HOW OLD IS YOUR SOUL? DIFFERENCES IN THE IMPACT OF EWOM ON GENERATION X AND MILLENNIALS

ABSTRACT

Purpose – Online reviews have received research attention in recent years as they work as precursors of consumer behaviors. Previous studies have suggested that the influence of online reviews may vary across generations. However, the previous literature has not analyzed yet whether millennials and generation X react differently to online reviews. This study aims to shed light on this by analyzing whether the attitudes and behavioral intentions generated by online reviews are different for these two generational cohorts.

Design/method – An experimental procedure was designed to manipulate online review valence; data was collected from 351 respondents in two samples, generation X and millennial participants.

Findings – Results suggested that positive online reviews generate more positive customer attitudes and booking intentions than negative online reviews. In addition, generation X vs. millennials moderates the link among online review valence, attitudes, and booking intentions. The resultant behaviors from online reviews are more intense among generation X than for millennials.

Practical implications – Managers should be aware of online review valence and their customers' generational cohort, that is, whether they are millennials or generation X, as they react differently to online reviews.

Originality/value – This research examines the moderating role of millennials and generation X in the relationship between online reviews, consumer attitudes, and behavioral intentions. The aim is to explain how millennial and generation X consumers react to eWOM, that is, whether generational cohort mitigates or enhances the effects of positive vs. negative online reviews on consumer reactions.

Keywords – eWOM, valence, generation X, millennials, attitude, intentions.

INTRODUCTION

Information communications technologies have changed the way consumers make purchase decisions (Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2020). These technologies have opened a new path to purchase (Nielsen, 2017) that allows consumers to access almost any kind of information. An important source of online information is electronic word-of-mouth (hereafter: eWOM). eWOM has been defined as "all informal communications directed at consumers through internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers" (Litvin *et al.*, 2018). eWOM can take various forms such as e-mail, social network posts, videos, and online product/service reviews. This study focuses on online reviews. Online reviews are important because they allow consumers to obtain unbiased information from other consumers (Chu *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, consumer online reviews are seen by other consumers as more credible and trustworthy than marketer-issued information (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Gretzel and Yoo, 2008).

Prior hospitality-based research has shown that eWOM acts as a social influence on customer behaviors (Book and Tanford, 2019). Previous studies have analyzed the effect of eWOM on customer responses, such as attitudes (Casaló *et al.*, 2015a; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009), intentions (Ruiz-Equihua *et al.*, 2019; Sparks and Browning, 2011), trust (Anaya-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020), and engagement (Kanje *et al.*, 2020). However, there may be differences in the impact of eWOM on customer behaviors in the hospitality context based on generational cohort. Previous hospitality-based studies have examined differences in customer behaviors among generations. For example, Yoo and Gretzel (2009) found that millennials and generation X individuals are more prone than the baby boomer and silent generations to use online reviews when planning trips. Similarly, Kim *et al.* (2015) showed

that millennial and generation X customers tend to use more online sources than baby boomers and the silent generation, who tend to use more offline sources when planning trips. Moreover, Confente and Vigolo (2018) found that eWOM influences the customer booking intentions of millennials and generation X significantly more than it does the intentions of the baby boomer and silent generations. In sum, previous research detected that generation X and millennials are more prone to use eWOM than previous generations. This could be due to generation X and millennials having higher rates of internet adoption than earlier generations (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016).

However, despite the similar levels of eWOM usage between generation X and millennials, every generational cohort is associated with certain values and priorities (Jackson *et al.*, 2011). Thus, it is reasonable to think that millennial and generation X consumers might react differently to the online environment (Wagner and Acier, 2017). Despite previous research detecting that generation X and millennials are more prone to use eWOM than previous generations, extant studies still do not consider differences in term of reactions to eWOM between these cohorts (Bravo *et al.*, 2020). The present study aims to shed light on this aspect. To do so, we examine whether millennial and generation X consumers react differently to eWOM and, if so, how and why.

Due to the importance of eWOM, we consider that it is incumbent on marketers to clarify the behavioral differences provoked in millennials and generation X by eWOM messages. Thus, the present study addresses an important research gap in the understanding of eWOM (Falcão *et al.*, 2019). We analyze the moderating role of the millennial and generation X cohorts on the relationship between online reviews and two important responses

provoked by eWOM, namely consumer attitudes and booking intentions. To do so, we adopt generational cohort theory (Inlglehart, 1977).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generational cohort

A generational cohort is the aggregate of individuals within a particular birth age range who, in their formative years, go through similar life experiences which affect their future behaviors (Ryder, 1965). Generational cohort theory posits that people can be grouped based on their birth dates (Ladhari *et al.*, 2019). Using generational cohorts to analyze consumer behaviors has been shown to be more useful than other demographics, such as age and gender (Eastman and Liu, 2012). Generational cohort theory identifies several cohorts from 1925. Brosdahl and Carpenter (2011) categorized the generational cohorts as: the silent generation (1925–1945), baby boomers (1946–1960), generation X (1961–1981) and generation Y/millennials (born in 1982 or after). Although there is no full agreement as to the start and end points of generation Y (Bolton *et al.*, 2013), there are no huge variations in this regard, as most classifications agree it starts in the early 1980s (Dunphy, 1999; Markert, 2004), and ends in the late 1990s (Brosdahl and Carpenter, 2011).

Previous research has identified descriptive differences between generation X members and millennials; this is the focus of the present study. Generation X are skeptical and pragmatic (Eastman and Liu, 2012), and can be unsure of themselves, which makes them seek reassurance to establish if their choices are correct (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016). Millennials are digital natives, feel comfortable with technology and devices, are obsessed with social

media (Bolton *et al.*, 2013), and are technologically savvy and better informed (Ladhari *et al.*, 2019; Valentine and Powers, 2013). Gupta *et al.* (2020) noted that younger customers use more digital devices. A recent study reported that 88% of 18 to 29-year-olds use social media, which falls to 78% among the 30 to 49-year-age group (Aaron and Monica, 2018). Previous research has suggested that there may be generational differences in terms of consumer responses to eWOM. However, whether millennials and generation X, the focus of this research, react in a different way to eWOM remains unexplored (e.g., Confente and Vigolo, 2018; Kim *et al.*, 2015; Yoo and Gretzel, 2009).

Online review valence

Online review valence refers to the evaluative direction of reviews regarding a product or service experience, ranging from negative to positive (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). Previous hospitality research has analyzed valence in contexts such as hotels (Gavilan *et al.*, 2018), restaurants (Zhang *et al.*, 2010), and online travel communities (Casaló *et al.*, 2011). Extant research shows that valence strongly influences customer behaviors. For example, Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) found that customer exposure to both positive and negative online reviews increased their awareness of hotels (that is, irrespective of review valence). They found also that more positive customer behaviors such as booking intentions arise from positive online reviews than from negative ones (Ruiz-Equihua *et al.*, 2019). However, this does not mean that negative online reviews are less important. Casaló *et al.*, (2015a) found that travelers perceived negative online reviews as more useful than positive reviews. In summary, previous research has shown that valence is directly related to customer behaviors.

Customer attitude

Attitudes can be positive or negative, and refer to almost anything: a specific person, product, place, behaviors, and abstract ideas (Casaló *et al.*, 2015a). Attitude is a key variable in eWOM analysis because, in general, a more favorable attitude elicits a more favorable customer response (Ajzen, 1991). Previous hospitality-based research has examined the effect of online reviews on customer attitude. For example, Casaló *et al.*, (2015b) showed that customers develop more favorable attitudes toward hotels that appear on "the best hotel list" than those that appear on "the worst hotel list" Moreover, Ladhari and Michaud (2015) found that customer comments on hotels on Facebook influenced other customers' attitudes; that is, more positive comments created more positive customer attitudes toward the hotel. Finally, Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) reported that positive online reviews lead to positive attitude change in customers, while negative reviews lead to negative attitude changes.

Booking intentions

Intentions have been defined as indications of how hard people are willing to try to perform certain behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). Previous hospitality-based research has examined the effect of online reviews on customers' behavioral intentions, such as intention to purchase (Amaro and Duarte, 2015), intention to revisit (Abubakar *et al.*, 2017), intention to participate (Agag and El-Masry, 2016), or intention to recommend (Kang, 2018). Similarly, attitude and behavioral intentions are very important in the study of the impact of eWOM, as actual behaviors are one of their main outcomes.

Model overview

Figure 1 depicts our research model, with the four variables we examine in the eWOM communication process. The model is made up of two dependent variables, attitudes and booking intentions, and two independent variables, online review valence and generational cohort. We investigate first if online review valence exerts a direct effect on consumer reactions, that is, attitudes and booking intentions, and second, if generational cohort moderates the bond between review valence and customer attitudes and booking intentions.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Hypotheses formulation

Previous hospitality-based research has examined the effect of online review valence in contexts such as hotels (Ruiz-Equihua *et al.*, 2019), restaurants (Park and Nicolau, 2015), and online travel communities (Kang, 2018). In general, the previous research has found that online review valence has a direct effect on customer attitudes (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015) and behavioral intentions; for instance, booking intentions (Chan *et al.*, 2017) and revisit intentions (Abubakar *et al.*, 2017). Specifically, previous research has shown that positive online reviews elicit more positive customer attitudes and behavioral intentions (booking intention in our case) than negative online reviews (e.g., Gavilan *et al.*, 2018; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015; Sparks and Browning, 2011). Thus, in line with previous findings, we expect that positive reviews will generate more favorable customer attitudes and booking intentions:

H1: Positive online reviews elicit more positive attitudes than negative online reviews.

H2: Positive online reviews elicit more positive booking intentions than negative online reviews.

Millennials are surrounded by technology-based media. They may process information differently than their predecessors (Wagner and Acier, 2017). Moreover, older people have to make an effort to become accustomed to new technologies as they have other ways of working, learning, and living (Wagner and Acier, 2017). Moreover, generation Y individuals are digital natives (Bento *et al.*, 2018), whereas generation X individuals are digital immigrants (Wagner and Acier, 2017). Consequently, millennials experience higher satisfaction levels when they use the internet, and are less risk-averse than generation X (Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009).

Given that millennials are more experienced, more accustomed to the internet, and less risk-averse than generation X, we expect, for several reasons, that online reviews will generate more extreme customer reactions in generation X individuals. First, given that millennials have more experience in processing eWOM information (Bevan-Dye, 2020), they can probably more accurately interpret data about products and will thus not overreact to eWOM. Second, given their greater experience with the internet (Bravo *et al.*, 2020), millennials are probably also more prone to use eWOM and consequently to evaluate it properly and again not overreact to it. It has been shown that risk aversion modifies the impact of online review valence on customer behavior and indeed that online reviews generate lower responses among the less risk-averse (Casaló *et al.*, 2015b). In particular, risk aversion modifies the impact of online review valence on customer behavior (Casaló *et al.*, 2015b). In summary, we expect that positive (negative) online reviews will elicit more (less) positive customer attitudes and booking intentions for generation X customers than for

millennials, due to their different levels of expertise, risk aversion, and adaptation to the internet.

Therefore, we propose:

H3: The influence of online review valence on customer attitudes is more extreme among generation X individuals than among millennials.

H4: The influence of online review valence on customer booking intentions is more extreme among generation X individuals than among millennials.

METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the research hypotheses, we designed an experimental procedure to manipulate online review valence (positive online reviews vs. negative online reviews); data was collected from two samples, generation X and millennials. We focused on hospitality services, specifically hotels. The importance of eWOM in the services setting is very high, due to its intangibility (Casaló *et al.*, 2015a; Nicolau and Sellers, 2010). In this sense, customers of hospitality services search for online information such as online reviews to mitigate risk perceptions. For example, 79% customers of hospitality services use online reviews during some stage of their travel planning (Phocuswright, 2017). In addition, we grounded our selection on the importance of hotels in the tourism industry. For example, in 2018, accommodation in Europe involved 2,019,485 enterprises and employed 13,011,646 people (Eurostat, 2020).

Our scenarios displayed an online review, an image, and a description of a hotel. The hotel image and description were of a real hotel to increase the research's external validity.

Furthermore, the online review was based on a real consumer online review from booking.com, the leading online multinational travel agency, with almost 66% of the European market share in 2017 (Hotrec, 2018). In the experiment, we manipulated the independent variable, that is, the online review valence. Positive online reviews had 5 points from a 1 to 5 scale, while negative online review had 1 point. Both online reviews contained a hotel comment which had the same length and same positive or negative descriptive attributes.

The two versions of the online review were shown to both generational cohorts, that is, generation X and the millennials (the starting point for our millennial cohort was 1983). The data were collected in the first half of 2018. For the purposes of this research we did not take into account people younger than 20, as they belong to a later cohort – generation Z (Bento *et al.*, 2018). We measured respondents' attitudes and booking intentions using scales adapted from previous literature (Table 1). We collected data using questionnaires from a sample of 351 respondents, assisted by the market research company Toluna (https://esus.toluna.com/#/). Toluna employs an online panel of potential respondents. We requested a homogeneous distribution of respondents across scenarios and cohorts. The company randomly assigned participants to the positive and negative online review scenarios. After data depuration, the distribution of respondents was slightly higher for millennials and for those exposed to the positive reviews. However, we ensured that the number of respondents in each of the scenarios (Table 2) exceeded the widely accepted minimum threshold of 20 participants (Seltman, 2018). The sample's sociodemographic are displayed in Table 3.

Before testing the hypotheses, we evaluated the reliability of the scales employed to measure attitudes and booking intentions. Cronbach's α was above the 0.7 threshold suggested by Nunnally (1978) for both variables (α = 0.973 and α = 0.971, respectively). In addition, we developed a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the dimensional structure of these scales, employing statistical software EQS 6.1 and the robust maximum likelihood method as the estimation procedure. First, according to Steenkamp and van Trijp (1991) and Jöreskog and Sörbom (1993), we checked whether the factor loadings of the confirmatory model were statistically significant (at 0.01) and higher than 0.5. All items meet these requirements, and acceptable levels of convergence, R-square values, and model fit were obtained (χ^2 = 302.145, 34 d.f., p < 0.000; Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 = 103.8320, 34 d.f., p < 0.000; NFI = 0.980; NNFI = 0.982; CFI = 0.986; IFI = 0.986; RMSEA = 0.077; 90% confidence interval [0.060, 0.093]). Second, to assess construct reliability, we confirmed that the values of the composite reliability ($CR_{ATTITUDE}$ = 0.973; $CR_{INTENTION}$ = 0.971) are greater than the cut-off value of 0.65 (Jöreskog, 1970). Then, convergent validity was checked by confirming that the average variance extracted ($AVE_{ATTITUDE}$ = 0.879; $AVE_{INTENTION}$ = 0.870) values are above the suggested minimum of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Finally, discriminant validity was ensured using three criteria. First, following Fornell and Larcke, (1981), we verified that the square roots of the AVEs ($AVE^{1/2}_{ATTITUDE}$ = 0.938; $AVE^{1/2}_{INTENTION}$ = 0.933) are greater than the correlation between attitude and booking intention (0.908). Second, following Bagozzi et al. (1991), we checked that the value 1 is not included in the confidence interval (plus or minus two standard errors around the correlation) of the correlation between attitude and booking intentions; specifically, the value 1 does not appear in this confidence interval (0.866; 0.950). Third, we compared the χ^2 value of the

confirmatory model ($\chi^2 = 302.145$, 34 d.f., $p < 0.000$) with the value of a model where the correlation between attitude and booking intentions is fixed to 1 ($\chi^2 = 781.162$, 35 d.f., $p < 0.000$). A χ^2 difference test (χ^2 difference (1) $= 479.017$, $p < 0.001$) allows us to confirm that model fit significantly improves when correlation between attitude and booking intentions differs from 1. Attitude and booking intentions satisfied these criteria, ensuring discriminant validity.

Additionally, we conducted several manipulation checks (Table 1). First, we assessed the realism of the scenarios, again using scale items adapted from previous studies (Bagozzi, Belanche, *et al.*, 2016) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.864$), ranging from 1 to 7. The realism mean assessment was 5.20 (SD = 1.21). Therefore, questionnaire respondents perceived our scenarios as realistic ($t = 79.96$, $p < 0.01$). Second, we evaluated respondents' perceptions about the review valence manipulation. The positive review scenarios obtain a mean value of 6.10 (SD = 0.81); the mean value of the negative review scenarios was 2.39 (SD = 2.02). Thus, respondents correctly perceived the differences between the valence scenarios ($t = 21.558.$, $p < 0.01$), confirming a successful manipulation.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

RESULTS

To test the research hypotheses, we employed the ANOVA, using SPSS v26. On the one hand, the dependent variables were attitudes and booking intentions. On the other hand, the independent variables were online review valence (positive vs. negative) and generational cohort (millennials vs. generation X). ANOVA is appropriate for this form of hypothesis testing. The technique is appropriate for experimental designs where at least one of the independent variables is manipulated randomly; in the present study the participants were randomly assigned to two review valence scenarios, positive or negative. In addition, the generational cohort, although non-experimental, had two conditions (generation X vs. millennials) in our research. Hence, review valence and generational cohort are both qualitative variables that explain two continuous variables, making ANOVA the most appropriate technique to test the hypotheses (Tabanchick and Fidell, 2007).

H1 proposes that positive reviews generate better customer attitudes than negative reviews. Our results (see Table 4) support the H1 (F = 221.29, $p < 0.01$). Positive online reviews induce more favorable customer attitudes (M = 5.86, SD = 0.83) than negative online reviews (M = 3.84, SD = 1.54). H2 posits that positive reviews provoke more booking intentions than negative reviews. Our results (see Table 4) supported H2 (F = 193.77, $p < 0.01$). Positive reviews induce more customer booking intentions (M = 5.70, SD = 0.99) than negative reviews (M=3.69, SD=1.62). Therefore, review valence has a significant effect on both attitude and booking intentions; specifically, positive reviews induce more positive customer attitudes and booking intentions for enterprises than negative reviews.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Hypotheses H3 and H4 proposed a moderating effect of the respondents' generational cohort in the relationships between eWOM valence, attitudes, and booking intentions (see Table 5). H3 proposed that the impact of online review valence on attitudes is more extreme for generation X than for millennials. Our results confirmed the moderating role of consumers' generational cohort on the relationship between eWOM valence and customer behaviors, supporting H3 ($F = 5.21$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, positive online reviews trigger more favorable attitudes for generation X customers than for millennials ($M_{generation\ X} = 5.90$; $SD = 0.85$; $M_{millennials} = 5.82$; $SD = 0.81$), while negative online reviews trigger less favorable attitudes for generation X customers than for millennials (Fig. 2a) ($M_{generation\ X} = 3.56$; $SD = 1.45$; $M_{millennials} = 4.10$; $SD = 1.58$).

Similarly, H4 proposed that the relationship between review valence and customer booking intentions is enhanced for generation X customers more than for millennials. Our results supported H4, hence confirming the moderating role of the generational cohort on the relationship between eWOM valence and booking intentions ($F = 7.73$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, positive reviews trigger more booking intentions in generation X customers than millennials ($M_{generation\ X} = 5.79$; $SD = 1.00$; $M_{millennials} = 5.63$; $SD = 0.98$), while negative online reviews trigger less booking intentions for generation X customers than millennials (Fig. 2b) ($M_{generation\ X} = 3.34$; $SD = 1.52$; $M_{millennials} = 4.00$; $SD = 1.65$). In summary, the results indicated that the impact of eWOM valence on customer attitudes and booking intentions was more intense for generation X customers than for millennials. On the one hand, positive reviews trigger more favorable attitudes and booking intentions in generation X customers than millennials. On the other hand, negative reviews trigger less favorable attitudes and booking intentions in generation X customers than millennials.

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

To provide a more complete picture of the effect of the two generational cohorts on the customer behaviors provoked by eWOM, we tested their direct effects on attitudes and booking intentions (see Table 6). The results showed that the consumer's generational cohort does not directly influence attitudes (F = 2.76; p > 0.05) or booking intentions (F = 2.82; p > 0.05).

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

eWOM has received much attention due to its critical role on customer behaviors such as hotel choice (Serra-Cantallops *et al.*, 2020). Previous studies into online review valence suggested that positive online reviews elicit more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions (e.g., Gavilan *et al.*, 2018; Ruiz-Equihua *et al.*, 2019; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009), and that generational cohorts might moderate this impact of eWOM (Bravo *et al.*, 2020). Despite the high internet adoption rates and eWOM usage of generation X and millennials (Confente and Vigolo, 2018; Lissitsa and Kol, 2016), previous studies have not addressed this moderating role for these cohorts yet. The present study advances in this regard. First, our

findings confirmed that positive reviews trigger more positive attitudes and booking intentions. Second, the findings indicated that reviews trigger more extreme attitudes and booking intentions in generation X than in millennials. Generational cohort theory proposes that this occurs because the various generational cohorts go through different life experiences, which makes them react differently to online reviews. The fact that millennials are digital natives (Bolton *et al.*, 2013) and have more experience of the internet (Ladhari *et al.*, 2019) might explain the fact that online review information has less impact on them than it has on generation X.

Theoretical implications

This study has several theoretical implications. First, as proposed in H1 and H2, online review valence generates different customer responses. Positive reviews elicit more positive customer attitudes and booking intentions than negative reviews. These findings are in line with previous hospitality-based research into online review valence (e.g., Gavilan *et al.*, 2018; Ruiz-Equihua *et al.*, 2019). In addition, the present study contributes to the literature by confirming the effect of online review valence on customer behaviors in two specific generational cohorts, generation X and millennials. As suggested in previous research, generation X and millennials are more influenced by online information than their predecessors (e.g., Confente and Vigolo, 2018; Kim *et al.*, 2015; Yoo and Gretzel, 2009).

Second, the research results confirmed the suitability of generational cohort theory to analyze the differential impact of eWOM on millennial and generation X individuals. Our results demonstrated that generation X individuals and millennials react differently to online reviews; online reviews elicit more extreme (greater/lesser) reactions (i.e., attitude and

booking intentions) in generation X individuals than in millennials. This finding is in line with previous research that showed that millennials are more accustomed to new technologies than are previous generations (Bravo *et al.*, 2020; Wagner and Acier, 2017), as they were the first generation to grow up in the digital age of internet connectivity (Bevan-Dye, 2020). In fact, millennials perceive themselves as more expert than older generations (Yoo and Gretzel, 2009). Furthermore, millennials are more likely to broadcast eWOM than are generation X (Yoo and Gretzel, 2009); thus, they can interpret it more accurately. Therefore, the impact of reviews on millennials might be mitigated by their internet experience. As a result, positive/negative online reviews elicit more extreme customer responses in generation X customers. Furthermore, the differences in reactions between the generations are more extreme with negative online reviews. This finding is in concordance with prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), as generation X individuals are more risk-averse than millennials (Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009) and, thus, negative information should have a greater impact on them.

Practical implications

On the one hand, hotel managers with predominantly generation X customers should react more promptly and intensively to negative reviews to neutralize their effects than if most of their customers were millennials. As noticed by Nusair (2020), online reviews on review websites allow customers to communicate their negative experiences with thousands of travelers around the globe. To prevent negative online reviews in general, frontline staff and service managers (responsible for managing the interaction between customers and the organization) must be properly trained for handling tourist queries (Pandey and Sahu, 2020).

However, if negative reviews still arise, hotel managers should try to recover the service by apologizing and offering something to the customer (free hotel nights, lunch, or activities). As Wang and Chaudhry (2017) suggested, appropriate managerial responses to negative online reviews improve subsequent ratings and, according to our results, this reaction is particularly important for hotels whose customers belong mostly to generation X. The positive outcome from service recovery, expressed in terms of positive reviews by the satisfied customer (Romero and Ruiz-Equihua, 2020), will have a greater effect for generation X readers.

On the other hand, managers from online review websites might consider encouraging users to register on the website and collecting their sociodemographic information to allow them to use all the services of the website. For example, only registered users might write a review or access to all the reviews of a specific hotel. This would allow hotels to have more detailed information about the profile of readers of their reviews. Having this information, hotels might evaluate more accurately who is receiving information about them and hence managing such reviews more properly. In the case of this information being available on several online reviews websites, hotels managers might adapt their eWOM management policies according to the generation cohorts of users of each website.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations. First, we selected generation X and millennials as the foci of our research. Future studies might analyze other generational cohorts and explore whether they exhibit differences. Second, the study focused exclusively on the hotel industry. Future research might examine whether the findings apply to other hospitality services and

products. Third, our study analyzed the moderating effect of generational cohort on two customer responses, attitudes and booking intentions. Future research might examine other customer responses such as perceived usefulness, perceived risk, and trust in the service provider; this would be beneficial for the hospitality industry.

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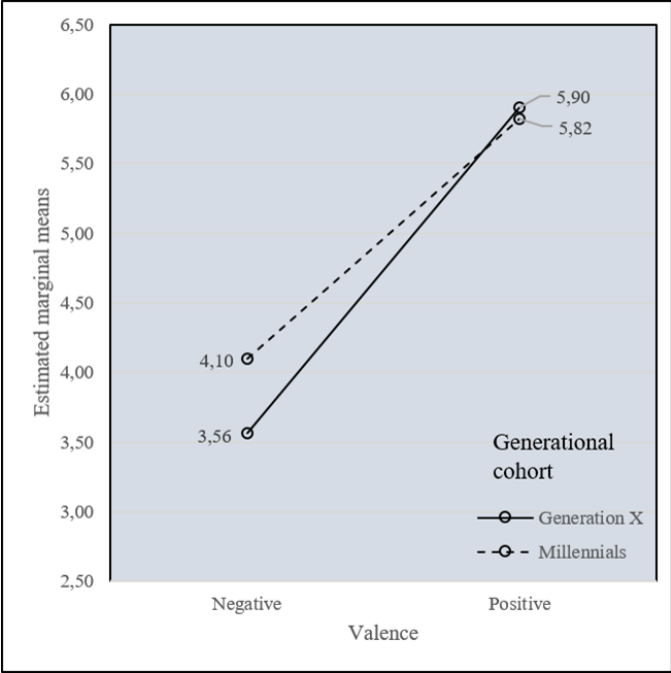
Figure 1. Research model
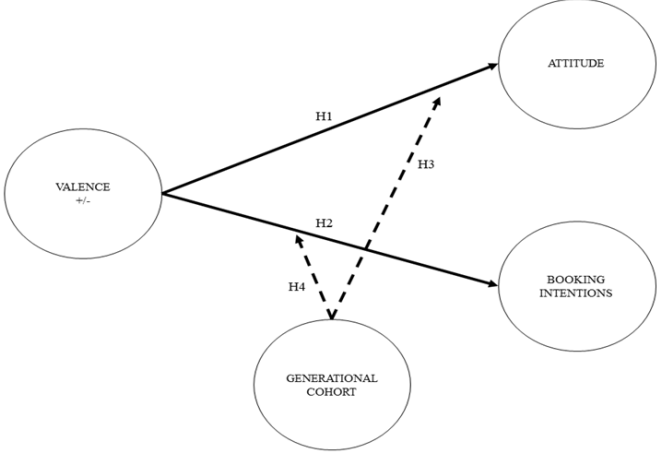
Note: H3 and H4 are moderating effects.

Figure 2. Moderating effects of generational cohort on online review valence and customer attitude and booking intentions.
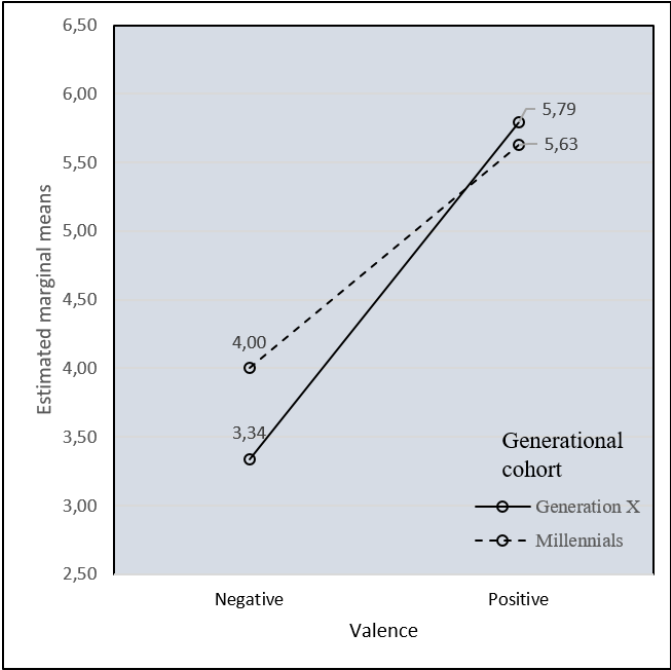
    a) Attitude

    b) Booking intentions

Table 1. Measurement scales and manipulations checks.

	Mean (SD)
Dependent variables:	
Attitudes (Cronbach's α = 0.973)	4.74 (1.62)
Adapted from Casaló, Flavián, Guinalíu, & Ekinci (2015 b) and Wu & Chen (2005)	
My opinion about this hotel is positive	4.85 (1.61)
Booking this hotel is a good idea	4.70 (1.76)
Booking this hotel is a wise idea	4.68 (1.66)
Booking this hotel is an appropriate idea	4.62 (1.69)
Booking this hotel would be a pleasant experience.	4.85 (1.80)
Booking intentions (Cronbach's α = 0.971)	4.58 (1.70)
Adapted from Amaro & Duarte (2015) and Reimer & Benkenstein (2016)	
If you were to book an hotel…	
The probability of booking this one would be high	4.41 (1.85)
I would consider booking this hotel	4.63 (1.79)
It is probable that I would book this hotel	4.42 (1.81)
I would give this hotel a try	4.83 (1.77)
I would select this hotel.	4.61 (1.75)
Manipulations checks:	
Realism (Cronbach's α = 0.864)	5.20 (1.21)
Adapted from Bagozzi, Belanche, Casaló, & Flavián (2016)	
The scenario is realistic	5.06 (1.39)
The scenario is credible	5.14 (1.41)
How likely is it that would you find an opinion similar to the one shown here?	5.38 (1.30)
Valence	
The opinion about this hotel is… (ranging from 1-very negative to 7-very positive)	
-Positive valence scenario	6.10 (0.81)
-Negative valence scenario	2.39 (2.02)
Note: all items measured a Likert type scale of seven points, unless specified	

Table 2. Scenario distribution.

Review valence		Millennials	Generation X	Total
		Generational cohort		
	Positive	84	72	156
	Negative	103	92	195
	Total	187	164	351

Table 3. Sample demographics.

	Millennials	Generation X
Sample size	187	164
Age		
20-24	32.62%	
25-34	67.38%	
35-44		57.31%
45-54		42.69%
Gender		
Male	36.37%	39.64%
Female	63.63%	60.37%

Table 4. Main effect of online review valence on customer attitudes and booking intentions.

	Positive	Negative	F-Score	P	Result
Attitudes	5.86	3.84	221.29	<0.01***	H1 Supported
Booking intentions	5.70	3.69	193.77	<0.01***	H2 Supported

Note: (***) significant at a 99%

Table 5. Interaction effect of online review valence and generational cohort on attitudes and booking intentions.

		Behaviors			
		Attitudes		Intentions	
		Millennials	Generation X	Millennials	Generation X
Review valence	Positive	M = 5.82	M = 5.90	M = 5.63	M = 5.79
		SD = 0.81	SD = 0.85	SD = 0.98	SD = 1.00
	Negative	M = 3.56	M = 4.10	M = 4.00	M = 3.34
		SD = 1.45	SD = 1.58	SD = 1.65	SD = 1.52

Table 6. Main effects of generational cohort on attitudes and booking intentions.

Overall	Millennials	Generation X	F-Score	P	Result
Attitudes	M = 4.87 SD = 1.55	M = 4.59 SD = 1.68	2.76	> 0.05	Non-significant
Booking intentions	M = 4.73 SD = 1.61	M = 4.42 SD = 1.79	2.82	> 0.05	Non-significant