

WOM and Loyalty: Differences Between Package-buyers and Self-packers

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Abstract

Vacation travelers can buy vacations as packages (package-buying) or put them together themselves by selecting various travel products individually (self-packing). The latter alternative requires a higher level of involvement by the traveler. Positive relationships between involvement and satisfaction, and in turn, word of mouth (WOM) and loyalty, have previously been established in the literature. Nevertheless, little attention has so far been given to how package buying vs self-packing may affect satisfaction and WOM in different ways, and therefore also have different impact on loyalty. Drawing on previous research on the role of involvement and satisfaction on WOM and loyalty, we apply data from a large field study (N=5158) in a travel planning context to investigate the differences in WOM and loyalty between self-packers and package-buyers. We find that package-buyers are more likely to recommend the planning process compared to self-packers, while self-packers are more likely to repeat the same planning process, compared to package-buyers. The findings have both theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: *Word of mouth; Vacation buyers; Involvement*

Track: Tourism Marketing