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Title of Thesis: E-Word of Mouth and its Effect on Hotel's Customer Purchasing Decision

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ABSTRACT

During the past decade, the Internet has established itself as a powerful medium that has revolutionized the way people do business. Also it has presented marketers with new avenues to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication, and new approaches for the acquisition and retention of customers. One aspect of these approaches is the phenomenon of online interpersonal influence. Research has widely demonstrated that personal sources of information like EWOM are more influential than traditional advertising. The potential impact of others' opinions has dramatically increased over the time with the development of the internet channels. Since the hospitality and tourism products and services contain more interpersonal interaction that needs to be experienced by consumers, the influence of EWOM in hospitality industry is more significant than in other industries. However, very little is known about the impact of EWOM on customer purchasing decision and what makes certain opinions more influential than other.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between EWOM and hotels' customer purchasing decision and to investigate the determinants of electronic word of mouth influence on hotel customer purchasing decision. The methodology undertaken in this study is quantitative in nature and with the use of questionnaires to collect the data from study sample. The results show that the influence of EWOM depends on source credibility, valence, and volume of information obtained from EWOM. Also we find that there is a relationship between receiver characteristics like receiver expertise and EWOM influence. The results further indicate that the type of website and type of the product which EWOM are about has a significant impact on EWOM influence. The findings of the study provide information to managers and marketers from hotels as to why there is a necessity to pay close attention to what being said about them via EWOM and also why it is necessary to manage their online presence.