

Through the storm: Mapping Customer – Management Expectations, Interactions, and Interpretations of a social media storm in tourism

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Abstract

When a social media storm occurs, several interpretations emerge in the aftermath as to the reasons why it occurred, why it escalated, and how it should have been handled. Indeed, communications teams in tourism tend to believe that they acquire valuable lessons upon weathering a crisis. Nonetheless, the conclusions they draw on how to handle a social media storm may be out of sync with customers' expectations on how this storm should have been managed successfully. In such a case of expectation gap, tourism companies reside on false assumptions regarding the proper way of managing future social media storms. We use a simulation game to explore the different assumptions, and the interpretations, between communications teams and customers engaged in the same social media storm. The findings highlight the significance of building trust and aligning expectations between customers and hotels as the main driver for successful management of social media storms.

Keywords: *social media storms; simulation game; tourism communication management*

Track: Tourism Marketing