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Increase the influence of the travel video bloggers by using Youtube to sell trips indirectly through relationship marketing and service quality online

Aumento de la influencia de los vídeo bloggers de viaje mediante el uso de Youtube *para vender viajes indirectamente a través de marketing de relaciones y la calidad del servicio en línea*

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Purpose: The main aim of this article is to verify by applied field research the relationship between the e-service quality provided by the travel youtubers and the e-relationship quality with the users, formed by trust, satisfaction and commitment.

Design/methodology/approach: For the theoretical framework and the creation of the hypothesis there was used a literature review that is focused on travel youtubers, relationship marketing and service quality online. For confirmation of the hypothesis there was applied a quantitative survey technique to 1245 sample units.

Findings: Dimensions of information and communication, that are part of the quality of the service, are the ones that affect the most in the development of the quality of the relation. As a consequence, travel youtubers have to develop a strategy that includes all kinds of actions of content creation in order to grow their notoriety while not selling any sort of product or service. Hence, the quality of the relation must be defined as a multi-dimensional construct with a superior order formed by trust, satisfaction and commitment as main dimensions that may be influenced (antecedent) or may be admitted of other dimensions (consequents), having them put through clients and users. Therefore, travel youtubers must create among their followers a positive attitude towards themselves. Attitude is formed by cognitive elements (trust), affective elements (satisfaction) and conative elements (commitment).

Originality/value: This research paper offers theoretical framework confirmed by a field study for measuring quality relationship online by users and travel youtubers and identifies which are the dimensions that form the user's attitude. These attitudes will be transformed into behaviors such as the repetition of purchase and the development of positive word-of-mouth communication.

Keywords: Travel Youtubers; Relationship Marketing; Service Quality; Online Information and Communication; Followers; Content Creation.

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RESUMEN

Propósito: El objetivo principal de este artículo es verificar mediante la investigación de campo aplicada, la relación entre la calidad del servicio electrónico proporcionada por los usuarios de viajes y la calidad de la relación electrónica con los usuarios, formada por la confianza, la satisfacción y el compromiso.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: para el marco teórico y la creación de la hipótesis se utilizó una revisión de la literatura que se centra en los usuarios de YouTube, el marketing relacional y la calidad del servicio en línea. Para la confirmación de la hipótesis se aplicó una técnica de encuesta cuantitativa a 1245 unidades muestrales.

Resultados: Las dimensiones de información y comunicación, que son parte de la calidad del servicio, son las que más afectan el desarrollo de la calidad de la relación. Como consecuencia, los youtubers de viaje deben desarrollar una estrategia que incluya todo tipo de acciones de creación de contenido para aumentar su notoriedad sin vender ningún tipo de producto o servicio. Por tanto, la calidad de la relación debe definirse como una construcción multidimensional con un orden superior formado por la confianza, satisfacción y compromiso como las principales dimensiones que pueden ser influenciadas (antecedente) o pueden ser admitidas de otras dimensiones (consecuentes), establecidas a través de clientes y usuarios. Por lo tanto, los youtubers de viaje deben crear entre sus seguidores una actitud positiva para ellos mismos. La actitud está formada por elementos cognitivos (confianza), elementos afectivos (satisfacción) y elementos conativos (compromiso).

Originalidad/valor: Este trabajo de investigación ofrece un marco teórico complementado por un estudio de campo que mide la relación de calidad en línea entre los usuarios y los youtubers de viajes e identifica cuáles son las dimensiones que forman la actitud del usuario. Estas actitudes se transformarán en conductas tales como la repetición de la compra y el desarrollo de una comunicación positiva de boca en boca.

Palabras clave: Youtubers de Viaje; Marketing Relacional; Calidad de Servicio; Información y Comunicación Online; Seguidores; Creación de Contenido.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet has changed the way we exchange information, plan and consume journeys inside the touristic sector (Varkaris and Neuhofer 2017). According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), there were two «mega-tendencies» that transformed the tourism system. On one hand, (a) there is social media (blogs, communities, wikis, social networks, business networks, virtual worlds, virtual reality gaming, photography exchanging websites, video streaming websites, forums and opinion websites), that represents different ways of creating content for the user (Gretzel 2006; Pan and Fesenmaier 2006). And on the other hand (b) is the research of information in order to plan a journey that has become one of the main usages by Internet consumers. Therefore, browsers have become an important interface through which touristic companies can reach and persuade potential visitors (Varkaris and Neuhofer 2017).

With this, it highlighted the formation of a new class of travel consumer in whose daily life the Internet was increasingly integrated. In this way, Constantinides (2014) described how a phenomenon called Web 2.0 or social media was affecting the way in which the consumer communicated, made decisions, socialized, learned, entertained, interacted or made purchases. In addition to transforming consumer attitudes and behavior (Solomon *et al.* 2016), it was also disrupting the power structures of the market, causing a substantial migration from sellers to customers and giving way to a new figure called prosumer (Toffler 1980). The main explanation for this migration of power was that consumers, thanks to social media, have unlimited access to information and the choice of any product or service at any time and in any place.

The relationship quality is defined as "a higher order construct composed of different but related dimensions" (Roberts *et al.* 2003, p. 190) or as "a multidimensional construct formed by trust, satisfaction and commitment, conditioned by the evaluation of the client". These dimensions of the relationship quality (satisfaction, trust and commitment) arise and develop from discrete encounters or simple transactions (Egan 2011), but the success of achieving a relationship quality will depend to a large extent on the tools that marketing has to take those individuals towards the formation of personal and functional connections (Hess and Story 2005).

In this research, we will analyze how the travel *youtubers* influence in Spain in the development of the quality of the relationship of the users and at the same time in the development of a positive attitude towards certain contents offered by them. The choice of this research topic is justified for two reasons: (1) because there is a lack of research articles in the marketing literature on the influence of *youtubers* in the development of a positive attitude of users towards a specific travel content and towards the indirect sale of a certain tourist product, and (2) because YouTube online channel is the most complete means of communication with sound, image, movement and interactivity.

Hence, in the social media, users should be considered as quality actors and critics in fact, since a bad electronic experience can affect the relationship quality and, consequently, the user's behavior (Varkaris and Neuhofer 2017).

Given this context and having reviewed the existing literature on the subject, we formulated the main research questions:

Q1.What dimensions form the quality of the service offered by *youtubers* in Spain?
Q2.What dimensions form the relationship quality, specifically, the attitude of users towards the tourism content offered by *youtubers*?

Once the research questions have been raised, as the main objective the authors of this paper intended to verify the relationships between the quality of service of *youtubers,* and the quality of the relationships and the loyalty of users. Thus, the specific objectives are the following:

O1. Analyze how the dimensions that form the quality of service of the YouTube travel channel influence the quality of the users' relationships.
O2. Analyze how the dimensions that shape the quality of the relationships affect users' loyalty.

To achieve those previously mentioned questions, this article is organized in the next manner: in the first part there is a literature review on the e-service quality and the e-relationship quality in order to be able to set a hypothesis for the research. In the second part there is explained the applied methodology. The third part states the analysis and the results of the research project. And, finally, the fourth part summarizes the conclusions we have reached in relation to the questions we stated at the beginning.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

The emergence of social media is transforming the attitudes, interests, motivations, experiences, groups of reference, values, behaviors, shopping habits of the consumers; more specifically, the apparition of a new element in social media known as *youtubers* is triggering a migration of the influence from the brands towards the users (Constantinides 2014). Henceforth, we can understand social media as "web-based services that allows individuals: 1) build a public or semipublic profile within a given system; 2) create a list of users with whom you share connection; and 3) view and break through the connection list as well as those made by other users within the same network". The character and nomenclature of these connections may vary from one website to another (Boyd and Ellison 2007, p. 211). Aichner and Jacob (2015) understand social media as:

— Web 2.0 Internet-based applications;
— User Generated Content (UGC);
— User profiles developed from a structure of social organization between users;
— Media that ease the development of social networks throughout user profile intercommunication.

Therefore, YouTube can be identified as a social media where users can upload, share and comment videos with other users (Aichner and Jacob 2015). YouTube is currently (in October 2019) the second most visited website in the world, only behind Google (The top 500 sites on the web 2019).

Hence, we can define *youtubers* as people that upload their own created videos through YouTube. YouTube is the main video

sharing site in the Internet, receiving around two billions uni-que visits a month (statistics from May 2019) (Global logged-in YouTube viewers per month 2017-2019, 2019). In the following Table 1 we can observe the most influential travel YouTube chan-nels in Spain in October 2019.

Table 1
Travel YouTube channels in Spain

YouTube channel	Subscribers	Visualizations	Number of videos
alanxelmundo	2.250.000	320.644.493	795
marieldeviaje	330.000	30.875.588	198
molaviajar	298.000	28.023.328	485
benshortsviajes	206.000	10.657.113	129
mochileros	114.000	12.255.508	228
paconadal.supongo	41.300	6.567.574	157
mochilerostv	37.600	2.645.094	317
viajandocondiego	34.500	6.290.027	74
eduardodeviaje	20.000	12.033.507	1.921

Source: authors adapted from *Canales de viajes en español* 2019.

Having this into account, authors such as Kotler *et al.* (2018) points out the necessity of analyzing how users perceive the e-service quality; in this case, how they perceive the e-service quality provided by the travel *youtubers* and how it will affect the attitudes of the users.

2.1. e-Service quality

The e-service quality could be defined as the "global eva-luation made by the client on the relation with the excellence and the e-service quality provided throughout a virtual market" (Santos 2003, p. 235) or as "how much a website facilitates the navigation/surfing, the shopping activity and the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery" (Parasuraman *et al.* 2005, p. 217). In this research, and in accordance with the authors Giovanis *et al.* (2015) we assume that the e-service quality as a background for the e-relationship quality, and in this case, for the YouTube travel channels´ users to be able to evaluate the provided service, it is necessary to identify the main dimensions that define the e-service quality.

Users, when visiting travel websites, compare the characteris-tics of the sites. Therefore, as stated by Cristóbal *et al.* (2007), the design of those characteristics is essential for the users to per-ceive the e-service quality. Thus, we have found several research papers which speak on the e-service quality, but most of them try to measure the general quality of a website (such as Cristóbal *et al.* 2007; Sarmiento 2017; Jeon and Jeong 2017).

In this regard, Kim *et al.* (2004) discovered that online trip providers share similar features respecting the content of the information, the reputation, the security, the structure and the usage facility. All that derives from dimensions coming up from studying the e-service quality (Ho and Lee 2007). Consequent-ly, Sarmiento (2017) in a study on travel websites confirmed influence between the e-service quality and the e-relationship

quality; specifically, using dimensions as experience, design, se-curity, information and communication in order to analyze the quality of the online service.

Following the previous explanations, we can see that the di-mensions, which the best define the e-service quality, are major-ly determined by the interface between user and social media (Chung and Shin 2010); in this case, travel *youtubers*. Thus, fo-llowing the same research patterns as Chung and Shin (2010), Ali (2016), Sarmiento (2017) and Jeon and Jeong (2017), we also identify five dimensions in YouTube travel channels that we in-corporate in our model. Those dimensions are the following:

— E-experience understood as "the combination of relational and emotional factors that the website uses through online services in order to have an influence in the perception of the users" (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick 2012, p. 370; Chung and Shin 2010; Constantinides 2014; Sarmiento 2017; Jeon and Jeong 2017).
— Design of the website; it replaces the physical store even be-ing able to have a positive effect on the shopping activity or the information search (Liu and Arnett 2000; Loiacono *et al.* 2000; Yoo and Donthu 2001; Wolfinbarger and Gilly 2001; Zeithaml *et al.* 2001; Cristobal *et al.* 2007; Chung and Shin 2010; Sarmiento 2017; Jeon and Jeong 2017).
— Security understood as the confidence the users have in the website (Liu and Arnett 2000; Loiacono *et al.* 2000; Yoo and Donthu 2001; Wolfinbarger and Gilly 2001; Zeithaml *et al.* 2001; Parasuraman *et al.* 2005; Chung and Shin 2010; Wang *et al.* 2015; Sarmiento 2017).
— Information understood as the content quality users want to find in this YouTube travel channels in order to plan a trip or get to know better some destination (Liu and Arnett 2000; Loiacono *et al.* 2002; Barnes and Vidgen 2002; Chung and Shin 2010; Ho and Lee 2015; Sarmiento 2017).
— Communication understood as the feedback inherent to in-teractive tools related to social media, in this case YouTube platform (Loiacono *et al.* 2000; Barnes and Vidgen 2002; Cox and Dale 2002; Chung and Shin 2010; Ho and Lee 2015; Sar-miento 2017).

2.2. e-Relationship quality

The e-relationship quality arises from the theory and in-vestigation in the Relationship Marketing field when it comes to the relationship strengthening and turning clients into loyal ones (Rauyruen and Miller 2007). The e-relationship quality is a concept that has been studied deeply by the authors as Ulaga and Eggert (2006), Chen *et al.* (2008), Holmlund (1996), Athanaso-poulou (2009), Moliner (2008), Ho and Lee (2015), Sarmiento (2017) and Jeon and Jeong (2017).

Hence, after revising the papers written until the present mo-ment in 2019 about the e-relationship quality, it is asserted that the most common dimensions for the e-relationship quality are online trust, online satisfaction and online commitment (Atha-nasopoulou 2009; Sarmiento 2017; Jeon and Jeong 2017).

In this way, e-trust is considered as one of the essential requi-rements in order to have a successful online experience (Chung and Shin 2010). Online environments are characterized by un-

certainty, anonymity, lack of control and opportunism; accordingly, trust is a crucial element inside that environment. As a consequence, if a website is designed with high level security, respects privacy, has a good reputation and facilitates the surfing activity, it will have a positive impact on e-trust (Corritorea *et al.* 2003). e-Trust is defined as the conviction, benevolence and integrity shown by the service provider (Mayer *et al.* 1995).

Therefore, the authors Hwang and Kim (2007) understand the website as a service provider, which led Zeithmal *et al.* (2001) to state that Internet is a service; so that trust towards a website is determined by the e-service quality (Bliemel and Hassanein 2007). In this sense, Gronroos (2000) affirms that the relation between e-service quality and e-trust is a fact. After having reviewed the existing literature on e-service quality as well as e-trust (Gronroos 2000; Athanasopoulou 2009; Chung and Shin 2010; Sarmiento 2017 and Jeon and Jeong 2017), we can confirm that the e-service quality has an impact on the main components of trust (i.e. on integrity, benevolence and capacity). Hence, the bigger is the subjective perception of the e-service service quality, the bigger the general trust on the online service will be (Harris and Goode 2004). On basis of the previous considerations, it is clearly visible that the dimension of the service quality provided by travel *youtubers* determines the relationship quality. Thus, it is plausible to state the first hypothesis as:

H_1: *The e-service quality provided by travel youtubers has a positive effect on e-trust.*

The e-satisfaction has a very important role, this has been demonstrated by numerous models both theoretical and practical that have considered satisfaction as a crucial factor in the decision making process of consuming, as well as for the development of relations between clients and products or services (Chung and Shin 2010). Furthermore, investigations that relate the service quality with satisfaction have been done both on an offline environment (Storbacka *et al.* 1994; Zeithaml and Bitner 2000; Roberts *et al.* 2003) and online (Cristóbal *et al.* 2007; Liu *et al.* 2008; Sahadev and Purani 2008; Herington and Weaven 2007; Kim *et al.* 2009; Sarmiento 2014). In this regard, it is remarkable that Anderson *et al.* (1994) were the first to demonstrate that the service quality has a positive effect on satisfaction. Also Cristobal *et al.* (2007) stated that if you revise the existent literature, there is more evidence supporting the thesis that there is a relation between the e-service quality and the e-satisfaction; this statement is likewise supported by the following authors Constantinides (2004); Bansal *et al.* (2004); Constantinides and Fountain (2008); Chung and Shin (2010); Sarmiento (2014); Constantinides (2014); Ho and Lee (2015); Sarmiento (2017) and Jeon and Jeong (2017). As a consequence, if e-satisfaction dimension determines a positive perception of quality on the side of the user through interactivity, we could pose the following hypothesis:

H_2: *The e-service quality provided by travel youtubers has a positive effect on e-satisfaction.*

The e-commitment has been defined in many ways; it stands out as a key element when setting and keeping long term relations (Cater and Zabkar 2009); as the will of developing and keeping a positive exchange relationship (Wu and Chen 2005); the permanent will of maintaining a valued relationship (Moorman *et al.* 1992); or as the psychological attachment towards an organization, product or service (O'Reilly and Chatman 1986). The conceptualization of commitment emerged from organizational behavior research papers and all these definitions entail the development of beneficial and mutually satisfactory relations (Gundlach *et al.* 1995; Morgan and Hunt 1994). Hence in online environments, users are considered as co-producers in the process of online service consumption. These interactions between users and services are built throughout episodic experiences (Chesbrough and Spohrer 2006), and ultimately when the commitment happens (Dai and Salam 2010). This led Mukherjee and Nath (2007) to define e-commitment as the natural association and the sense of belonging to a website. Therefore, the perception of the e-service quality will affect the e-commitment between the parts of the exchange.

In accordance with Chung and Shin (2010), e-satisfaction and e-trust combine themselves to provide the necessary conditions for the relations between users and website in order to develop the e-commitment. e-Trust and e-satisfaction are considered as the precedent for the e-commitment (Li *et al.* 2006). Satisfaction is originated at the beginning of the relation and, whereas the interactivity intensity grows between the user and the website, the online trust will grow as well (Ramaseshan *et al.* 2006), and finally, the e-commitment.

Having into account that trust and commitment are interactive elements, i.e. both are developed alongside the relation, to investigate the impact of the dimensions of the website on the relationship quality (Chung and Shin 2010; Sarmiento 2017), we proposed the following hypothesis:

H_3: *The e-service quality provided by travel youtubers has a positive impact on e-commitment.*

2.3. e-Loyalty

Oliver (1997, p. 392) defined loyalty towards a brand as "a deep commitment to repurchase a preferred product or service which causes repeated purchases in the organization despite situational influences or marketing efforts." More recently Sarmiento (2015, p. 404) defines loyalty "in terms of behavior as the number of times a customer buys in the same store and in terms of attitudes what kind of preferences customer shows towards a brand".

In this sense, the definition of loyalty is based on attitudes and behavioural approaches which suggest that fidelity is a sequential process that indicates what kind of preferences the consumer shows for a particular brand that implies cognitive, affective and conative phases within the traditional purchase decision making process. Namely, fidelity initially includes psychological aspects of evaluation and decision-making regarding brands, as well as attitudes and emotions that later become effective and repetitive repurchase behaviours (Jeon and Jeong 2017). In this investigation loyalty is understood as online users' favourable attitude towards the use of travel *youtubers* websites.

For years one of the key dimensions for predicting behavior has been overall customer satisfaction. But in recent years the paradigm shift towards a relational approach has broadened the dimensions that predict behavioral intentions among which trust stands out (Sarmiento 2017).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) were the first to demonstrate that trust helps stimulate exchanges between partners. It also serves as a brake on short-term alternatives in favor of the expected long-term benefits by staying with existing partners. Moreira et al. (2017) state that trust reduces uncertainty in environments where consumers feel vulnerable. Today for brands it is vitally important to gain consumer confidence to build their loyalty and reduce the risk in exchange relationships. There are numerous researches that have proven the positive relationship between trust and loyalty (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Garbarino and Johnson 1999; Barroso and Martín 1999; Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Moreira and Silva 2015; Ho and Lee 2015; Moreira et al. 2017; Sarmiento 2017; Jeon and Jeong 2017). In this context, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_4: The *electronic trust towards travel youtubers has a positive effect on the users´ electronic loyalty.*

Once the relationship between trust and loyalty has been analyzed, we begin to raise the question on the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. During the literature review we also found many research papers that demonstrate the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty (Moreira and Silva 2015; Ho and Lee 2015; Moreira et al. 2017; Sarmiento 2017; Jeon and Jeong 2017). The author who stands out most in demonstrating this kind of relationships is Oliver (1997, p. 42) who proves that there are "up to six associations between these concepts; nevertheless, satisfaction is not transformed into fidelity, but at most satisfaction is a seed that demands daily food so that loyalty can develop".

Moreira et al. (2017) state that customer satisfaction is important, because it helps organizations achieve their financial and market goals (Oliver 1997). Sarmiento (2017) adds that, if a service provider through social media can meet the needs of its customers better than its competitors, it will be easy to make them loyal through the development of quality relationships.

Jeon and Jeong (2017) showed that users, who consume travel blogs and are satisfied with the offered service, influence them in the development of a positive attitude towards the blog and it creates intention to consume the blog again. In this research work, the relationship between user satisfaction and loyalty through social media in the tourism sector was demonstrated. In this sense, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_5: *The electronic satisfaction towards travel youtubers has a positive effect on the users´ electronic loyalty.*

Finally, the relationship between commitment and loyalty has also been studied by the marketing literature. In markets relationships must be built on the basis of commitment and mutual benefit over time. Porter et al. (1976) affirm that those consumers who show a certain level of commitment towards a brand in an electronic context will develop a strong link to it. This is because the level of loyalty shown to a brand is stronger when it has its origin in a commitment, so it can lead to stable relationships between the consumer and the organization (Prado-Román et al. 2014). Thus, Von der Heidt and Laberton (2011) understand that commitment is an indicator of loyalty as it represents emotional or psychological attachment to a brand. In addition, the commitment can be considered as part of the attitudinal loyalty towards a brand (Sarmiento 2017). Therefore, we have offered the following hypothesis:

H_6: *The electronic commitment towards travel youtubers has a positive effect on the users´ electronic loyalty.*

In the revised literature it is shown that there is a relationship between the quality of service in social travel media and loyalty (Moreira and Silva, 2015; Ho and Lee 2015; Moreira et al. 2017; Sarmiento 2017; Jeon and Jeong 2017), but as it is indicated by researchers Prado-Román et al. (2014) the nature of the relationship between quality of service and loyalty cannot be distinguished (Alén and Fraiz 2005). Therefore, we cannot determine whether the effect of the quality of service is carried out directly on loyalty or if it is carried out indirectly through mediating variables such as satisfaction, trust or commitment. In this context, we have established the following hypotheses:

H_7: *The quality of service provided by travel youtubers has a positive effect on users' loyalty.*

H_8: *The quality of service provided by travel youtubers has an indirect and positive effect on users´ loyalty through trust.*

H_9: *The quality of service provided by travel youtubers has an indirect and positive effect on users´ loyalty through satisfaction.*

H_10: *The quality of service provided by travel youtubers has an indirect and positive effect on users´ loyalty through commitment.*

Once presented the theoretical background and analyzed the relationship of the study dimensions with each of the hypotheses, we present the following model (see Figure 1) to verify them empirically.
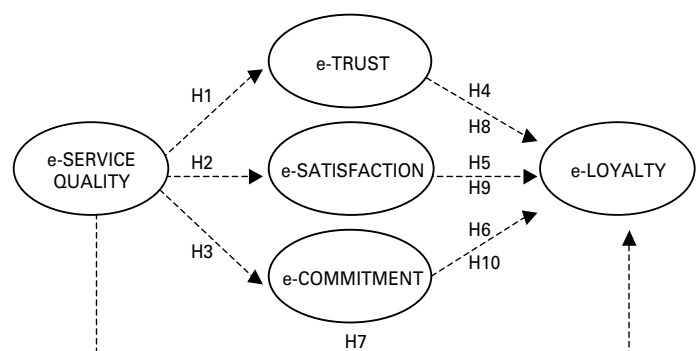

Figure 1
Proposed model for the investigation
Source: authors.

3. METHODOLOGY

All the variables of the model in Figure 1 were measured with elements adapted from previous investigations as shown in Table 3. The scales were slightly modified for adapting them to the context of the travel *yotubers*. The population used in this research were young university students in different universities of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. The main reason for choosing this target population is due to the perception of young university students who use social media to a greater extent and, more precisely, they are watching more travel videos on YouTube. The chosen location was the Autonomous Community of Madrid, as it is where young Spanish university students are mostly concentrated and because of the highest affinity index (218 for the age range between 18 and 24 years old). The used sampling technique was by convenience.

A multi-item measurement scale was used for the creation of the model. The scales to measure the latent dimensions and to assure the validity of their content were adapted from previous studies. In all the scales, 8 items were applied, as shown in Table 3. The instruments used for a questionnaire designed are based on different studies previously mentioned, more accurately, taking as reference Cristobal *et al.* (2007), Ho and Lee (2007), Chung and Shin (2010), Moreira and Silva (2015), Ho and Lee (2015), Moreira *et al.* (2017), Sarmiento (2017) and Jeon and Jeong (2017). The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions in total which were divided in three different blocks. The first block included 3 questions related to YouTube travel video consumption and also a filter question to increase the validity of this research. The second block contained 27 questions related to the e-service quality provided by the travel *youtubers* and also questions linked to the e-relationship quality and e-loyalty. The third block incorporated 4 socio-demographic questions in order to classify the respondents. For the questionnaire, there have been used scale questions. For the measurement of scale questions there have been applied the 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 mean "strongly disagree" and 7 "strongly agree".

In total, the size of the research sample consisted of 1245 persons with 82.45% response rate (1026 valid questionnaires); 4.3% sample error and confidence level up to 95%. Before the final survey and for the adequacy of the questionnaire design, there was applied a pre-test to 50 people from the target population. The study was made during May, June and July, 2019. For the analysis and interpretation of the results there we used IBM SPSS software. More detailed technical data on methodology you can find in Table 2.

Table 2

Technical data sheet of the research methodology

Target population	Young university students (18-24 years old) from the Autonomous Community of Madrid
Sample size	1245 users
Sample design technique	By convenience
Sample error	4.3%
Confidence level	95%
Date of the study	May-June-July, 2019
Response rate	82.45%
Data analysis software	IBM/ SPSS V.20

Source: authors.

Table 3

Dimensions, items and references used for the model

Dimensions	Items	References
E-experience	(E1) I had a good experience with this travel *youtuber* (E2) I like interacting with the travel *youtuber* (E3) I feel comfortable with the travel *youtuber*	Sarmiento (2017) Jeon and Jeong (2017).
Design	(D4) The design of the videos are attractive (D5) The videos are commented by the *youtuber* in an original way (D6) Videos have sound	Sarmiento (2017) Jeon and Jeong (2017).
Security	(S7) User privacy is secure (S8) The YouTube channel respects the privacy of users (S9) Users feel safe by providing information to the travel *youtuber*	Ali (2016) Sarmiento (2017)
Information	(I10) The information is concise (I11) The YouTube channel has complete information (I12) The information is useful	Ho and Lee (2015) Sarmiento (2017)
Communication	(C13) I participate in YouTube channel discussions (C14) I participate in active mode through comments, photos or videos (C15) They usually encourage you to participate with comments	Ho and Lee (2015) Sarmiento (2017)
e-Trust	(T16) The travel *youtuber* answers all questions (T17) The travel *youtuber* is integral (T18) The travel *yotuber* is trusted	Ho and Lee (2015) Sarmiento (2017)
e-Satisfaction	(ST19) I am satisfied when browse through the travel *youtuber* website (ST20) I am satisfied with the experience with this travel *youtuber* (ST21) It has been a good choice to use this travel *youtuber*	Ho and Lee (2015) Ali (2016) Sarmiento (2017) Jeon and Jeong (2017).
e-Commitment	(CO22) I would defend this *youtuber* if others criticized him (CO23) I feel very identified with the values of this *youtuber* (CO24) I feel very identified with the information provided by *youtuber*	Sarmiento (2015) Von der Heidt y Laberton (2011)
e-Loyalty	(LY25) I will say positive things about this travel *youtuber* (LY26) I will recommend this travel *youtuber* to other people (LY27) I usually choose the tourism destinations that this travel *youtuber* recommends me	Ho and Lee (2015) Jeon and Jeong (2017).

Source: authors.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of this research paper are presented on basis of obtained primary data from 1245 questionnaires handed to users of YouTube travel channels. In the following table 4 are displayed the results of the socio-demographical characteristics of the respondents. As it can be seen, 58.6% of the respondents were females, while 41.4% were males. Regarding to the age of the users, 36.3% of them were between 18 and 19 years old, being the most represented range; 30.2% were between 20 and 21 years old; 19.8% between 22 and 23; and finally, 13.7% of the respondents were 24 years old or older. Regarding to the purchasing power of the respondents, most of them have medium purchasing power, more precisely, the 43.1% of the sample; 11.1% have high purchasing power, 23.1% of them have medium-high purchasing power; and 22.7% have medium-low purchasing power. Most of the respondents had Spanish nationality: 76.1% of them while 23.9% were foreigners. Among the foreign respondents were nationalities such as Chinese, Romanian, British, French, Italian, Colombian, Venezuelan, Ecuadorian and German.

Table 4
Socio-demographical characteristics of travel *youtubers* channel users

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	519	41.4
	Female	726	58.6
Age range	18-19 years	453	36.3
	20-21 years	376	30.2
	22-23 years	247	19.8
	24 or more years	169	13.7
Purchasing power	High	138	11.1
	Medium-high	287	23.1
	Medium	537	43.1
	Medium-low	283	22.7
Nationality	Spanish	948	76.1
	Foreign	297	23.9

Source: authors.

When questioned about the consumption of the YouTube travel channels, the students were asked on the main motives for them to use it. The main reason is to "Plan a trip/journey", for the 87.54% of them; the second is for the "Entertainment in Social Media"; the third is to "Get good quality information", and the last one, for 47.8% of the respondents, answered that they follow those channels "To see and to know places that they think will never be able to visit".

In the second question, the respondents were asked about the frequency with which the connected to any travel channel

through YouTube. In this manner, all the 1245 answers to this question were considered as valid and none as idle. Results prove that 73.6% (916 users) of the sample connect to a travel YouTube channel just to plan a trip and choose destination; 15.8% do it every week (197 users); 5.7% once a month (71 users) and, the lesser of them, 4.9% (61 users) once a year.

The third question was about the subscriptions: to which travel *youtubers* are subscribed the users in the sample. Out of the 1245 users, just 487 of them are subscribed to some YouTube travel channel: 42.76% (208 users) of them to "alanxelmundo"; 24.89% (121 users) to "benshortsviajes"; 18.3% (89 users) to "molaviajar", 9.2% (45 users) to "danieltirado" and 5% (24 users) to "mochileros". There were no other subscriptions to any other YouTube travel channel in the sample.

In Table 5 it can be seen the average and the standard deviations for each of the dimensions. As it can be noticed, results show that the average of the variable "satisfaction" with the service provided by travel *youtubers* is the highest (5.97), closely followed by variable "information" (5.71) while the lowest average is the one of the variable "design" (3.28). Out of Table 5 we can deduce that variables that have higher interactivity and those that contain quality information are the ones that are best rated by the users.

Table 5
Average and standard deviations of each variable

Variables	Number of items	Average	Deviation(SD)	Position
Experience	3	4.37	0.815	7
Design	3	3.28	0.845	9
Security	3	4.32	0.836	8
Information	3	5.71	0.928	2
Communication	3	5.64	0.934	4
Trust	3	5.68	0.975	3
Satisfaction	3	5.97	0.939	1
Commitment	3	4.56	0.815	6
Loyalty	3	5.19	0.911	5

Source: authors.

In the next block of the questionnaire (please see Table 6) we measured the reliability. In order to test the reliability, we have used Cronbach alpha coefficient. Results indicated that Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.757 for the dimension "experience"; 0.523 for "design"; 0.656 for "security"; 0.862 for "information"; 0.734 for "communication"; 0.769 for "trust"; 0.892 for "satisfaction"; 0.687 for "commitment" and 0.749 for "loyalty". As all the results are above 0.60, it can be stated that they are consistent and reliable (Hair *et al.* 2010). Composite reliability factor is in each and every case above 0.7 as pointed by Hair *et al.* (2010). The convergent validity factor, that should be higher than 0.5, was also checked.

Table 6
Reliability analysis for the research items: «experience», «design», «security», «information», «communication», «trust», «satisfaction» «commitment» and «loyalty»

Dimension	Cronbach Alpha Coif.	AVE	Composite Reliability
Experience	0.757	0.93	0.98
Design	0.523	0.91	0.95
Security	0.656	0.92	0.96
Information	0.862	0.95	0.99
Communication	0.734	0.94	0.97
Trust	0.769	0.92	0.98
Satisfaction	0.892	0.96	0.99
Commitment	0.687	0.91	0.96
Loyalty	0.749	0.94	0.99

Source: authors.

In Table 7 are presented the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient test, as well as the average of the dimensions. In accordance with Hernández Sampieri *et al.* (2010), Pearson correlation coefficient is significant when it is over 0.30. Results demonstrate that there is a relation between the variables "experience", "design", "security", "information", "communication", "trust", "satisfaction", "commitment" and "loyalty".

Table 7
Pearson correlation coefficient

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Experience	1.000							
2 Design	0.345	1.000						
3 Security	0.3878	0.337	1.000					
4 Information	0.489	0.362	0.656	1.000				
5 Communication	0.461	0.381	0.382	0.552	1.000			
6 Trust	0.472	0.429	0.365	0.351	0.567	1.000		
7 Satisfaction	0.575	0.451	0.374	0.476	0.448	0.527	1000	
8 Commitment	0.372	0.357	0.311	0.410	0.456	0.351	0.493	1.000
9 Loyalty	0.426	0.387	0.352	0.352	0.463	0.327	0.376	0.476	1.000

Source: authors.

The structural model that raised the relationships between the variables was estimated through the use of structural equation models with AMOS. Adjustment rate statistics (see Table 8) indicates that the model was adjusted within an acceptable level (x^2= 154.5; x^2/df = 1.38; NNFI = 0.923; CFI = 0.943; IFI = 0.975; RMSA = 0.078).

In this sense, we can observe that there is a positive correlation between de quality of the service provided by travel *youtubers* and the online trust (β = 0.69). As a consequence, H_1 is accepted. Furthermore, the study shows a positive relation between the quality of the service provided by travel *youtubers* and the online satisfaction (β = 0.92), which allows us to accept hypothesis H_2. And finally, the contrast displays the positive relation between the quality of the service provided by travel *youtubers* and the online commitment (β = 0.53) that brings to acceptance of hypothesis H_3. Curiously, our results coincide with the research of Ho and Lee (2015), and Ali (2016) in stating that quality of service influences trust and satisfaction. This is mainly due to the same application of the models in online tourist service contexts. Given these results, it seems clear that users of travel *youtubers* who are satisfied over time develop a trust towards them and more in the long term a level of commitment.

Hence, the research has demonstrated the relationship between electronic satisfaction towards travel *youtubers* and electronic users´ loyalty (β = 0.91), so the H5 is accepted. Also it has verified the relationship between the electronic commitment to travel *youtubers* and the electronic loyalty of the users (β = 0.55), so the H6 is accepted. These results indicate that relationships with travel *youtubers* may end in a feeling of fidelity, as long as the users in the continuous interactions are satisfied with the content and share the same values (commitment) as it indicated Ho and Lee (2015), Jeon and Jeong (2017) and Sarmiento (2017).

The relationship between trust towards travel *youtubers* and users´ loyalty was also accepted (β = 0.64). In the research paper of Ho and Lee (2015) it was rejected, but in our model we have found that trust is a fundamental variable for users´ loyalty. The quality of the relationship cannot be understood without trust as Sarmiento (2017) states.

The only hypothesis that was rejected, was the one that analyzed the direct relationship between the quality of service of the travel *youtubers* and the loyalty of the users (β = 0.19). This result is mainly due to the fact that users do not usually develop any type of behavior or conative attitude without having some kind of affective attitude or cognitive attitude as Sarmiento (2017) affirms.

Table 8
Results of structural equation modeling

Structural relation	Standard B	t-value	Criterion
H_1 *e-service quality - e-trust.*	0.686	7485***	Accepted
H_2 *e-service quality - e-satisfaction.*	0.917	10285***	Accepted
H_3 *e-service quality - e-commitment.*	0.526	2745**	Accepted
H_4 *e-trust - e-loyalty*	0.638	2265*	Accepted
H_5 *e-satisfaction - e-loyalty*	0.913	10346***	Accepted
H_6 *e-commitment - e-loyalty*	0.546	7188***	Accepted
H_7 *e-service quality - e-loyalty*	0.185	0.186	Rejected

Note. N= 1245; *p>0.05; **p>0.01; ***p>0.001; R^2 =0.768; x^2= 154.5; x^2/df = 1.38; NNFI = 0.923; CFI = 0.943; IFI = 0.975; RMSA = 0.078
Source: authors.

The R² value for our test was 0.768, meaning the model is explained at a 76.8%, i.e. the quality of the service provided by travel *youtubers* (experience, design, security, information and communication) has an influence of 76.8% on the quality of the relation and loyalty for with the users.

Table 9 shows the indirect relationships of the quality of service and loyalty through the different dimensions of the quality of the relationships (trust, satisfaction and commitment). As we can observe, the indirect relationships of service quality and loyalty has a positive effect through trust ($\beta = 0.75$), satisfaction ($\beta = 0.93$), and commitment ($\beta = 0.83$), thus, hypotheses 8, 9 and 10 are accepted.

Table 9
Indirect relationship between service quality and loyalty through trust, satisfaction and commitment

Structural relation	Standard B	t-value	Criterion
H₈ e-*service quality - e-trust - e-loyalty*	0.746	7892***	Accepted
H₉ e-*service quality - e-satisfaction - e-loyalty*	0.927	10187***	Accepted
H₁₀ e-*service quality - e-commitment - e-loyalty*	0.829	8293***	Accepted

Note. N= 1245; *p>0.05; **p>0.01; ***p>0.001
Source: authors.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The research we carried out made possible to identify the main reason for users to follow travel *youtubers* through YouTube channels; that is planning a trip. In this situation, *youtubers* must have other tools at their disposal, i.e. they should have presence in other social media in order to provide more information about the trips as YouTube is limited to video format, it is impossible to give more detailed information as text, for example.

The travel *youtuber* with more subscribers in the Spanish speaking world is that proves the statement we made before. "Alanxelmundo" is the travel *youtuber* with wide range of online presence. Hence, he has his own website and profiles in other social media platforms such as Google+ Facebook, Twitter and Instagram besides YouTube. As "alanxelmundo" has his own website, he can provide more detailed information to his followers than through the YouTube channel. Furthermore, he uses Facebook to create a travel community with his followers, allowing him to set a relation with and among them. Being in Twitter, he tries to be close to his followers posting comments about his adventures. Another tool he uses is Instagram, this one based in the posting of photographs and pictures, which is a format that many users prefer rather than videos (Alanxelmundo 2019a y Alanxelmundo 2019b). Therefore, *youtubers* need to identify the necessities of their followers in order to satisfy them.

The first question that we proposed for this investigation was to identify the dimensions that form the quality of service of the *youtubers*. Based on the results, seen in the previous part, we can affirm that the quality of service of the *youtubers* is formed by the

experience through the YouTube channel; the design of travel planning; the security that transmits them; the relevant information for the trip and the communication that *youtuber* develops with the users.

The second question we proposed for this research was to identify the dimensions that make up the quality of the relationship. In this sense, after reviewing the existing literature, we can affirm that the quality of the relationship of the users of the YouTube travel channels is formed by trust, satisfaction and commitment.

The main objective that we set out at beginning of this research was to analyze the relationships between the quality of service, the quality of the relationships and the loyalty, has been demonstrated with the presented results. In the context of travel *youtubers*, in addition to providing a quality service and maintaining long-term quality relationship with users, it is essential to develop a positive attitude. This positive attitude that users can develop towards travel *youtubers* over time can become a behaviour, better to say, a feeling of loyalty towards them.

In the following paragraphs we will give the answers to the specific objectives. The first one sets the objective of analyzing how the dimensions of the quality of service that travel *youtubers* provide influence the quality of the users´ relationships. Once the results have been analyzed, we can affirm that the most important dimension for users who follow travel youtubers is the information provided by the website for travel planning and the interactivity that may occur between users and *youtuber*.

Regarding the second specific objective that was trying to analyse the relationship between the quality of the relationship and loyalty, we can say that there is a strong relationship in the context of travel *youtubers*. To understand these relationships between the dimensions of study, we must understand that the most important dimension and which determines the relationship with loyalty is satisfaction. Once users are satisfied with the services of the *youtuber* they begin to develop a confidence and a feeling of commitment over time.

As a consequence, this research work has tried to demonstrate the influence that *youtubers* have on travel planning. One decade ago, users had a passive role in the development of travel websites. Specifically, they were dedicated solely and exclusively to navigate and carry out electronic transactions (electronic commerce), so they did not contribute to the development of the electronic service. With the arrival of Social Media the situation has changed radically. Users can now create, upload or exchange content or communicate with other users thanks to different types of social media (social networks, blogs, micro-blogging, image websites, video websites, forums, virtual games, virtual worlds, instant messaging and professional social networks).

5.1. Managerial implications

As this study has shown, the social media channel YouTube is an effective option to provide information and develop long-term relationships with users in the tourism context. The findings provide practical implications for *youtubers* to improve levels of satisfaction and trust through the provision of quality information. In fact, the content should attract users who visit the YouTube chan-

nel. The quality of service (including experience, design, security, information and communication) has been found as an important antecedent of the quality of the relationship.

It is important that travel *youtubers* illustrate the key attributes of the content such as diversity, volume, presentation and organization. In addition, the choice of videos improves YouTube travel channels and provides value to users. Another vitally important factor is the exchange of information in tourism communities, as they encourage users to publish their reactions and comments. These interaction tools drive the development of trust and users´ satisfaction. Professional *youtubers* should prepare a personal marketing plan and implement tools that can provide content, comments, links and travel problem resolutions.

The results of this research show that the YouTube channel is a very visual, but not very interactive medium. Compare to other social media the main competitive advantage of this medium is that it can provide enough information through voice and visual content. If *youtubers* want to gain interaction, they should have a presence in other social media such as Instagram.

Another practical implication that *youtubers* can develop is creation of tourism routes through YouTube channel, so in addition to users, tourism professionals can better prepare the travel routes.

To sum up, *youtubers* must combine their channel with other social media networks to make it more interactive and instant in order to reach a wider audience and generate greater loyalty.

5.2. Research limitations

The main and single limitation of this investigation was the size of the analyzed sample. The principal decision to choose this sample by convenience lies on: accessibility, speed, economics, ease and, above all, the closeness of the subjects to the researchers. Thus, we analyzed 1245 users that represent 0.26% of the total undergraduate students of the universities in the Autonomous Community of Madrid. For economic and mobility reasons the analysis is carried out only in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, although we justify it by saying that it was the Autonomous Community of Spain in which social media were most used among young people. Given this context, we can affirm that the data found cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of students in Spain.

5.3. Future researches

For future research projects, we recommend applying the model to the entire geographical area such of Spain or carrying out a comparative analysis of several countries. In addition, we recommend applying research to the entire population that consumes YouTube travel channels without limiting it to a range of age and profession as we have done in our research.

In our research paper we have focused on the quality of service, but for the future lines of research it would be correct to analyse antecedents of the quality of the relationship such as interactivity or entertainment and how they influence trust, satisfaction, commitment or loyalty.

Finally, we consider that this model should also be applied to *instagramers*, since it is currently one of the fastest growing social media and that brings greater satisfaction to its users.

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