

## COLLABORATIVE QUALITY: A NEW CONCEPT FOR TOURISM QUALITY

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The fourth industrial revolution, brought on as a result of technological advances originating in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has given rise to business structures built upon on technology 2.0, which in turn have given us new forms of business management. As a consequence, consumers have become prosumers (producer + consumer). These new consumers are informed individuals, content generators and sources of feedback for companies, positioning themselves as key elements to understanding and managing quality in tourism-focussed companies.

This study is the result of a reflection on the changes that must be adopted in tourism quality in order to adapt to technological innovations, and how to interact with these new consumers in this fourth industrial revolution.

To that end, this study analyses the results of the exhibition and diffusion that QMSs have in tourism; Q mark for quality and SICTED [Complete System for Tourism Quality in Spanish Destinations] online. An analysis of the websites and social media (Facebook and Twitter) of the all of the Andalusian hotels certified with both quality labels.

The parameters used in this study are not focused exclusively on usability and positioning, as they are insufficient for a global analysis (Fernández-Cavia & Huertas-Roig, 2009; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013; Luna-Nevarez & Hyman, 2012), and include:

- Technical aspects (positioning and visibility).
- Informative aspects (communication).
- Relationship aspects (social media relevance and interaction).

In reference to positioning and visibility, the authors affirm that “It is categorically imperative (...) in tourism markets to not be online is a productive anachronism” (Ricelly et al., 2017: 635). This reference confirms the popular Spanish saying, “If you aren’t seen, you aren’t remembered” which directly expresses the importance of brand visibility and ranking.

Incorporating marks of quality on web pages and social media allows consumers to choose between those who are publically committed to the best business practices and

those who aren't (De Bruin et al., 2005). The first have added value with their services. The presence of a mark of approval means that the business owner has assumed and is committed to complying with a code of conduct and best practices (López & Redchuk, 2015).

This constitutes recognition of the quality of the businesses that have obtained and exhibit the mark with the hope of improving their positioning in the market, translating into an advantage over the competition, and benefits from the prestige of the mark (López & Castillo, 2016).

Communicating the benefits of quality certification is done in order to mobilize potential clients. The stages that mark the degree of connection that the consumer acquires after receiving communication from the brand are: 1) Communication generates brand awareness; 2) This communicates the values and benefits of the brand to the consumer; 3) and generates intention to purchase; 4) and instils loyalty in the consumer to the brand (Chaves, 2006). Not communicating the values of the quality certificate eliminates the added value that it can provide to the tourism brand in question. Lucius Annaeus Seneca said, "if offered knowledge under the condition that it is only for myself and not to be shared with others, I wouldn't accept". This affirmation leads one to reflect on whether it makes sense to adhere to QMS tourism standards without communicating this to clients.

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw a new factor added to classic ideas on communication, visualization and positioning (Ollé & Rio, 2009): interaction. And thus began a new model with technology 2.0 at the foundation and new consumers as the key element of this model.

The technological revolution set off a tsunami in the world of marketing, where the birth, diffusion and influence of social media have further fragmented communication, placing it in the hands of users instead of brands (Aaker, 2010). The figure of recommenders has become one of the most commonly used resources in promoting services and products (Gretzel & Yoo, 2013). The democratization of influence in communication has extended the power of recommendation to practically any individual active on social media.

Aware of this power, on-line agencies have brought this resource to their digital tourism platforms, creating quality awards for establishments that are decided upon by the clients themselves. In this way, taking advantage of the power of suggestion and recommendation through testimonials. These marks of approval have been called "Influencer Marks" (Candau, 2016). They are marketing products created by the metasearch engines of the tourism sector, with the goal of attracting attention and gaining the trust of users. They use technology 2.0 to encourage their users to describe experiences and rate the services of hotel accommodations they have used, promoting C2C recommendations.

There are two types of influencer marks. On the one hand, recommenders, which are recommendations indicating the point ratings given by users. And on the other, those that receive awards for excellence for being the best rated in a specific geographic region. In both one can find the casuistry of C2C recommendations.

Conclusions from empirical work have demonstrated that current tourism QMSs, Q mark for quality and SICTED, have eliminated factors from their systems that generate more value among new consumers, such as: positioning, visibility, communication, and interaction.

The lack of positioning and almost complete lack of optimal visualization that the tourism quality management systems Q and SICTED have today (only 5% of the emblems of all the establishments are placed optimally on their websites. With 0% visibility and positioning in social media), together with the deficient informative communication that they offer to users (94% of the establishments do not explain the meaning of the Q mark & SICTED certifications on their websites, and only 2% do so on social media) and topped off by the low level of interaction maintained with users (of the total sample, 15% have bidirectional lines of communication with clients, all established through their websites. No social media is used for this end but rather for brand imaging only. It should be noted that 33% of these manage the commentaries that clients make on their websites), shows the current lack of adaptation of tourism QMSs to the fourth industrial revolution.

The lack of current marketing strategies associated with technology 2.0 being implemented to promote brands as models of trust has led to a degree of disinterest on behalf of business people, which is one reason for the stagnation in the growth of new models for QMS in hotels. Over the last ten years, they have maintained the same share of the market (Camisón, 2004).

Paradoxically, the growth of influencer marks and excellence awards given by metasearch engines has awoken interest in business networks as they have completely won over users. The exponential growth of these metasearch engines shows that the public is interested in the quality of establishments. Influencer marks have been able to position new consumers as the focal point of their systems, making them essential collaborators in the work, through a continual interaction that generates communication, feedback and transparency in the process, in turn improving visibility and sales of services. The traditional tourism QMSs have been displaced as references of trust when making decisions on purchasing tourism services.

This new era demands that tourism QMSs transition from simple tools of correct business management to being guarantors and champions of continual, and visible, improvement that is communicated, receives feedback and is sold to new consumers. In a nutshell, they must transition to the stage of collaborative quality.

The stage of collaborative quality is the evolutionary consequence of changes in technology that have befallen the market. In this stage, QMSs require collaboration and active interaction with the stakeholders of the organization, with the goal of turning them into tools that generate value for businesses. They must promote the flow of information, generating massive creativity that, when done ethically and with immediacy, guarantee products and services that are constantly improving and that cover the needs of clients in this new era. Consumer must be, after all, satisfied not just functionally but also emotionally and spiritually. Relationships must be established that are transparent, and structured around marketing strategies. In this stage, quality must not only be produced and managed, but also interactive, visible, shared and sold, becoming a true guarantee for the client (Candau, 2016).

