir la empresa a las siguientes generaciones de la familia, esto es, un deseo de continuidad.

Una empresa que no cumpla estas condiciones según esta definición se podría considerar como una empresa no familiar.

Para el caso de España, la empresa familiar es el tipo de empresas más numeroso de nuestro tejido empresarial. Actualmente, representan el 88,8% del total de empresas y el 91.9% en el caso de Andalucía (IEF, 2017). Sin embargo, existe un decrecimiento en el número de empresas familiares, a medida que van pasando de una generación a otra debido, principalmente, al fracaso generacional. Es por ello que, se ha realizado un gran esfuerzo en este sentido para tratar de poner sobre la mesa aquellos factores que están facilitando el fracaso generacional de las empresas familiares. Estos esfuerzos se han traducido en investigaciones que versan, entre otros temas, sobre el protocolo de sucesión en la empresa familiar, o la esperanza de vida de las mismas. Y, también, se han realizado numerosas

investigaciones en lo que respecta la comparación entre empresas familiares y no familiares, tratando temas como: la aversión al riesgo, número de empleados, concentración del control de la empresa, etc. (Gallo et al., 2004).

En lo que respecta a los artículos publicados, el concepto de empresa familiar se ha implementado haciendo una comparación entre empresas familiares y no familiares, de la siguiente forma:

En el primer artículo “*Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector*” y en el artículo “*International management of customer orientation*”, desarrollan una comparación entre empresas familiares y no familiares, pero en lo que a COSE se refiere, por lo que ambos concluyen en que las empresas familiares presentan mayor grado de COSE que las no familiares. Este mayor grado de COSE en las empresas familiares está presente en todas y cada una de las dimensiones de COSE (Habilidades Técnicas, Habilidades Sociales, Motivación y Autoridad en la toma de decisiones).

En el tercer artículo “*Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector*” los diferentes participantes (empleados, clientes o directivos) de las entrevistas realizadas en el estudio cualitativo pertenecían a empresas familiares. Por lo que, en este estudio, no ha habido una comparación entre empresas familiares y no familiares, sino que todo el estudio se ha llevado a cabo dentro de empresas que cumplían con los requisitos de empresa familiar, de acuerdo con el criterio establecido por European Commission (2008).

### 1.2.2 Sector hotelero.

En los últimos años, el sector hotelero español ha sufrido una mejora en el comportamiento de la demanda debido al aumento de sus clientes. Se puede observar claramente el comportamiento positivo que han tenido los aeropuertos españoles durante los años 2016, 2017 y 2018 creciendo un 11.0%, 8.2%, y 5.8 % respectivamente, y contando con 263.753.406 pasajeros en el último año (AENA, 2016, 2017 y 2018). Este crecimiento ha tenido un impacto positivo dentro del sector servicios, especialmente, dentro del sector hotelero, el cual ocupa un gran porcentaje dentro del sector servicios.

En España, el sector turístico representa el 11,2% del PIB, contando con 12.139 hoteles en nuestro país, que presentan el 82.1% de las pernoctaciones sobre los diferentes tipos de establecimientos (apartamentos turísticos y rurales, campings, y hoteles). En el caso de Andalucía, el sector hotelero ocupa una gran parte de la economía, contando con 36.673 empleados y 2.543 hoteles, de acuerdo con los datos del Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE, 2019) y Dirce (2012).

Estos datos avalan el gran peso que tiene el sector hotelero en la economía española y andaluza, razón por la cual fueron elegidos como empresas a analizar en los diferentes artículos e investigaciones.

Desde el punto de vista de la dirección de empresas, un factor determinante en el sector servicios y, por lo tanto, en el sector hotelero son las relaciones que tienen los empleados con los clientes. Estas relaciones se caracterizan por ser muy estrechas y, en la mayoría de ocasiones, el reflejo de la calidad del servicio prestada por el establecimiento, es sinónimo del determinado comportamiento que el empleado pueda tener cuando está prestando el servicio al cliente, por eso se les denomina “empleados de servicio” (service employees) (Schneider y White, 2004). Esto pasa debido a la intangibilidad de los servicios (Di Mascio, 2010), que hace que el comportamiento del empleado hacia el cliente sea el reflejo de la calidad del mismo.

En el caso de la orientación al cliente (CO), teniendo en cuenta los cuatro componentes de COSE (habilidades técnicas y sociales, motivación y poder en toma de decisiones), resultará decisivo para alcanzar cualquier grado de orientación al cliente, debido a la peculiaridad del papel de los *empleados de servicio*, cuando están prestando el servicio al cliente. En los resultados de la publicación “*International management of customer orientation*”, específicamente dentro de la comparación entre hoteles nacionales e internacionales, los internacionales mostraban mayor grado de COSE que los nacionales. Esto se debe al hecho de que las habilidades técnicas de los empleados en los hoteles internacionales eran mayores que en los nacionales debido, probablemente, a los distintos procesos de formación dentro de las empresas.

### 1.2.3 Orientación al Mercado (MO)

La orientación al mercado (MO) ha sido estudiada por numerosos autores desde la década de los 90. Los estudios llevados a cabo por Narver y Slater (1990) y Kohli y Jaworski (1990) se consideran la piedra angular del concepto, pues establecieron un marco teórico nunca investigado hasta el momento.

Por un lado, Kohli y Jaworski (1990), definió MO como “la implementación del concepto de marketing”. De esta manera, una empresa “orientada al mercado” es aquella cuyas políticas y acciones son consistentes con el concepto de marketing. El modelo teórico propuesto por estos autores cuenta con los siguientes componentes: (1) *Generación de inteligencia* (identificar las necesidades presentes y futuras de los clientes, así como también un análisis exógeno de factores que puedan influir en esas preferencias o necesidades); (2) *Difusión de inteligencia*: (esa misma inteligencia tiene que ser comunicada y difundida por los distintos departamentos y empleados dentro de la organización); (3) *Capacidad de respuesta a la inteligencia*: (definida como las distintas acciones de respuesta a esa inteligencia, que supone la selección del tipo de mercado, el diseño de determinados productos o servicios que satisfagan las necesidades de los clientes, produciendo, promoviendo y distribuyendo los productos).

Kohli y Jaworski (1990) propusieron por primera vez los antecedentes y consecuencias del modelo de MO. En concreto, las consecuencias propuestas por los autores están íntimamente relacionadas con la implementación de estrategias y políticas de MO (respuestas ante clientes y empleados, y resultados financieros y de mercado en la empresa). Y, según estos autores, los antecedentes tienen que estar influenciados por factores como las dinámicas interdepartamentales, los sistemas de organización y factores relacionados con la dirección de la empresa.

Por otro lado, Narver y Slater (1990), desarrollaron una escala de medida validada y analizaron los efectos de MO sobre los resultados de la empresa a largo plazo. Examinaron una muestra de 140 empresas, cuyos análisis mostró resultados positivos en la relación de MO con los beneficios de la empresa. Según estos autores, MO se define como la cultura de la organización que efectiva y eficientemente crea los comportamientos necesarios para la

creación de valor para los clientes, y cuyo resultado es la también la generación de beneficios para la empresa, y consta de tres elementos: (Narver y Slater, 1990, p.21):

- Orientación al Cliente: definida como el conocimiento de los clientes potenciales para que, posteriormente, se pueda crear valor añadido.
- Orientación a la competencia: definida como la percepción a corto y a largo plazo de las debilidades y fortalezas de la empresa, poniendo el foco en el diseño de estrategias y el desarrollo de capacidades.
- Coordinación interfuncional: definida como la coordinación de los recursos de la empresa para crear valor para los clientes potenciales.

Es preciso destacar, el objetivo común de ambos modelos en satisfacer las necesidades del cliente final. En el primer modelo, esto se canaliza a través de la generación de Inteligencia de Mercado (Market Intelligence) (Kohli y Jaworski, 1990) y, en el segundo modelo, a través de la Orientación al Cliente (Customer orientation, CO) (Narver y Slater, 1990). El punto en común hacia el que conducen ambos modelos es la mejora de los beneficios de la empresa, a través de la generación de un mayor número de transacciones realizadas por clientes satisfechos con el servicio que han recibido por parte de la empresa.

#### 1.2.4 La Orientación al Cliente en Empleados de Servicios (COSE):

La Orientación al Cliente (CO), es un concepto que se ha discutido teóricamente dentro del marco de Marketing Relacional (RM), debido a la importancia de la gestión de las relaciones con el cliente para las empresas (Berry, 1995). El concepto de CO ha sido estudiado en profundidad durante los últimos años, debido a la gran capacidad de generar satisfacción para los clientes, así como también muchas consecuencias positivas para las empresas (Bowen y Schneider, 1985).

Desde un punto de vista teórico, la primera aparición del concepto fue a través del modelo propuesto por Saxe y Weitz (1982), a través del cual incluía la orientación al cliente junto con la orientación a las ventas (SO-CO, Selling Orientation- Customer Orientation). Sin embargo,

como se ha detallado en el apartado anterior, el primer modelo que desarrolló de manera detallada el concepto de CO, fue el propuesto por Narver y Slater (1990) y Kohli y Jaworski (1990), específicamente, el modelo MKTOR de Narver y Slater (1990). En este estudio, disociaban el concepto de MO del de CO por primera vez, considerando los tres componentes principales: Orientación al Cliente, Orientación a la Competencia, y Coordinación Internfuncional, definiendo la gestión de las relaciones con los clientes como un pilar diferente dentro de la Orientación al Mercado (MO).

El siguiente paso dentro de la literatura de CO fue el modelo propuesto por Kelley (1992), que analizó los antecedentes de la Orientación al Cliente de Empleados de Servicios (COSE) y enfatizó en el objetivo de mantener relaciones a largo plazo con los clientes. En la misma línea, (Brown et al. (2002) estudió CO a nivel individual (services workers, COSW) estableciendo que el comportamiento de los empleados cuando prestan el servicio al cliente, determina el grado de orientación al cliente logrado por el empleado. Susskind et al. (2000) estudió CO a nivel organizacional, testando empíricamente COSE y poniendo el foco en la supervisión y colaboración entre empleados como factores potenciadores de COSE.

Sin embargo, el modelo de COSE que se ha adoptado en esta tesis doctoral es el que propuso Hennig-Thurau (2004) debido a su amplia aceptación académica y, principalmente, debido a que es un modelo cuyo diseño se ajusta a las necesidades de presentan las empresas. Este estudio define COSE como las características de un empleado de servicios que (1) entiende y satisface las necesidades del cliente y (2) actúa en consecuencia para conseguir ese fin.

Los cuatro factores principales de COSE, de acuerdo con este autor, son:

- (1) Habilidades Técnicas: hace referencia al conocimiento técnico que debe tener el empleado para prestar el servicio (Argyle, 1967).
- (2) Habilidades Sociales: considerada como la capacidad del empleado para entender la perspectiva del cliente.
- (3) Motivación: hace referencia al deseo del empleado de satisfacer las necesidades del cliente.
- (4) Autoridad en la toma de decisiones: es la sensación de autoridad que el empleado puede tener para tomar una decisión autónomamente en temas relacionados con los

clientes para satisfacer sus necesidades sin consultar a sus supervisores (Hennig-Thurau y Thurau, 2003).

En este modelo, los autores puntualizan que, para que se cumpla el concepto de COSE, todos los factores tienen que cumplirse dentro del modelo. El estudio fue llevado a cabo en el sector de retail y agencias de viaje, y las hipótesis fueron soportadas positivamente, lo que quiere decir, que hay una relación positiva entre COSE y la satisfacción al cliente, el compromiso y la retención del cliente.

Hasta ahora, el modelo de COSE se ha aplicado en diferentes sectores como, por ejemplo, en restaurantes de lujo (Kim y Moon, 2009), tiendas de productos naturales, y restauración a nivel organizativo (Suskind et al., 2000, 2007), banca retail (Ifie, 2014) y banca privada (Morales Mediano y Ruiz-Alba, 2019). En el caso de esta tesis doctoral, los diferentes estudios se han enfocado en el sector hotelero, en concreto, dos artículos de investigación, de los cuales se han sacado conclusiones contundentes en cuanto a COSE:

En el primer artículo “*Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in hotel sector*” se propuso como consecuencias de COSE al boca-boca electrónico (electronic word of mouth, e-WOM) y a la satisfacción del cliente como consecuencias directas del modelo de Hennig-Thurau model of COSE y, en este sentido, también se usaron diversas subescalas y se propuso un cuestionario para medir COSE, y dos consecuencias más derivadas del mismo.

En el segundo artículo, “*International management of customer orientation*” es un estudio empírico que desarrolla el modelo propuesto en el artículo anterior que demuestra las diferentes relaciones causales, poniendo el foco en la gestión internacional de las empresas como una de las variables principales. Las Capacidades Digitales de los empleados (Digital Capabilities) se incluyeron en el modelo de COSE también por primera vez. Los resultados muestran que las Capacidades Digitales tienen un efecto positivo sobre la satisfacción del cliente, por medio del efecto mediador que representa COSE. La variable de gestión internacional se representó mediante la comparación de empresas con presencia internacional vs empresas sin presencia internacional, y también mediante la comparación empresa familiar

vs empresa no familiar. Los resultados muestran que los hoteles con presencia internacional tienen un mayor grado de COSE que los que no tienen presencia internacional y, para el caso de las empresas familiares, tienen mayor nivel de COSE que las no familiares.

En el tercer artículo, “*Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector*” tras el análisis de los resultados del estudio cualitativo (Focus group, Entrevistas, Online focus group), en relación a cuáles de las dimensiones de COSE tenían una mayor influencia sobre los tres tipos de e-WOM, se descubrió que las habilidades sociales, es la dimensión de COSE que más afecta a que se produzca un e-WOM positivo y negativo, es decir, que dependiendo de cómo sea la orientación del cliente del empleado, desarrollada a través de sus habilidades sociales, se podrá conseguir e-WOM positivo o negativo por parte del cliente. En cuanto al resto de dimensiones de COSE, las habilidades técnicas resultaron no tener un efecto determinante en los tipos de e-WOM, pues este tipo de habilidades, el cliente da por hecho que los empleados cuentan con ellas. En caso de omisión de las mismas, entonces si se ha demostrado que produce e-WOM negativo. La motivación resulta ser crucial para los clientes, así como un posible antecedente para customizar servicios. La autoridad en la toma de decisiones, se ha demostrado de ser irrelevante para los directivos de los hoteles, y algo que no resulta crucial para los clientes, siempre que los asuntos que les afectan se solucionen eficientemente.

En resumen, se puede decir que todos los estudios han sido aplicados por primera vez al sector hotelero, considerando las Capacidades Digitales, el boca-boca electrónico (e-WOM) como consecuentes de COSE, dentro del modelo de Hennig-Thurau.

### **1.3 Preliminares y detalles no incluidos en las publicaciones debido a limitaciones de espacio.**

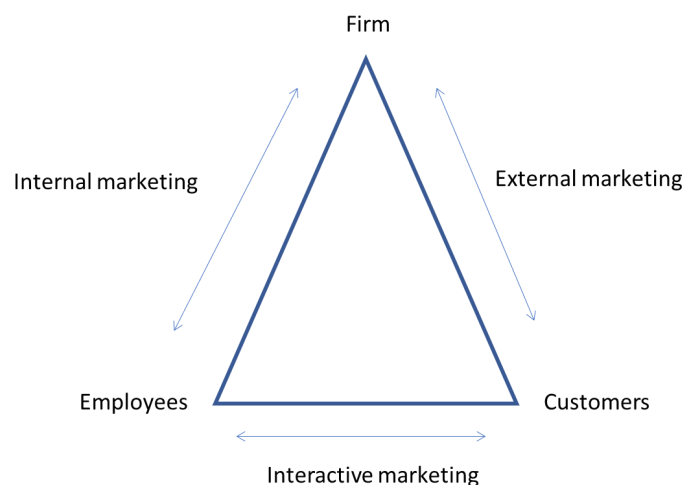
La investigación dentro del campo de las empresas familiares resulta de mucha importancia, debido al gran número de empresas familiares presentes en nuestra economía, y también por la enorme importancia que supone la supervivencia de las mismas. En este contexto, el marketing dentro de la empresa familiar es un tema que no ha tenido demasiada atención académica aun, debido al escaso número de estudios publicados. Es por ello que el marketing dentro de la empresa familiar fue elegido como el tema principal de investigación para esta



tesis doctoral, debido a la relevancia que supone para la supervivencia de las empresas y, más específicamente, para las empresas familiares.

El enfoque de este estudio es el papel que juega el empleado, dentro del marketing de servicios en la empresa familiar. El comportamiento resulta ser un factor crucial cuando se analizan tanto a empleados como a clientes, debido a que el beneficio de la empresa y los resultados obtenidos dependen de esas relaciones. Esto se refleja claramente en el Triángulo del Marketing Relacional, propuesto por Grönroos (1996), que representa la situación del mercado para un gran número de empresas (Figura 1).

De acuerdo con esta teoría, hay tres tipos de marketing, dentro del marketing de servicios; Marketing interno (*Internal Marketing*), que consiste en las relaciones entre la empresa y los empleados (clientes internos); Marketing Externo (*External Marketing*), las relaciones entre la empresa y los consumidores (clientes externos); y Marketing Interactivo (*Interactive Marketing*), las relaciones entre los empleados y los clientes.



**Figura 1:** Triángulo del Marketing Relacional. Elaboración propia adaptado de Grönroos (1996).

De esta manera, esta estructura tiene un impacto en la percepción de la calidad del servicio por el cliente y, por ende, en satisfacción de este, un factor sin el cual resulta difícil crear una estrategia de marketing con éxito. Por lo tanto, se considera que existe una fuerte relación entre la orientación al mercado interno (OMI) enfocada principalmente en el desarrollo de los recursos internos (empleados); la orientación externa, donde las empresas necesitan ofrecer y conseguir aquello que los clientes esperan de ellas; y las relaciones interactivas en los

servicios (COSE), donde los empleados (especialmente los denominados front-line), con sus habilidades y capacidades, tienen que conseguir la satisfacción del cliente.

### 3. Objetivos.

El propósito de la presente tesis doctoral es analizar la orientación a cliente de empleados de servicios (COSE) dentro del ámbito de la empresa familiar del sector hotelero, pues, tal y como se ha detallado anteriormente, existe un nicho de investigación.

Para poder conseguir dicho propósito, se han trazado los siguientes objetivos de investigación:

1. Estudiar en profundidad el concepto de COSE, proponiendo un modelo actualizado con nuevos elementos y variables que puedan detallar los resultados de mercado de la empresa, como puede ser la satisfacción del cliente o e-WOM.
2. Desarrollar empíricamente, mediante estudio cuantitativo, las relaciones entre la satisfacción del cliente y e-WOM.
3. Observar las diferencias entre empresas familiares y no familiares en lo que a COSE se refiere.
4. Desarrollar cualitativamente las relaciones entre los diferentes tipos de e-WOM y las dimensiones de COSE.
5. Identificar cuáles de las dimensiones de COSE tiene un mayor impacto en e-WOM.
6. Analizar cuál es la dimensión de COSE más influyente e importante desde el punto de vista del empleado.

### 4. Discusión de los resultados.

En lo que concierne a los resultados, los artículos publicados muestran resultados positivos que tienen tanto implicaciones teóricas como prácticas.

En particular, el primer artículo “*Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in hotel sector*” y el segundo “*International management of customer orientation*” se pueden analizar conjuntamente, pues el modelo propuesto en el primer artículo, es el que se testa empíricamente en el segundo. La incorporación de e-WOM y las Capacidades Digitales suponen una contribución teórica al modelo clásico de COSE. Los resultados muestran relaciones positivas entre COSE y e-WOM a través del efecto mediador de la satisfacción del cliente. Esto implica que COSE es una herramienta mediadora con potencial,

y que puede ayudar tanto a directivos como a mandos intermedios para poder implementarlo y ganar niveles de satisfacción del cliente y e-WOM.

En relación con los hoteles analizados, los hoteles internacionales presentan un mayor nivel de COSE que los nacionales, principalmente debido a las habilidades técnicas del personal en los hoteles internacionales. Lo cual implica una ventaja competitiva sobre sus competidores. El hecho de tener empleados mejor formados implica, como consecuente un mejor resultado de la empresa.

Al mismo tiempo, las empresas familiares presentan un mayor nivel de COSE que las no familiares, esto puede deberse a la flexibilidad y adaptabilidad a las necesidades del cliente que presentan las empresas familiares (Gallo, 2004), debido al componente familiar. Los directivos de las empresas familiares deben considerar la internacionalización como una ventaja desde el punto de vista de COSE, y desde el punto de vista de la empresa familiar, para poder beneficiarse de ambos factores.

En el tercer artículo, “*Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector*” el análisis del efecto de cada una de las dimensiones de COSE sobre los diferentes tipos de e-WOM resulta novedoso y presenta resultados muy positivos. En cuanto a las habilidades técnicas, tal y como se ha detallado anteriormente, no presentan una gran relevancia para producir e-WOM positivo, pues los clientes dan por hecho que los empleados cuentan con las habilidades técnicas para desarrollar su trabajo. No obstante, la omisión de dichas habilidades técnicas, si produce e-WOM negativo. En cuanto a las habilidades sociales, resultan ser la dimensión de COSE con un mayor impacto en e-WOM positivo, valores como la empatía, amabilidad, son las más importantes según los resultados obtenidos. En caso de que los empleados carezcan de habilidades sociales, ello producirá e-WOM negativo. Para el caso de la motivación, resulta ser crucial para que se produzca e-WOM positivo, por parte de los clientes, y solo producirá e-WOM negativo cuando los clientes perciban desmotivación en los empleados, en el caso esa desmotivación no eclipsara la el desarrollo del servicio, se produciría e-WOM neutral. Por último, la autoridad en la toma de decisiones, no supone un asunto de prioridad para los clientes. Pues los clientes se ha demostrado que entienden el hecho de que un empleado no pueda tomar una decisión en un momento determinado, para solucionar un

problema que concierne a un cliente, si no está autorizado para ello. Sin embargo, el cliente valorará positivamente que se satisfagan sus necesidades lo antes posible si el empleado transmite sus preocupaciones a la cadena de mando de la empresa. Por ello, solo se producirá un e-WOM negativo, si se demora mucho la respuesta.

## 5. Conclusiones finales.

En primer lugar, es preciso resaltar que esta tesis doctoral aborda una temática que, a pesar de su relevancia, hasta el momento había recibido escasa atención académica. En este sentido, contribuye al conocimiento del marketing dentro del sector de las empresas familiares. En particular, muy pocos estudios analizan la empresa familiar en términos de COSE, incluso sabiendo que es una herramienta útil. Es por ello que los artículos publicados pueden considerarse originales por este mismo motivo, debido a que muestran literatura relevante y resultados empíricos consistentes.

En el primer y segundo artículo, “*Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in hotel sector*”, e “*International management of customer orientation*” los resultados muestran que COSE está, efectivamente, compuesto por los cuatro principales factores que lo forman (habilidades técnicas y sociales, motivación, y autoridad en toma de decisiones) y tienen un efecto positivo sobre la satisfacción del cliente y e-WOM. Además, las Capacidades Digitales de los empleados tienen un efecto positivo sobre la satisfacción del cliente, mediante el efecto mediador que juega COSE dentro del modelo.

En el tercer artículo, “*Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector*”, se obtiene la conclusión de que no solo es importante las habilidades técnicas de un empleado para conseguir la satisfacción del cliente y un e-WOM positivo. Es decir, no es suficiente que el empleado realice correctamente el servicio desde el punto de vista técnico, sino que, debido a la intangibilidad de los servicios, es preciso que dispongan de habilidades sociales y motivación para poder captar la perspectiva del cliente.

En lo que respecta a la contribución que representa este estudio para las empresas, sobre todo a las empresas familiares, esta investigación puede sugerir ideas para los propietarios/directivos de las mismas para implementar estrategias en sus estructuras

organizativas, lo cual redundará en un efecto positivo sobre la satisfacción al cliente, la lealtad y en consecuencia, en los resultados de mercado de la empresa.

En lo que respecta a la teoría y a la investigación, esta tesis doctoral representa una contribución a la teoría del Marketing relacional, a través del modelo de COSE. En esta misma línea. También se contribuye al desarrollo del modelo debido a la incorporación de e-WOM y Capacidades Digitales al modelo estudiado, demostrando que tienen una influencia positiva sobre la satisfacción al cliente. Además, contribuye al debate y al enriquecimiento del conocimiento de las empresas familiares, dada su gran importancia en nuestro tejido empresarial.

En resumen, para que las empresas puedan conseguir una Orientación al Mercado, en términos de orientación al cliente, puede ser útil para directivos que quieran mejorar el marketing dentro de la empresa familiar, dado su gran importancia en términos de resultados y, más importante aún, de supervivencia.

### 5.1 Limitaciones e investigaciones futuras.

Una de las limitaciones que se puede considerar común a las tres publicaciones es el ámbito geográfico del estudio, pues se ha realizado solamente en Andalucía. Aunque es una muestra muy representativa de España, sería interesante investigar las mismas relaciones causales, pero en otras regiones y otros países.

En el caso del primer “*Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in hotel sector*” y segundo artículo “*International management of customer orientation*”, están enfocados en el papel que juega el empleado y las relaciones que tiene con el cliente. Desde esta perspectiva, se necesita más investigación para analizar, por ejemplo, el grado de COSE que presentan los empleados desde el punto de vista de los mandos intermedios o directivos de la empresa.

En el tercer artículo “*Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector*”, la principal limitación es el ámbito geográfico del estudio, pues se ha desarrollado en la Costa del Sol (Málaga, España). Resultaría interesante expandir hacia otras áreas turísticas y otros sectores, este mismo estudio. También, las limitaciones sobre “bias responses” han sido tenidas en

cuenta por el investigador, debido a que se ha desarrollado un estudio cualitativo (Creswell, 2014).

## 6. Referencias.

AENA (2016): [online] <http://www.aena.es/csee/ccurl/231/679/Definitivo-2016.pdf>  
(Accessed April 2019)

AENA (2017): [online] [http://www.aena.es/csee/ccurl/666/408/Definitivo\\_2017.pdf](http://www.aena.es/csee/ccurl/666/408/Definitivo_2017.pdf)  
(Accessed April 2019)

AENA (2018): [online]  
[http://www.aena.es/csee/ccurl/792/416/Informe2018\\_provisionales.pdf](http://www.aena.es/csee/ccurl/792/416/Informe2018_provisionales.pdf) (Accessed April  
2019)

Argyle, M. (1983): *The psychology of interpersonal behaviour*. Penguin press, New York, US.

Berry, L. L. (1995). Relationship marketing of services—growing interest, emerging perspectives, *Journal of the Academy of marketing science*, 23(4), 236-245.

Bowen, D. E. and Schneider, B. (1985): Boundary-spanning role employees and the service industry: some guidelines for management and research, *The Service Encounter*, D. C. Heath, Lexington, M. A., 127-47.

Brown, T. J., Mowen, J. C., Donovan, D. T., and Licata, J. W. (2002). The customer orientation of service workers: Personality trait effects on self-and supervisor performance ratings, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 110-119.

Creswell, J. W., (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed., Sage publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Di Mascio, R. (2010). The service models of frontline employees, *Journal of Marketing*, 74(4), 63-80.

Dirce (2012). Directorio central de empresas. Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Central Register of Firms, National Institute of Statistics, Government of Spain). [www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t37/p201/&file=inebase](http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t37/p201/&file=inebase)

European Commission (2008): [online] [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promotingentrepreneurship/we-work-for/family-business\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promotingentrepreneurship/we-work-for/family-business_en) (Accessed February 2018).

Family Business Institute (2017): [online] <http://www.iefamiliar.com/cifras/1> (Accessed 15 October 2018).

Gallo, M. Á., Tàpies, J., and Cappuyns, K. (2004). Comparison of family and nonfamily business: Financial logic and personal preferences, *Family Business Review*, 17(4), 303-318.

Gallo, M., Klein, S., Montemerlo, D., Tomaselli, S., and Cappuyns, K. (2009). *La empresa familiar multigeneracional*. Eunsa.

Grönroos, C. (1996). Relationship marketing logic. *Asia-Australia Marketing Journal*, 4(1), 7-18.

Hennig-Thurau, T., and Thurau, C. (2003). Customer orientation of service employees—Toward a conceptual framework of a key relationship marketing construct, *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 2(1-2), 23-41.

Hennig-Thurau, T. (2004). Customer orientation of service employees: Its impact on customer satisfaction, commitment, and retention, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 15(5), 460-478.

Ifie, K. (2014). Customer orientation of frontline employees and organizational commitment, *The Service Industries Journal*, 34(8), 699-714.

INE (2019): [online] <https://www.ine.es/infografias/turismo/desktop/index.html?lang=es> (Accessed April 2019)

Kelley, S. W. (1992). Developing customer orientation among service employees, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 20(1), 27-36.

Kim, W. G., and Moon, Y. J. (2009). Customers' cognitive, emotional, and actionable response to the servicescape: A test of the moderating effect of the restaurant type, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(1), 144-156.

Kohli, A. K., and Jaworski, B. J. (1990). Market orientation: the construct, research propositions, and managerial implications, *Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 1-18.

Morales Mediano, J., and Ruiz-Alba, J. L. (2019). New perspective on Customer Orientation of Service Employees: A conceptual framework. *The Service Industries Journal*, 39(13-14), 966-982.

Narver, J. C., and Slater, S. F. (1990). The effect of a market orientation on business profitability, *Journal of Marketing*, 54(4), 20-35.

Rojo, A., Diéguez, J., and López, P. (2011). Importancia del concepto de Empresa Familiar en investigación: utilización de la base de datos SABI para su clasificación. *Revista de Empresa Familiar*, 1(1), 53-67.

Saxe, R., and Weitz, B. A. (1982). The SOCO scale: a measure of the customer orientation of salespeople, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 19(3), 343-351.

Schneider, B., and White, S. S. (2004). *Service quality: Research perspectives* (Vol. 107). Sage.

Susskind, A. M., Borchgrevink, C. P., Brymer, R. A., and Kacmar, K. M. (2000). Customer service behaviour and attitudes among hotel managers: A look at perceived support functions, standards for service, and service process outcomes, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 24(3), 373-397.





Susskind, A. M., Kacmar, K. M., and Borchgrevink, C. P. (2007): “How organizational standards and coworker support improve restaurant service” *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 48(4), 370-379.





# Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1    AIM.....	3
1.2    RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	4
1.3    OBJECTIVES .....	6
1.4    PRESENTATION OF PUBLICATIONS AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE UNITY OF THE TOPIC .....	6
1.5    PRELIMINARIES AND DETAILS THAT ARE NOT INCLUDED IN PUBLICATIONS DUE TO LIMITED SPACE ..	8
1.5.1 <i>Relational Marketing</i> .....	8
1.5.2 <i>Methodologies</i> .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2: CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES IN FAMILY BUSINESS IN THE HOTEL SECTOR (PUBLICATION 1).....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1    ABSTRACT .....	13
2.2    INTRODUCTION .....	14
2.2.1 <i>Specific Research Objectives</i> .....	16
2.3    LITERATURE REVIEW.....	17
2.3.1 <i>Family Businesses and the Hotel Sector</i> .....	17
2.3.2 <i>Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE)</i> .....	19
2.4    CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS.....	20
2.4.1 <i>Customer Satisfaction and Word of Mouth</i> .....	21
2.5    DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTION .....	24
2.5.1 <i>Limitations and Future Research</i> .....	25
2.6    REFERENCES .....	25
APPENDIX I.....	33
APPENDIX II.....	34
<b>CHAPTER 3: INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF CUSTOMER ORIENTATION (PUBLICATION 2) .....</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1    ABSTRACT: .....	36
3.2    INTRODUCTION .....	36
3.3    LITERATURE REVIEW.....	39
3.3.1 <i>Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE)</i> .....	39
3.3.2 <i>Digital Capabilities</i> .....	40
3.3.3 <i>Internationalisation and Family Business</i> .....	41
3.4    PROPOSED MODEL AND HYPOTHESES.....	44
3.5    RESEARCH MODEL.....	48
3.6    METHODOLOGY .....	49





3.6.1	<i>Sample and Data Collection</i> .....	49
3.6.2	<i>Questionnaire and Scales Used</i> .....	50
3.7	RESULTS .....	50
3.7.1	<i>Validity and Reliability of Measurement Scales</i> .....	51
3.7.2	<i>Estimation of the Proposed Model</i> .....	53
3.7.3	<i>Comparison between Family and Non-family Businesses</i> .....	54
3.7.4	<i>Comparison between Domestic and International Businesses</i> .....	55
3.8	DISCUSSION .....	55
3.8.1	<i>Theoretical Implications</i> .....	55
3.8.2	<i>Managerial Implications</i> .....	57
3.9	LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH .....	58
3.10	CONCLUSION .....	58
3.11	REFERENCES .....	59
	APPENDIX I: .....	70
<b>CHAPTER 4: CUSTOMER ORIENTATION AND E-WOM IN THE HOTEL SECTOR (PUBLICATION 3) .....</b>		<b>73</b>
4.1	ABSTRACT .....	73
4.2	INTRODUCTION .....	73
4.3	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	76
4.3.1	<i>Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE)</i> .....	76
4.3.2	<i>Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)</i> .....	77
4.4	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	79
4.4.1	<i>Study 1. Focus Group</i> .....	81
4.4.2	<i>Study 2. Interviews</i> .....	81
4.4.3	<i>Study 3. Online Focus Group</i> .....	82
4.5	RESULTS AND FINDINGS .....	83
4.5.1	<i>Results from Study 1. Focus Group</i> .....	83
4.5.2	<i>Results from Study 2</i> .....	85
4.5.3	<i>Results from Study 3</i> .....	92
4.6	CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS .....	94
4.7	LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH .....	95
4.8	REFERENCES .....	96
	APPENDIX I .....	104
	APPENDIX II.....	106
<b>CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>		<b>108</b>
5.1	FINDINGS .....	108
5.2	DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	111





5.2.1	<i>Research Question 1</i> .....	111
5.2.2	<i>Research Question 2</i> .....	112
5.2.3	<i>Research Question 3</i> .....	113
5.2.4	<i>Research Question 4</i> .....	113
5.2.5	<i>Research Question 5</i> .....	114
5.2.6	<i>Research Question 6</i> .....	115
5.2.7	<i>Research Question 7</i> .....	116
5.2.8	<i>Research Question 8</i> .....	116
5.2.9	<i>Research Question 9</i> .....	117
5.2.10	<i>Research Question 10</i> .....	117
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS</b> .....		<b>120</b>
6.1	CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY .....	120
6.2	MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS.....	121
6.3	RESEARCH LIMITATIONS.....	123
6.4	FUTURE RESEARCH.....	124
6.5	FINAL REMARKS .....	126
<b>REFERENCES (*)</b> .....		<b>128</b>



---

# List of Figures

---

Figure 1: RM triangle (author's elaboration adapted from Grönroos (1996) .....	9
Figure 2: COSE conceptual model with customer satisfaction and e-WOM.....	34
Figure 3: Research model (author's elaboration adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)).....	48
Figure 4: Standardised coefficients in the proposed model .....	54
Figure 5: COSE and e-WOM (author's elaboration adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004) and Vermeer et al. (2019) .....	106



# List of Tables

---

Table 1: Overall Research Questions (ORQs), Research Questions (RQs) and articles .....	5
Table 2: Sample Characteristics.....	50
Table 3: Loadings (unstandardised and standardised), reliability and AVE of measurement scales .....	52
Table 4: Discriminant validity of measurement scales .....	52
Table 5: Means between family vs non-family businesses, and domestic vs international businesses.....	55
Table 6: Profile of the participants in the three studies .....	104
Table 7: Codes and sub-codes.....	105
Table 8: Findings from Publication 2, comparison between family vs non-family businesses and international vs domestic businesses.....	109
Table 9: Findings from Publication 3 .....	110
Table 10: How do the different COSE dimensions influence the three types of e-WOM.....	117



---

# List of Abbreviations

---

COSE:	Customer orientation of service employees
FB:	Family business
NFB:	Non-family business
RM:	Relationship marketing
e-WOM:	Electronic word of mouth
HRS:	High relational service
CO:	Customer orientation
MO:	Market orientation
RQ:	Research question
ORQ:	Overall research question
SOCO:	Selling orientation-customer orientation
FBI:	Family business institute
NSI:	(Instituto Nacional de Estadística) National Statistics Institute
HK:	Housekeeping
RD:	Rooms division
F&B:	Food and beverages
FO:	Front office





---

# CHAPTER 1: Introduction

---

This doctoral thesis is the result of an investigation carried out in the family business sector, focusing on the role of employees and the consequences of their behaviour when providing services to customers. A main gap in the literature was identified with regard to customer orientation in family businesses, since COSE and e-WOM have never been studied before in the family business field; hence, an opportunity for investigation emerged.

As a result of the research and this doctoral thesis, three core research articles have been published in relevant journals to fill that gap. These articles support the main findings of this current research and confirm the original contributions of this doctoral thesis to expand knowledge within marketing science.

The thesis is divided into six main chapters: the first chapter includes an introduction in which the aim, research questions and objectives are presented and the justification for the unity of the topic is discussed in depth. This is followed by a study of the main literature about the topic, and a final section including preliminaries and details not included in the publications due to limited space.

The second, third and fourth chapters present the three articles respectively. Chapters five and six presents the findings, discussions and conclusions.

## 1.1 Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate the role of customer orientation of service employees (COSE) in the service encounter, and its influence on customer satisfaction and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Also, it encompasses a comparison between family and non-family businesses in the hotel sector, with a study of the influence that every COSE component (technical skills, social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority) has on different types of e-WOM (positive, neutral and negative). In the following sections, this aim will be developed through different objectives.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Based on a systematic analysis of the literature, relevant gaps and challenges were found; therefore, these two overall research questions (ORQs) were proposed:

- ORQ1: What is the role of the antecedents of COSE in family firms?
- ORQ2: What is the influence of COSE on two consequences: a) customer satisfaction and b) e-WOM in family businesses?

In order to answer these, the following specific research questions were proposed:

- RQ1: Is the level of COSE different in family firms?
- RQ2: Do the antecedents and consequences of COSE play a different role in family firms?
- RQ3: What are the most important COSE dimensions from a customer's perspective?
- RQ4: What are the main barriers to employees' decision-making authority?
- RQ5: What demotivates employees the most?
- RQ6: Does customer satisfaction have any influence on e-WOM?
- RQ7: Is the influence of customer satisfaction and e-WOM different in family firms?
- RQ8: What are the COSE dimensions that play the greatest role in the activation of e-WOM customer behaviours?
- RQ9: How do the different COSE dimensions influence the three main types of e-WOM?
- RQ10: Which of the COSE dimensions receive the greatest management effort in order to be fostered among employees?

Hence, it can be seen in the following Table 1 how each article responds to the overall research questions, and to each of the respective specific research questions.

<b>Overall Research Questions</b>	<b>Specific Research Questions</b>	<b>Articles</b>
<p>ORQ1: What is the role of the antecedents of COSE in family firms?</p>	<p>RQ1: Is the level of COSE different in family firms?</p> <p>RQ2: Do the antecedents and consequences of COSE play a different role in family firms?</p> <p>RQ3: What are the most important COSE dimensions from a customer's perspective?</p> <p>RQ4: What are the main barriers to employees' decision-making authority?</p> <p>RQ5: What demotivates employees the most?</p>	<p>Article 1 + Article 2 + Article 3</p>
<p>ORQ2: What is the influence of COSE on two consequences: a) customer satisfaction and b) e-WOM in family businesses?</p>	<p>RQ6: Does customer satisfaction have any influence on e-WOM?</p> <p>RQ7: Is the influence of customer satisfaction and e-WOM different in family firms?</p> <p>RQ8: What are the COSE dimensions that play the greatest role in the activation of e-WOM customer behaviours?</p> <p>RQ9: How do the different COSE dimensions influence the three main types of e-WOM?</p> <p>RQ10: Which of the COSE dimensions receive the greatest management effort in order to be fostered among employees?</p>	<p>Article 2 + Article 3</p>

**Table 1: Overall Research Questions (ORQs), Research Questions (RQs) and articles**

### 1.3 Objectives

The aim of the present doctoral research was to analyse customer orientation of service employees (COSE) in family businesses (FBs) in the hotel sector, since, as already discussed, there is a gap in the literature. Thus, in order to address the aim of the research and therefore to answer the research questions, some objectives have been developed:

1. To conduct deeper study into COSE, developing and proposing an updated model with new elements that can influence business performance such as e-WOM and customer satisfaction.
2. To empirically (quantitatively) test the relationship between customer satisfaction and e-WOM.
3. To evaluate the differences between FBs and NFBs in regards to COSE.
4. To empirically (qualitatively) test the relationships between COSE and e-WOM.
5. To identify which of the COSE components have a higher impact on e-WOM.
6. To analyse which are the most important COSE dimensions and the repercussions from customers', employees' and managers' perspective and to present implications for academia and practitioners.

### 1.4 Presentation of Publications and Justification for the Unity of the Topic

The articles published are:

González-Porras, J. L., Ruiz-Alba, J. L., and Guzmán-Parra, V. F. (2018). Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in the hotel sector. *Revista de Estudios Empresariales. Segunda Época*, (2), 73-85. (Doi:10.17561/ree.v2018n2.4)

González-Porras, J.L., Ruiz-Alba, J.L., Rodríguez-Molina, M.A. and Guzmán-Parra, V.F. (2019). International management of customer orientation. *European Journal of International Management*. (Doi:10.1504/EJIM.2020.10022183).

González-Porras, J.L., Ruiz-Alba, J.L., Morales Mediano, J. (2020). Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*. (Doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.12.004.)

With regard to the aim, the first article “Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in the hotel sector” was a conceptual paper that developed a theoretical framework based on studies on COSE in family businesses – more specifically, in the hotel sector – and then, gathering the existing literature, proposed a model for future empirical research. In the proposed model, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) was, for the first time, considered as a consequence of the COSE model proposed by Hennig-Thurau (2004).

The second article “International management of customer orientation” presented and discussed the results of the empirical quantitative study of COSE proposed in the previous article, and investigated the role of COSE, and its influence on customer satisfaction and e-WOM, with a focus on international management in the hotel sector. A comparison of different types of businesses (family business vs non-family business) was also investigated.

The third article “Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector” was a qualitative study, on family businesses from the hotel sector, that tested the extent to which the different dimensions of COSE (technical skills, social skills, motivation and empowerment) influence the different types of e-WOM (positive, neutral and negative) by means of a triple methodology (focus group, in-depth interviews and online focus group).

The three articles were methodologically connected since they shared an overall objective and were focused on COSE. It is noteworthy that the first article focused on gathering the existing literature about COSE and proposing a model to test in terms of its possible consequences (customer satisfaction and e-WOM); and the other two accomplished the objective of the first article in terms of testing: firstly, with an empirical qualitative methodology using a model that included customer satisfaction and e-WOM as consequences; and secondly, with an empirical qualitative methodology, exploring the impact of the different dimensions of COSE in the different types of e-WOM. Hence, the three studies have a solid line of argument, as the first one examined the role of COSE

theoretically, while the others empirically researched the role of COSE within customer satisfaction and e-WOM.

With regard to the theory, the three articles studied the conceptual framework that supports the COSE model, a concept that is framed under the paradigm of Market Orientation (MO), all within the research field of family businesses in the hotel sector. With these considerations, the unity of the topic is justified.

## **1.5 Preliminaries and Details That Are Not Included in Publications Due to Limited Space**

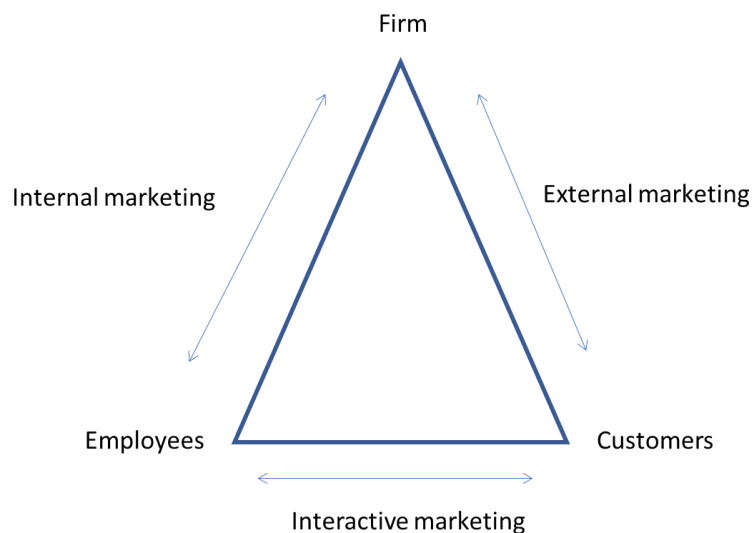
This section has been used to explain the different aspects that, during the elaboration of the publications, due to a lack of space, could not be discussed. The first part refers to the nexus between Relational Marketing (RM) and Customer Orientation (CO). In the second part, an analysis of the methodologies used in the articles has been included.

### **1.5.1 Relational Marketing**

In this context, RM within the family business sector is presented as an area yet to be researched, due to the lack of studies on the topic. That is why RM in family businesses was chosen as the main general theoretical background of this doctoral thesis; RM is about ‘maintaining, attracting and enhancing customer relationships’ (Berry, 1983, p. 25) as it is marketing for the survival of businesses, and more specifically, for family businesses.

The focus of this study is the role that the employee plays within service and relational marketing in family businesses. The behavioural component proved to be crucial when analysing employees and customers, because the performance of the business depends on that relationship. This is explained clearly in the RM triangle proposed by Grönroos (1996), which represents the market situation for a growing number of businesses (see Figure 1 below).

According to this theory, there are three types of marketing when it comes to analysing services. *Internal Marketing* consists of the relationship between the firm and the employees or internal customer; *External Marketing* is the relationships between the firm and the customers; and *Interactive Marketing* is the relationship between the employees and the customers.



**Figure 1: Relational marketing triangle (author's elaboration adapted from Grönroos (1996))**

The focus of this doctoral thesis is the *Interactive Marketing* side, more specifically, the role of the CO of employees that has been demonstrated to be critical in the development of relationship marketing strategies within companies (Webster, 1988). Hence, these relationships have an impact on the total quality perception and satisfaction of customers and is crucial for successful marketing. In addition, it can be confirmed that there is a clear influence from the interactive relationships in services (COSE) on market performance indicators (e-WOM and customer satisfaction), where employees (especially front-line), with their skills and capabilities, have to keep customers satisfied, and in light of 'the organization culture that most effectively efficiently creates the necessary behaviours for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business' (Narver and Slater, 1990, p. 21).

### 1.5.2 Methodologies

In the case of the first article “Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in the hotel sector” there is no empirical methodology as it is considered a conceptual article. This form of scholarship has the objective of knowledge development, by means of gathering the existing literature on a specific research field and results crucial for maintaining a discipline long-term vitality (Stewart and Zinkhan, 2006). Hence, a deep analysis about COSE within family businesses was done, for the first time, and a model was proposed adding e-WOM as a potential consequence. Also, a questionnaire (scales) for measuring the relationships from the model was also proposed.

The main objective of the second article “International management of customer orientation” was to continue developing the analysis proposed in the first one. To achieve it, a quantitative methodology was implemented, by means of a sample and data collection from a family business SABI (Iberic balance analysis system) database. A total of 52 hotels were selected according to the family business European Commission (2008) definition criteria (Subsection 2.2.1, Publication 1), resulting in 387 customers responding to the questionnaire proposed. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also conducted in order to test the reliability of the scales and discriminant validity following Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion. This method enabled the investigation to test all the relationships placed in the model as hypotheses, resulting in 225 valid responses (58.1% response rate); non-response bias analysis was also conducted.

Finally, in the third article “Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector” 5 research questions were proposed to analyse the way in which the different dimensions of COSE impact e-WOM. For that, three qualitative studies were designed, integrated, and conducted by means of the development of a focus group, in-depth interviews, and an online focus group. A total of 25 participants were selected: 4 for the focus group, 15 for the in-depth interviews and 6 for the online focus group. Among them were managers, front-line employees, and customers from hotels, all of which were family businesses.

The design of this thesis follows a mixed-method structure. These methodologies were chosen for studying the same research field from different perspectives. In this sense, this study was designed as explanatory study. According to Creswell (2014), the mixed-methods



approach, specifically an explanatory one, is divided into two main stages: the first one consists of the design of a robust quantitative study and, after the analysis of the results, a qualitative study is developed taking the results from the quantitative study as a cornerstone.

Hence, as has been previously exposed, this doctoral thesis starts with a conceptual paper, that draws and proposes an initial research scenario. Then comes what Creswell (2014) considered an explanatory study, starting with an empirical investigation with a quantitative study, followed by qualitative research that leads to the final conclusions.



# CHAPTER 2: Customer orientation of service employees in family business in the hotel sector (Publication 1)

---

## Customer orientation of service employees in family business in the hotel sector

(Published in *Revista de Estudios Empresariales, Segunda Época*)

### 2.1 Abstract

The business interactions between front-line employees and customers are crucial to evaluating service quality and for a business' performance. A gap has been identified in the literature on both the customer orientation of service employees (COSE) and family businesses (FBs); the concepts never have been studied together before. Due to this fact, we present a concept that develops a theoretical model based on Hennig-Thurau (2004). This model drives research about the COSE and FBs in the hotel sector. The two main contributions are as follow: (1) electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is proposed as a consequence of COSE within FBs and (2) a questionnaire has been developed from relevant subscales to measure COSE and two possible consequences derived from it (Customer Satisfaction and e-WOM). A database from the Iberic Balance Analysis System (SABI) has been selected to study these variables in the hotel sector, and it will be used in a proposed future empirical study that is expected to provide support for the theory.

**Reference:** González Porras, J. L., Ruiz-Alba, J. L., & Guzmán Parra, V. F. (2019). Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in the hotel sector. *Revista De Estudios Empresariales. Segunda Época*, (2)

**DOI:** <https://dx.doi.org/10.17561/ree.v2018n2.4>



# CHAPTER 3: International management of customer orientation (Publication 2)

---

## International management of customer orientation

(Published in *European Journal of International Management*)

### 3.1 Abstract:

This study investigates the role of customer orientation of service employees (COSE) and its influence on customer satisfaction and on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), with a focus on international management. An empirical study was conducted amongst hotel customers with a final valid sample of 265 respondents. Digital capabilities have been included in the COSE model for the first time. Findings indicate that digital capabilities have a positive influence on customer satisfaction that is mediated by COSE. This study has also compared differences between international and national firms and also considered family businesses and non-family businesses. The results show that international hotels have a higher level of COSE than national hotels, mainly due to the technical skills of the employees, and the presence of a higher level of COSE in family businesses (FBs) rather than in non-family businesses (NFBs). Some contributions to academia and to international management have been discussed.

**Reference:** González-Porras, J., Ruiz-Alba, J., & Guzmán-Parra, V. (2019). International management of customer orientation. *European Journal of International Management*.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1504/EJIM.2020.10022183>



# CHAPTER 4: Customer Orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector (Publication 3)

---

## Customer Orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector

(Published in the *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*)

### 4.1 Abstract

Customers frequently engage in electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) to share their service experience. This is particularly important in hospitality where the role of front-line employees and their level of customer orientation are critical. However, it has not yet been studied how the Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE) influences e-WOM. This study addresses this gap. Qualitative data were collected from family-run hotels through three independent studies with 25 different participants via: a focus group, in-depth interviews and an online focus group. This research provides novel findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of how the COSE dimensions play different roles in the three types of customer e-WOM (positive, neutral and negative). This investigation also contributes to the literature by identifying new factors that could be incorporated in the COSE model, such as attitude, customisation and extra-role performance. Some managerial contributions regarding COSE and a future research agenda are proposed.

**Reference:** González-Porras, J.L., Ruiz-Alba, J.L. and Morales-Mediano, J. (2021) 'Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector', *Int. J. Internet Marketing and Advertising*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp.302–326.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.12.004>.







# CHAPTER 5: Findings and Discussion

---

## 5.1 Findings

The overall aim of the present doctoral study was to investigate customer orientation in family businesses in the hotel sector. To this end, three main research articles have been published.

The first article “Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in hotel sector” (2018) gathered the existing literature with regard to the customer orientation of service employees (COSE) and proposed an updated theoretical model of COSE placing electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as a consequence of COSE for the first time. Hence, it can be said that the main finding in this publication is the research gap and the formulation of the theoretical model around it, since COSE and e-WOM have never been studied together before. At the same time, the paper included a proposal (questionnaire) for an empirical study to validate the theoretical model, including validated scales that have enabled the test and the relationship between the variables. For the rest of the publications, an explanatory table has been included, since the findings for this first publication are encompassed in the model proposed; it can be seen in Appendix II (Chapter 2, p. 40).

The second article “International management of customer orientation” addressed the empirical study proposed in the previous article, carrying out empirical research to support an analysis of COSE placing e-WOM as a consequence and digital capabilities as an antecedent. An analysis comparing family businesses and non-family businesses was conducted, while a comparison of international businesses in the hotel sector with national ones was also performed. The results supported the updated COSE model, which considered employees’ technical and social abilities, motivation and decision-making authority, and had positive effects on customer satisfaction and e-WOM. Hence, digital capabilities have a positive effect on COSE, but not directly on customer satisfaction, although the mediating role played by COSE makes this relationship significant, meaning that there is no direct positive relationship between customer

satisfaction and digital capabilities, but the effect that COSE plays enriches the relationship between these two, since COSE has a positive influence on customer satisfaction, and a positive influence on digital capabilities. This is a relevant finding, due to the fact that having customer-oriented employees and with digital capabilities, it leads to a satisfactory relationship with the customer. Also, another finding is the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and e-WOM, that confirms the potential that COSE and digital capabilities have for employees. In this sense, this article revealed the higher level of COSE of family businesses over non-family businesses; the higher level was present in each of the dimensions. Meanwhile, in the comparison between international and national hotels, the international ones presented a higher level of COSE mainly due to the technical skills of the employees, since for the rest of the dimensions, the difference was marginal.

**Table 2: Findings in Publication 2, comparison between family vs non-family businesses and international vs domestic businesses**

Dimensions/Type of Business	Family vs Non-Family Businesses	International vs Domestic Businesses
Technical Skills	Higher in Family Business (H5a)	Higher in International (H6a)
Social Skills	Higher in Family Business (H5b)	Marginal differences (H6b)
Motivation	Higher in Family Business (H5c)	Marginal differences (H6c)
Empowerment	Higher in Family Business (H5d)	Marginal differences (H6d)

The third article “Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector” addressed the relationships between COSE and e-WOM, which is a gap in the literature never studied before. Qualitative data were collected from family-managed hotels through a triple methodology: focus group, in-depth interviews and an online focus group.

One of the greatest finding and contribution in this article is the discovery of the COSE dimension that has a major influence on e-WOM. Results showed dimensions of COSE with a higher impact on e-WOM were, specifically social skills and motivation for positive and negative e-WOM. Interviewees showed their agreement in the influence that social skills have for the customer relationships, positively and negatively, and the ones with a lower influence (technical skills and decision-making authority).

**Table 3: Findings from Publication 3**

Dimensions /Study	Focus Group	Interviews	Online Focus Group
Technical Skills	Do not activate e-WOM, since are taken for granted	Employees' trainings is focused on technical skills, but does not generate positive e-WOM.	No aspects to highlight
Social Skills	Activates e-WOM for the good and for the bad.	Highest impact on e-WOM. Empathy as the most important skill.	Consensus among the participants on the influence of Social skills on e-WOM (empathy vs kindness)
Motivation	Antecedent of customisation	Crucial element from customer perspective	Lack of recognition can cause demotivation
Empowerment	Not normally dealt with at senior management level	Least important dimension leading to e-WOM	Causes difficulties in day-to-day operations because it is not addressed by management

This investigation also contributes to the literature by identifying new factors that could be incorporated in future studies into the COSE model, such as attitude, customisation and extra-role performance. These contributions came up when the participants were debating which social skill was the most important one when serving the customer. It is also considered a relevant finding, since the previous studies about COSE did not enter specifically into differentiating the types of social skills that the employee should have when facing the customer (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Kelley, 1992; Brown et al., 2002; Susskind et al., 2000; 2007).

Hence, the main findings of this doctoral thesis are the new antecedent of COSE proposed and tested in the articles published (digital capabilities) and the positive influence of COSE and its dimensions on customer satisfaction and the different types of e-WOM. In the following section, the different answers to the research questions, according to the findings of the research, have been included.

## 5.2 Discussion of Results and Answers to Research Questions

In this thesis, relevant research questions have been identified, developed and thoroughly answered, following a scientific methodology. This subsection, presents in a systematic and structured way these questions and the subsequent findings that, along with the discussion, can contribute to provide solid answers to these questions, previously formulated. Although these questions and answers can be found in different sections of the thesis, but in a scattered way, however, it is convenient to present them in ten subsections in order to answer structurally to the research questions proposed from the beginning of this research.

### 5.2.1 Research Question 1

RQ1: Is the level of COSE different in family firms?

This research question was initially proposed in ‘Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector’, and lastly empirically addressed in ‘International management of customer orientation’.

By a test of means in Subsection 3.6.3, the level of COSE in family businesses has been proved to be different than in non-family businesses. Indeed, the results showed a higher level in each of the COSE dimensions. The interpretation of the results to answer this research question, can be twofold:

- This is the first time that the construct of COSE has been studied in the family business field, compared with previous studies such as Kelley (1992) or Brown et al. (2002), that did not take into consideration the family element while studying COSE. Having discovered the higher presence of COSE in family businesses than in non-family businesses, it can be considered as an explanation for why family businesses establish close relationships with their customers, enhancing their daily internal procedures and structures to serve them in the best way, and also transmitting their value proposition to them.

- Another aspect to highlight is what Tokarczyk et al. (2007) revealed regarding customer orientation contribution to family businesses to facilitate market orientation. Hence, it can be said that a higher presence of COSE in family businesses could be considered as a cornerstone for a family business to start improving their market orientation, with the associated benefits in terms of performance.

### 5.2.2 Research Question 2

RQ2: Do the antecedents and consequences of COSE play a different role in family firms?

‘Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector’, together with ‘International management of customer orientation’ and ‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’, have addressed and answered this research question.

The COSE dimensions are technical skill, social skills, motivation and decision-making authority (empowerment), established by Hennig-Thurau (2004) and it was proved that all of them influence the COSE outcomes to the same extent, and also specified that all the dimensions have to be accomplished to have COSE as such.

However, in ‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’ it was proved by a qualitative study that there are some dimensions (social skills) which play a different role in the COSE consequences. Hence, it has been uncovered that not all the dimensions of COSE act to the same extent as Thurau’s model established. This is even more relevant in the case of family businesses in the hotel sector since, as has been tackled in RQ1, there is a higher level of COSE in the family ones. Also, in ‘International management of customer orientation’, digital capabilities were tested positively to be an antecedent of COSE in family businesses, for the first time. Consequently, the antecedents and consequences of COSE play a different role in family firms.

### 5.2.3 Research Question 3

RQ3: What are the most important COSE dimensions from a customer's perspective?

Businesses and corporations are always looking for the satisfaction of their customers, since it is a strategy to start gaining their loyalty and build a long-term relationship. As a consequence of this, a manager's actions and goals are aligned to achieve this objective. That was one of the main reasons for asking customers about the most important COSE dimension from their perspective, since asking them their most important COSE dimension will enable detection of which aspects and items it is worthier to focus on, in order to get the highest level of satisfaction as possible.

Hennig-Thurau's (2004) model, tested the positive relationship between COSE and customer satisfaction, which was a relationship which was also empirically tested and confirmed in 'International management of customer orientation'. In this last article, the relationship between customer satisfaction and e-WOM was also tested, and was shown to be positive. This shows that customers engage in e-WOM action when they are satisfied. However, this does not conclude anything since, it is unclear which of the COSE dimensions is the one with greatest weight in terms of customer satisfaction.

'Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector' encompassed the answered to this research question, revealing that social skills are the most important COSE dimension for customers, for generating positive and negative e-WOM.

### 5.2.4 Research Question 4

RQ4: What are the main barriers to employees' decision-making authority?

The role of decision-making authority (empowerment) and its repercussions on customer satisfaction and e-WOM as an indivisible part of COSE have been studied in 'Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector', and 'International management of customer orientation', not forgetting that in this model all

the COSE dimensions were having the same influence on its consequences, following Hennig-Thurau's (2004) model. In contrast, it is in 'Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector' that this research question has been studied and discussed.

In this sense, empowerment has been demonstrated not to be dealt with at a senior management level (Subsection 4.4.1), and this represents the main barrier for employees when facing this ability. Likewise, the results from Study 2 in 'Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector' (Subsection 4.4.2.3) state that, from the customer perspective, this dimension is considered the less important COSE dimension leading to e-WOM, due to the fact that they can understand that a particular employee may not have the authority or permission to solve a particular problem or, in contrast, what customers demand is speed in line management decision-making to solve any issue. This matter was also debated in Study 3 in the same article (Subsection 4.4.3), when managers manifested that empowerment was not included on their agendas. Thus, it can be said that one of the main barriers for employees regarding empowerment is the inclusion of management in its daily important tasks to develop.

### 5.2.5 Research Question 5

RQ5: What demotivates employees the most?

Motivation against demotivation has always been a matter of concern at a management level. In 'Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector', being more concrete in Study 2 (Subsections 4.4.2.4 and 4.4.2.5), the confrontation of these two forces can have a twofold interpretation:

- From the customer perspective, normally they tend to be sensitive when facing demotivated employees, given that demotivation is influencing e-WOM when it is affecting the service experience. As a result, motivation represents a crucial element for customers while a service is being delivered (Mattila, 1999).



- From the management perspective, motivation receives less attention, since they tend to focus more on skills, and are mainly concerned with motivation as long as it is directly affecting other skills. On the other hand, employee demotivation can have its origin at the management level as it relates to the level of empowerment delivered to employees.

Therefore, it can be said that one of the main aspects that demotivates employees the most is a lack of a sense of empowerment in their daily activities.

### 5.2.6 Research Question 6

RQ6: Does customer satisfaction have any influence on e-WOM?

The relationship and influence that customer satisfaction has on e-WOM has been developed in ‘International management of customer orientation’; this is a matter that has been previously studied by authors like Ditcher (1966); the reasons why customers decide to engage in WOM communications has also been studied in terms of the strong feelings caused by a specific product.

Later on, Anderson (1998) postulated regarding the satisfaction of the customer after receiving the service and its possible recommendation. For this reason, the relationship between customer satisfaction and e-WOM resulted in the model proposed. As a result of the study, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and e-WOM.

### 5.2.7 Research Question 7

RQ7: Is the influence of customer satisfaction and e-WOM different in family firms?

As previously indicated in RQ6, the influence of customer satisfaction on e-WOM (Anderson, 1998; Ditcher, 1966) was positive. This was a pending subject in the family

business field. However, no significant differences have been discovered, since the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and e-WOM in non-family businesses is the same as that in family businesses.

The results confirmed that, also in family businesses, the relationship between customer satisfaction and e-WOM is positive. Consequently, the influence that customer satisfaction has on e-WOM can be confirmed to be positive too.

### 5.2.8 Research Question 8

RQ8: What are the COSE dimensions that play the greatest role in the activation of e-WOM customer behaviours?

The answer to this research question is developed in ‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’ (Subsection 4.4.2.1). When examining all the COSE dimensions against e-WOM, it was proved by a qualitative study that not all of them have the same influence in the activation of e-WOM.

More specifically, it was defined that social skills is the dimension with a higher weight in the activation, aligned with Poulston (2008). This means that the presence of social skills is very notable and triggers customers to go to social media to share their experiences and comments. On the other hand, a low level of social skills will have the same effect, but in contrast, this will activate customer intention to share their bad experiences on social media, in a negative tone.

### 5.2.9 Research Question 9

RQ9: How do the different COSE dimensions influence the three main types of e-WOM?

‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’ addressed the influence of every COSE dimension in Subsection 4.4; an illustrative table has been included to summarise and synthetise the effects that every single COSE dimension has on every type of e-WOM, according to Vermeer’s (2019) classification.

Apart from the COSE dimensions previously discussed, customers in interview also indicated another employee behaviour that enriches the delivery of the service and can have a potential effect on customer satisfaction. This is the example of behaviors such as attitude, extra-role performance, customisation and kindness.

**Table 4: How do the different COSE dimensions influence the three types of e-WOM**

Dimensions /e-WOM	Positive e-WOM	Negative e-WOM	Neutral e-WOM
Technical Skills	Taken for granted	If missing	No references
Social Skills	High weight and highest impact	High weight and highest impact	No references
Motivation	Crucial element from customer perspective	When employees are demotivated	No effect if it is not overshadowing the service
Empowerment	If problem, escalates quickly to management line	Problem solving at a low speed	Least important COSE dimension

### 5.2.10 Research Question 10

RQ10: Which of the COSE dimensions receive the greatest management effort in order to be fostered among employees?

From the management perspective, ‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’ has discovered that they are neither focusing on the same proportion in each of the COSE dimensions when training employees. Indeed, the dimension that receives more attention from the management perspective is the case of technical skills (Argyle, 1983), since they are focused on training the employee on how to technically deliver the service in the best way possible. Between these technical skills are included internal procedures, trainings, and formation plans.



It is also worth highlighting what was uncovered in ‘International management of customer orientation’ in the case of the classification of international businesses versus domestic ones. This matter is addressed in Subsection 3.6.4, concluding that the international ones have a higher level of COSE rather than the domestic ones, specifically and solely due to the dimension of technical skills.

Hence, surprisingly, the management is not paying attention to COSE dimensions such as the training of social skills that receives more attention from the customer perspective, and has a higher impact on service evaluation and, consequently, on customer satisfaction.





## CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

---

With regard to the results, the articles published showed positive results. These results and their implications could be useful for academics, as well as practitioners and



managers, who can implement these strategies in their business structure to improve business performance.

## 6.1 Contributions to Theory

‘Customer orientation of service employees in family business in hotel sector’ and ‘International management of customer orientation’ offer several relevant contributions.

Firstly, after a critical review of the existing literature in a more relational context (hotels), one of the main theoretical contributions is the proposal of a theoretical model based on Hennig-Thurau’s (2004) research, which composed a based to form the model proposed. Also, the incorporation of e-WOM (Vermeer al., 2019) and digital capabilities (Teece, 1997) to the model represents a theoretical contribution.

Secondly, the empirical methodology carried out entailed a test of the model and the relationships with the variables for the first time. The results showed a positive relationship between digital capabilities and customer satisfaction (Brady and Cronin, 2001) due to the mediating role of COSE, and a positive relationship between COSE and e-WOM through the mediating role of customer satisfaction.

Another contribution to theory has been the introduction of the family business field into the study of COSE. It has been revealing the fact of discovering the higher level of COSE in family businesses compared to non-family ones. This contributes to the development of the family businesses state of art, given the importance that these types of businesses have in the Spanish and European economies, and the differences that separate them from the non-family ones (Gallo et al., 2004).

In the same way, the study of COSE in the service sector, specifically in the hotel sector, also represents a contribution to theory, since the hotel sector is classified to have elements of high relationships (HRs), due to the customer-employee interaction (Di Mascio, 2010). On the other hand, in ‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’, the main contribution to theory is the analysis of the influence of the COSE

dimensions over the three types of e-WOM (Vermeer et al., 2019), which has never been considered before in the family business field.

This doctoral thesis represents a contribution to the development of the family business theory and its market orientation by means of the study of the customer orientation of service employees (COSE). As such, it contributes to the development of the Relationship Marketing (RM) theory (Berry, 1995) since the model of Henning-Thurau (2004) did not have any connection to RM theory and was focused on transactional services (retail). This doctoral thesis has contributed to this theory by means of studying the hotel sector, as a service with elements of high relationship components, following Morales Mediano's (2019) research in the private banking sector.

## 6.2 Managerial Contributions

The positive relationship between digital capabilities and customer satisfaction, regarding COSE, implies that COSE is a potential mediating tool that managers ought to take into consideration due to the influence that it can have on customer satisfaction and e-WOM. This could be implemented in training programmes that can enhance the employee digital skills and capabilities (Busse et al., 2019) in order to deliver a quicker and higher quality service to the customers.

In regards with the type of hotels analysed, international hotels presented a higher level of COSE than national ones, primarily due to the technical abilities of their staff, which means international hotels have a competitive advantage over competitors. Having better-trained employees results in higher customer orientation and, as a consequence, better performance.

At the same time, FBs exhibited a higher level of COSE than NFBs, perhaps due to the fact that FBs were, in some cases, more flexible and adaptable to customer needs than NFBs (Gallo, 2004), because of the familiar component. Managers of family businesses should consider internationalisation strategies to take advantage of both aspects with regard to COSE by being an FB with international standards.

The third article provides novel contributions to the COSE and e-WOM literature. Additionally, several useful managerial implications and recommendations are highlighted. In this sense, one of the most revealing findings of this article is that social skills is the COSE dimension with a higher influence in producing positive e-WOM, whereas technical skills is a dimension which is taken for granted from the customer perspective; indeed, a lack of technical skills produces negative e-WOM. However, managers and practitioners always focus their training programmes on technical skills, forgiving social skills. One contribution to practitioners would be to concentrate efforts on training employees' social skills (empathy, smiling, service customisation, active listening, initiative, teamwork, assertiveness and flexibility).

Another finding from a customer perspective is the influence of employee motivation, normally influenced by the employee's labour conditions. The presence of unfairness, and the lack of empowerment and of other resources to solve customer problems can create demotivation behaviour and produce negative e-WOM.

With regard to empowerment, employees normally perceive risk in taking decisions without consulting supervisors (Crowley et al., 2014). Managers also give limited attention to empowerment. For this reason, another recommendation for practitioners is to establish a clear strategy for staff development, by means of creating clear rules, so that front-line employees can have the capacity to take quick decisions to solve customer problems.

Moreover, service customisation, attitude and extra-role performance were some other factors leading to positive e-WOM. A combination, among all the factors previously mentioned, can enrich employee-firm-customer relationships (Grönroos, 1996), since the implementation of training programmes by management, focusing on training employees' social skills with a special interest in aspects such as problem solving can enable the delivery of a closer and rewarding service to customers leading to higher levels of customer satisfaction and positive e-WOM.



Lastly, it is important to note that the present doctoral thesis fills a gap in the literature, as this field has received little academic attention, and contributes to knowledge of marketing in the family business sector. In particular, few studies have examined family businesses with regards to COSE, even if it is a demonstrated potential tool for them. The articles published as part of this research can be considered original, as they have incorporated relevant literature and empirical results.

To sum up, it can be concluded that, in order for a business to be effectively oriented in the market – specifically, relating to customer orientation – a special interest has to be focused on employees, since they are the ones facing the customer and delivering the service. This can open managers' minds to improving the marketing in family businesses, given its demonstrated importance in business performance and survival down the generations.

### **6.3 Research Limitations**

Every research project involves some limitations in their execution. This doctoral thesis, as a research work, is not free from limitations.

In terms of geographical location, one limitation that is common in the three publications is that the research has been carried out in one Spanish region (Andalusia). Although this region is significant and, although Andalusia represents 17.3% of the total national territory, it would be interesting to extend the research to other regions or countries and compare the results extracted.

In the case of the first article 'Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in the hotel sector' and second article 'International management of customer orientation', there is a focus on the role that the employee plays with regard to the customer. From this perspective, more future research needs to be done to cover, for instance, managers, key informants, and the customer perspective, implementing a cross-validation methodology to evaluate the degree of COSE that the employee has with a wider perspective.

Another limitation is the fact that only family businesses from the hotel sector were analysed; in this sense, further research needs to be done, since a cross-sector comparison between family businesses could provide more robustness to the family business analysis.

In the third article ‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’, the main limitation is that the study has only been applied to the hotel sector in Costa del Sol (Spain). It would be interesting to expand it to other touristic areas and other sectors. Also, a researcher’s presence bias responses have to be taken into account, since the study was qualitative (Creswell, 2014).

#### **6.4 Future Research**

Some future research avenues have been pointed out in each of the publications presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 and are also discussed below.

In ‘Customer orientation of service employees in family businesses in the hotel sector’ it was suggested that how job satisfaction and employee commitment play a role in the antecedents of COSE should be explored. Also, it was suggested that differences between the types of hotels (e.g., rural, city, beach) could also be studied to observe how customers’ needs are fulfilled in different contexts, and at different levels (from one- to five-star hotels). A threefold perspective within COSE could be studied—managers, customers and employees—considering the organisational level as a whole.

In ‘International management of customer orientation’ it was suggested that future studies could include other geographical areas, international comparisons between hotels, or even the differences in family businesses between different countries (cross-cultural). In this publication, it was also suggested that a threefold perspective of COSE could be included, considering all the profiles included in the business (employee, managers and customers), since the majority of the research in this field has been

carried out from the customer perspective. A comparison between the different profiles included in the businesses would be interesting to study.

In ‘Customer orientation and e-WOM in the hotel sector’ new future research areas were proposed due to the discovery of the importance of factors such as customisation (Pallant et al., 2020; Zhang and Zheng, 2020) in order to promote positive e-WOM. In this research, one of the main findings was the most important COSE dimension that activates e-WOM; however, it would be interesting to study social skills and employees’ motivation placed as an antecedent of customisation. Employees’ attitude, that has been discovered to be a potential influencer in the relationship between COSE and e-WOM, could be considered along the same lines. Future research could include attitude (Xiong and King, 2019) in the COSE model. Indeed, it has been demonstrated in this study that human resources departments, when recruiting personnel, are paying little attention to employees’ attitudes. Hence, there is a gap to be filled.

In this sense, in the third publication, it was also suggested that the reasons why senior hotel managers do not feel the need to empower front-line employees to allow them to make quick decisions in the customers’ interest, in line with Humborstad (2014), could be investigated.

Extra-role performance was also an important finding in the third publication, and it was recommended to do an investigation around what can be triggered by COSE, and as a consequence, what relationship could exist between the ‘extra mile’ and e-WOM, by means of a quantitative methodology. This is something that also deserves research.

Also, regarding COSE and e-WOM, a future research avenue that could be addressed is the analysis of how each COSE dimension has a different impact on e-WOM but from a quantitative analysis, since in this doctoral thesis, it has been addressed from the qualitative perspective. Hence, having both types of research methodologies in the same study field could be useful in order to compare the results and conclusions.

It would be also interesting to investigate how the antecedents of COSE could be investigated as causal configurations of variables using Fuzzy-Set / Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) (Ragin, 2000). This would also help to find which of these causal configuration are necessary conditions and which are sufficient conditions.

Thinking about the use of smart services it would be relevant to study how service robots (Tuomi et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020) can enhance customer orientation of service employees in hospitality.

However, something that would definitely be interesting to address in future research would be to see the implementation of artificial intelligence in hotel services to see in what manner anticipation may play an important role in customer satisfaction. This could be beneficial for customers, in terms of offering a better and quicker service and, for businesses in terms of the possibility of cost saving.

## 6.5 Final Remarks

During this research, many findings and contributions have been revealed and debated. However, there is a matter that ought to be pointed, namely the humanitarian component doted in this research.

The service sector is not such as the primary or the secondary sector, that are less humanised as the tertiary. The last one is characterised by the relationship between human beings, and how the work between them is focused on serving others. As such, specifically the hospitality sector is distinguished by altruistic behaviours due to the tasks which must be completed. Hosting people and caring for them is a matter of serving others in the best way possible. This is even more intensive in the case of family businesses, where the family values are present in the management of the company in many cases.

Therefore, the findings of this research, such as social skills being the most important COSE dimension, reminds us how important the development of these skills (kindness, attitude, extra-role performance, empathy, etc.) are in society to promote an acceptable



and conformable level of coexistence. My conclusion and final message in this doctoral thesis to employees, customers, businesses, students, and the scientific community in general, relates to the effort that society should put into improving the development of social skills and emotional intelligence to make improvements in the current society and to make cohabitation easier and more successful.



## REFERENCES (\*).

---

Anderson, E.W. (1998). Customer Satisfaction and Word-of-Mouth. *Journal of Service Research*, 1(1), 1–14.

Argyle, M. (1983): *The psychology of interpersonal behaviour*. Penguin press, New York, US.

Berry, L. L. (1983). Relationship marketing. *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*, 66(3), 33-47.

Berry, L.L. (1995). Relationship marketing of services – Growing interest, emerging perspectives, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(4), 236-245.

Brady, M. and Cronin J. (2001). Customer orientation: Effects on customer service perceptions and outcomes behaviors, *Journal of Service Research*, 3(3), 249-51.

Brown, T. J., Mowen, J. C., Donavan D. T., and Licata, J. W. (2002). The customer orientation of service workers: Personality trait effects on self- and supervisor performance ratio, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 110-119.

Busse, J., Lange, A., and Schumann, M. (2019). Effects of digitalization on vocational education and training: First results of a qualitative study. *DELFI 2019*.

Creswell, J. W., (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed., Sage publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Crowley, M., Payne, J. C., and Kennedy, E. (2014). Working better together? Empowerment, panopticon and conflict approaches to teamwork, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 35(3), 483-506.

Dichter, E. (1966). How Word-of-Mouth Advertising Works. *Harvard Business Review*, 44(November–December), 147–166

Di Mascio, R. (2010). The service models of frontline employees, *Journal of Marketing*, 74(4), 63-80.

European Commission (2008): [online] [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promotingentrepreneurship/we-work-for/family-business\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promotingentrepreneurship/we-work-for/family-business_en) (Accessed February 2018).

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50.

Gallo, M. Á., Tàpies, J., and Cappuyns, K. (2004). Comparison of family and nonfamily business: Financial logic and personal preference, *Family Business Review*, 17(4), 303-318.

Grönroos, C. (1996). Relationship marketing logic. *Asia-Australia Marketing Journal*, 4(1), 7-18.

Hennig-Thurau, T. (2004). Customer orientation of service employees: Its impact on customer satisfaction, commitment, and retention, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 15(5), 460-478.

Humborstad, S. I. W. (2014) ‘When industrial democracy and empowerment go hand-in-hand: A co-power approach’, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 35(3), 391-411.

Kelley, S. W. (1992). Developing customer orientation among service employees, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 20(1), 27-36.

Lu, V. N., Wirtz, J., Kunz, W. H., Paluch, S., Gruber, T., Martins, A., and Patterson, P. G. (2020). Service robots, customers and service employees: what can we learn from the academic literature and where are the gaps?, *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 30 (3), 361-391.

Mattila, A.S. (1999). The role of culture and purchase motivation in service encounter evaluations, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 13(4/5), 376-389.

Morales Mediano, J., and Ruiz-Alba, J. L. (2019b). Customer orientation in highly relational services, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 38(2), 209-223.

Narver, J. C., and Slater, S. F. (1990). The effect of a market orientation on business profitability, *Journal of Marketing*, 54(4), 20-35.

Pallant, J., Sands, S., and Karpen, I. (2020). Product customization: A profile of consumer demand, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 54, 102030. [online] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698919311609> (Accessed 13 April 2020)

Poulston, J. (2008). Hospitality workplace problems and poor training: a close relationship, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(4), 412-427.

Ragin, C. C. (2000). *Fuzzy-set social science*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Rodó, J. E. (1993). *Ariel: Motivos de proteo* (Vol. 3). Fundación Biblioteca Ayacuch.

Stewart, D. W., and Zinkhan, G. M. (2006). Enhancing marketing theory in academic research, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34(4), 477-480.

Susskind, A.M., Borchgrevink, C.P., Brymer, R.A., and Kacmar, K.M. (2000). Customer service behavior and attitudes among hotel managers: a look at perceived support functions, standards for service, and service process outcomes, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 24(3), 373-397.



Susskind, A.M., Kacmar, K.M., and Borchgrevink, C.P. (2007) 'How organizational standards and coworker support improve restaurant service', *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 48(4), 370-379.

Teece, D.J., Pisano, G., and Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management, *Strategic Management Journal*, (18)7, 509-533.

Tokarczyk, J., Hansen, E., Green, M., and Down, J. (2007). A resource-based view and market orientation theory examination of the role of "familiness" in family business success, *Family Business Review*, 20(1), 17-31

Tuomi, A., Tussyadiah, I. P., and Stienmetz, J. (2020). Applications and implications of service robots in hospitality, *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 62 (2), 232-247.

Vermeer, S. A., Araujo, T., Bernritter, S. F., and van Noort, G. (2019). Seeing the wood for the trees: How machine learning can help firms in identifying relevant electronic word-of-mouth in social media, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 36 (3), 492-508.

Webster Jr, F. E. (1988). The rediscovery of the marketing concept, *Business Horizons*, 31(3), 29-39.

Xiong, L., and King, C. (2019) 'Aligning employees' attitudes and behavior with hospitality brands: The role of employee brand internalization', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 40 (1), 67-76.

Zhang, C., and Zheng, X. (2020) 'Customization strategies between online and offline retailers', *Omega*, 102230. [online] (Accessed 13 April 2020) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305048319304955>

(\* This list of references contains the sources that have been cited in this thesis in chapters 1, 5 and 6 (regardless that some of them are also cited in the published articles in chapters 2, 3 and 4).