

ANALYSIS OF REGION DE MURCIA HOTELS IN WEB 2.0

Soledad María Martínez María-Dolores

Juan Jesús Bernal García

Juan Pedro Mellinas

Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena

soledad.martinez@upct.es, juanjesus.bernal@upct.es, losmellinas@yahoo.es

Since the advent of internet in our society, in the mid 90's, companies have seen in this new media an opportunity to offer their products and services, tourism is a good example of this phenomenon. Those who hire packages, travel and hotels across the web, you become a majority against those who do not.

In recent years we have seen a revolution in internet, where users become partakers of the web and not mere spectators, something that has been called Web 2.0. Applications become usable by hundreds of millions of people, making it easier to share content, ideas, images, videos, to entire site or specific user communities.

The importance of Internet in sales and promotion of products related to the tourism industry is reflected in the figures of recent studies, belonging to 2009 and 2010. Moreover, the numbers of users of Web 2.0 tools, especially in recent months, highlight the increasing importance for social media users, especially in the case of Facebook.

A website offers the possibility to show a hotel to potential customers and sell services. At first the hotels were not receptive to having a website, but gradually changed and realized the importance of using the Internet in their business. Finally, even the most reluctant to new technologies, have surrendered to the evidence by creating a website for the hotel and selling their services through online agencies.

We are facing now a process quite similar to that occurred in the beginning of this century, when hotels hesitated to create a web page. Now, it is time to decide whether to have a presence on Facebook or Twitter, upload videos to Youtube and hotel photos to Flickr or just have a blog.

The tourists are influenced by the opinions of other travelers who are dumped in different social networks when choosing a hotel for your vacation. This was the famous «Mouth to Mouth» (Word of Mouth) adapted to the Internet, which has been called eWOM (electronic Word of Mouth). The presence of hotels in social media has been studied since the beginning of the development of this phenomenon. It has even been attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of that presence as marketing tool.

This analysis try to show the current situation of hotels in the region of Murcia in relation to Web 2.0. We study some factor related with their presence in the web, but we focus on the use of Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr and Google Places. Analysis of these data, show us a clearer picture of the context and current status of development of communication technologies in the regional hotel industry.

The results obtained by observing Murcia hotels in Web 2.0 are not consistent with our expectations. In an industry with a highly significant relationship with the Internet, it should be a minority who are oblivious to new technology. But reality shows that there is a small minority that use applications such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, to promote their establishments.

This situation is, somehow, similar to what happened at the end of last century and early this century with webpages. In those years, there were many hotels that chose to ignore the existence of internet, trying to continue with their traditional systems of promotion and sales. Finally, even the most reluctant to new technologies, have surrendered to the evidence creating a hotel website and selling their services through online travel agencies.

Hotel managers must be aware that most of the tourists consult the Internet to plan their trips. They should become skilled internet users, especially in everything related to the promotion and sale of hotels. But the reality shows the analysis of hotels observed, suggests that most of them ignore new technologies.

This research has allowed us to contextualize, in a sense, Web 2.0 and highlight some features within its wide range of possibilities, and their relationship with the tourism sector. We believe we have clearly shown the importance of the Internet for communication of tourist services, especially in the Region of Murcia, and the growing importance of social media at all levels.

We understand that we are at an early stage of the process of adaptation of companies to the new reality of Web 2.0, which may explain the low level of use of these tools. We hope that, in the months following our data collection, increase the presence of the hotels in the region of Murcia, which invites us to carry out further investigation on the same sample of hotels, at a later date. This will make possible to study the evolution of this phenomenon.