

Online vacation rentals: The **co-creation** tourism experience

JOANA AFONSO DIAS * [joanadia@gmail.com]

ANTÓNIA CORREIA ** [acorreia@ualg.com]

FRANCISCO MARTÍNEZ LÓPEZ *** [francis@uhu.es]

Keywords | Online Vacation Rentals, Information Dissemination, Co-creation, Word of Mouth, E-Word of Mouth, Community.

Objectives | This study explores how social media websites assist consumers in posting and sharing their travel – related comments, opinions, and personal experiences, which then serve as information for others, focusing on Online Vacation Rentals (OVRs) which is a new market segment of online travelling's 'long tail' and a new source for travel.

The specific objectives are:

- Get a clear understanding of the role of online vacation rentals among tourists;
- Analyze the circuit information and in particular broadcast mode (e-WOM; WOM) before, during and after the stay;
- As well as formal and informal networks that are established among the different actors that intervene in the process (tourists, owners, agencies, OVRs websites) of this new business segment;
- To achieve a deeper knowledge about the parties involved in this business model to include them in this investigation and review of the contribution.

Methodology | The methodology followed is based on two main procedures:

Netnography (Kozinets, 2010) and triangulation combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches and type of data, according to research questions.

Three instruments for data collection will be applied:

- Face to face in depth interviews to tourists and property owners and stakeholders;
- Online and face to face questionnaires will be applied to tourists; using online vacation rentals platform (websites and blogs);
- Selection and collection of online vacation rentals blogs reviews about tourist experience and respective content analysis.

Triangulation will be applied to the various data sets at the stage of collection and analysis, in order to understand better the phenomenon under study from various angles of approach.

* **Ph.D. student** in SME Management and Economics at Huelva University and **Lecturer** on the undergraduate degree course in Marketing and Publicity Management and Property Sales Management and Real Estate Management at INUAF - Instituto Superior Dom Afonso III, Portugal.

** **Assistant Professor with aggregation** at University of Algarve, Member of CEFAGE.

*** **Ph.D. in Economic and Business Sciences** at University of Seville, **Chancellor** of the University of Huelva, **Professor** of the Department of Financial and Managerial Information Systems.

Main results and contributions |

- To conceptualize the online vacation rentals phenomenon to better understand how powerful is the dynamic of information, their crucial actors and how the net structure is characterized.
- To understand in dept the role of co-creation (Pradhalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) of tourism experience in the online vacation rentals context;
- To further explore the results obtained from a pilot - study conducted in the Algarve on OVRs in which results pointed to a close - knit virtual community (British to British) (Dias *et al.*, 2011).

It is expected that this study can describe and analyse the current trends in order to provide useful insights for online tourism.

Limitations | The research is still on early stage.

This is a research based on qualitative data that, although rich, is limited on length. Therefore generalization of the results is the main limitation of this research.

There may be potential problems in collecting data from tourists who choose this type of accommodation.

Conclusions | The expected results are:

- Understand Online Vacation Rentals motivations;
- Identify significant differences between Hotels and OVRs motivations;
- Model Tourist OVRs search process;
- Identification of factors influencing the decision OVRs accommodation;
- Characterize the different OVRs targets;
- Clarify the idea that OVRs can support close knit virtual community.

References |

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