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Research paper

Influence of young consumers' external and internal variables on their e-loyalty to tourism sites

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes, in a generational context, the influence of young consumers' external and internal variables on their e-loyalty to tourism sites. Using a large sample and employing structural equations (PLS), a new model is generated that includes two external variables (site design and eWOM) and two internal variables (trust and satisfaction), to which the intention to purchase online is added. These variables are very important in e-commerce and tourism, and they have not previously been studied jointly. The results show that the impact of consumers' internal variables is greater than the impact from external ones. Moreover, the proposed causal model is practical and can be easily applied by tourism companies to improve site e-loyalty in the context of market orientation. The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPMA) carried out shows the importance of satisfaction over other variables.

1. Introduction

Electronic commerce in tourism has grown rapidly, as can be seen by the increasing numbers of tourists who use the Internet to organize their trips, especially among the segment of younger consumers (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Tseng, 2017). On the one hand, tourists nowadays seek and use information from various sources, process the information, make a selection and change tourist destinations with a simple 'click' (Datta, Bigham, Zou, & Hill, 2015). On the other hand, tourism managers use websites as a way to influence consumers' decisions, to promote tourism products and to obtain and retain customers, thereby obtaining commercial and financial benefits (Sugandini, Feriyanto, Yuliansyah, Sukwadi, & Uii, 2018; Toufaily, Ricard, & Perrien, 2013). For all these reasons, and due to factors such as the fierce competition in tourism markets, high consumer demands, the intangible nature of tourism products and the insecurity of e-commerce, there is considerable interest in the literature to study consumers' online behavior in this sector, and particularly their online loyalty (Mohseni, Jayashree, Rezaei, Kasim, & Okumus, 2018). More specifically, it is necessary to study further the formation of site loyalty in tourism and to design new causal models from existing ones, taking into account that this topic has been poorly studied and that more than ever, the site is a key link between consumers and products (Abou-Shouk & Khalifa, 2017; Yi, Fu, Yu, & Jiang, 2018). This will facilitate greater economic sustainability and a better market orientation for tourism companies (Chuang, 2018).

As proposed in the literature, it is also important for both theoretical and online marketing research to delve deeper into the study of certain potential segments of online consumers of tourism products, such as young people that make up the segment known as the 'Millennials' or the 'Net Generation' (Purani, Kumar, & Sahadev, 2019). This segment is composed of people born between 1981 and 1999 with similar attitudes, beliefs and experiences about tourism (Liu, Wu, & Li, 2019). The interest in this segment is because over 95% of young people use the Internet, mobile telephony and social media when they want to purchase a tourism product (Chuah, Marimuthu, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2017). As well as their great potential to influence, it is estimated that in 2020, young people will make more than 300 million trips per year (Fyall, Leask, Barron, & Ladkin, 2017). Finally, the reduced loyalty of this segment is another reason why it must be studied more thoroughly (Bilgihan, Okumus, Nusair, & Bujisic, 2014). Particularly relevant is the segment of university students, since they are a coveted market because they have a great commercial and influential importance and a higher level of education than the general public (Gurtner & Soyez, 2016; Purani et al., 2019).

To address the demands and concerns mentioned above, this paper studies online loyalty to e-commerce sites in tourism among young people. In this study, the terms e-loyalty and online loyalty are used interchangeably, whether carried out through the Web, mobile telephony or social networks. The aim of the paper is to enrich the

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theoretical and practical literature on the online purchase behavior of this population segment and clarify the relative roles of consumers' external and internal variables, and online purchase intention. The external variables are site design and eWOM, and the internal ones are satisfaction and trust. These variables are considered very important in the online context of e-commerce in tourism and have not been jointly studied before. Since it is not very easy to obtain real data on site e-loyalty in tourism, it is analysed through the intention to repurchase using the same site and/or recommend the site. It has been found that intention is the best predictor of real behavior in tourism, as happens in other sectors (Amaro & Duarte, 2013, 2015). In addition, a novel causal model (PLS) is developed on the formation of e-loyalty that is practical for tourism companies to use to improve their online marketing actions and market orientation. To facilitate this process, an Importance-Performance Analysis (IPMA) is included in this study, as other tourism authors have done (e.g. Albayrak, Caber, González, & Aksu, 2018). Moreover, the study of this segment constitutes a generational approach that can facilitate the adoption of homogeneous online marketing actions at a global level (Hao, Xu, & Zhang, 2019).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. E-loyalty in tourism

The development of electronic commerce in tourism has led to an interest in online loyalty in this sector (Yi et al., 2018). Nowadays, consumer e-loyalty is one of the central issues for academics and professionals in marketing and management in tourism, because it makes the creation and maintenance of beneficial long-term relationships with consumers possible and leads to increases in sales and profitability of tourism companies (Litvin et al., 2008). Moreover, online loyalty has been studied less than offline loyalty, very little in the case of tourism and even less among young people compared to other segments (Han & Hyun, 2015).

There is no unanimity regarding e-loyalty's conceptual delimitation and measurement in tourism. Indeed, so far, e-loyalty has largely been treated in the literature as an extension of consumer loyalty in an offline context (Nisar & Prabhakar, 2017; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), with an attitudinal approach to loyalty dominating in literature rather than a behavioral approach, just as in the offline context (McKercher, Denizci-Guillet, & Ng, 2012; Zhang, Fu, Cai, & Lu, 2014). However, it has been found that intention is the best predictor of real behavior in tourism, as happens in other sectors (Almeida & Moreno, 2018; Amaro & Duarte, 2013, 2015).

Specifically, e-loyalty refers to two concepts: (i) the intention or willingness of a consumer to repeat an online purchase of the same product, service or brand, or to recommend it through the Web, mobile phone or social networks, even if it is repurchased and recommended through a different site (e-loyalty to the product or destination, e-loyalty to a hotel); and (ii) the intention to repeat the purchase on the same site (or several sites) and recommend it through the Web, mobile telephony or social networks, even if it is not the same product, service or brand (e-loyalty to the site) (Carneiro, Eusébio, Caldeira, & Santos, 2019; Llach, Marimon, Alonso, & Bernardo, 2013). Of course a combination of both alternatives is also possible. This study is based on the second approach. In any case, it is assumed that online loyalty is related to the global or holistic purchasing experiences through e-commerce sites (Yin, Poon, & Su, 2017).

There are some factors that suggest the complexity of the construct and the need to delve deeper into the study of online loyalty in tourism. According to the contributions of McKercher et al. (2012), loyalty has three possible dimensions, and therefore consumers can be loyal to several sites: vertical loyalty (loyalty at different levels simultaneously, for example to an airline and a travel agent); horizontal loyalty (loyalty to more than one provider on the same level, for example to more than one lodging brand); and experiential loyalty (loyalty to certain holiday types). This fact is also explained by the theory of channel complementarity, which provides a framework for understanding the relationship between the consumption among different channel types that share similar functions (Wagner, Schramm-Klein, & Steinmann, 2013). Second, although in electronic commerce the consumer has the possibility to change sites with a single 'click', online loyalty is present even when there are other alternatives available, despite the situational influences and regardless of the efforts of marketing carried out by tourism companies (Chen,Yen, Pornpriphet, & Widjaja, 2015; Ozdemir et al., 2012). Moreover, the recommendation component of online loyalty is less frequent than repetition, unlike the offline context, in which both aspects are equally relevant (e.g. Amaro & Duarte, 2016; Nisar & Prabhakar, 2017). Finally, some authors consider that the affective content of loyalty models, such as Oliver's (1999) model, does not appear to be effective in the online tourism context, nor in the case of site loyalty or among younger consumers (Toufaily et al., 2013; Yi et al., 2018).

2.2. E-loyalty drivers in tourism

Various theories and models have been used to study the factors related to the formation of online loyalty in tourism, and the main contributions can be divided into three groups. A first group includes studies based on classic loyalty theories developed in the offline context, they have especially focused on the behavioral approach to loyalty and have been applied in very few studies in the online context in tourism (Toufaily et al., 2013). Therefore, these studies do not usually include site e-loyalty or relevant variables related to electronic commerce (e.g. site design, eWOM); neither have they studied young consumers. In this first group, theories such as the quality-satisfaction-loyalty chain (Anderson & Mittal, 2000) and Oliver's model of satisfaction and loyalty (Oliver, 1999) stand out. Oliver considered that customer loyalty can occur in four sequential phases, in which the level of consumer engagement increases as consumer moves from one stage to another: cognitive fidelity, affective fidelity, conative loyalty and loyalty to action and willingness to act (Toufaily et al., 2013). Although this model has been widely accepted in practice, there is little practical research that integrates several phases of e-loyalty into a single model (Caruana & Ewing, 2010). Additionally, this model has been criticized in the literature because it does not differentiate between inertia (false loyalty) and true loyalty (Floh & Treiblmaier, 2006). Finally, the model has not been fully accepted in the online context because Internet behavior is much less stable over time, the consumer has more alternatives to choose from, the cost of change is relatively small and information about the sites is available at low cost (Kim, Chung, Lee, & Preis, 2015; Silva & Gonçalves, 2016).

A second group of studies has focused mainly on an attitudinal and intentional approach to loyalty in tourism and in other sectors, both in the offline and online context. These studies are very limited, largely cognitive and in many cases they have been carried out using structural equations to predict the intention of repetition or recommendation (Kang, Lee, & Namkung, 2018; Yu & Chen, 2018). In the models belonging to this group, most authors have focused on consumers' internal factors (e.g. attitude), and they have taken into account their perceptions (e.g. perceived value) (Mohseni et al., 2018). The Reasoned Action Theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) is the reference theory for this second group. It assumes that e-loyalty depends on the attitude of the consumer and, to a lesser extent, on the social norm, defined as the degree to which the consumer perceives that other significant people accept her/his behavior (Lam & Hsu, 2004; Paul, Modi, & Patel, 2016). The omission in the theory of certain non-volitional factors (e.g. resources) has caused some authors to doubt its applicability in the context of consumer behavior, and particularly in the field of loyalty (Han & Kim, 2010). This facilitated the development of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), which constitutes an expanded model of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Chen & Tung, 2014). The Theory of

Planned Behavior dictates that attitude, subjective norm and perceived control can explain consumer loyalty, and these three variables are preceded by the consumer's beliefs about the result (Akbari, Fozouni, Pino, & Maleksaeidi, 2019). The inclusion of behavioral control in this theory improves the predictability of the intention, provided that unforeseen events do not occur (Garay, Font, & Corrons, 2019). However, several studies have found that the prediction of loyalty through this theory is usually less than 40% (e.g. Xu & Schrier, 2019). Additionally, the use of social networks and technology can mean that in many situations consumers do not to have total volitional control over consumption (Belk, 2014). The limitations mentioned above have led to the development of the Technology Acceptance Model in the online context of electronic commerce (Davis, 1989) (Belgiawan, Schmöcker, Abou-Zeid, Walker, & Fujii, 2017). The Technology Acceptance Model is also based on the Theory of Reasoned Action and is the most widely used of the three models in electronic commerce (Cheng & Huang, 2013). However, this model does not include social norms and considers that perceptions about the usefulness of the site, and its ease of use will determine the attitude and e-loyalty towards it (Davis, 1989; Zhang et al., 2014).

The third group of scientific contributions about e-loyalty formation in tourism, in which this study is included, is the most current and the most numerous. It arises as a result of the limitations indicated by some authors in relation to the three models or theories included in the second group and mentioned above. The most important limitations of those models are related to the reduced stability of some variables in the online context (Morosan & Jeong, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). Furthermore, although in tourism it has been found that attitude plays a relevant role in the formation of e-loyalty, this is not confirmed in the case of social norm, perceived control or perceived ease, as their influence on online loyalty is reduced (Amaro & Duarte, 2016; Bigné, Sanz, Ruiz, & Aldás, 2010). For these and other reasons, the models about e-loyalty included in the third group of studies are characterized by seeking a greater predictive power (Weigel, Hazen, & Cegielski, 2014). In these models, variables and relationships whose influence on e-loyalty have been proven are taken into account, and in many cases maintaining the basis of the reference models (Amaro, Andreu, & Huang, 2018; Xu & Schrier, 2019). The models that belong to this third group of studies have included external variables to the consumer, such as the reputation and image of the company (Chenini & Mustapha, 2018), the quality of the site and the service (Jeon & Jeong, 2017), perceived value and price (Zhang, Zhao, & Gupta, 2018), relationships, communication and eWOM (Bulut & Karabulut, 2018), as well as the role of culture (Peña, Gil, & Rodríguez, 2018). Among the internal variables of the consumer, the ones that stand out in the literature are commitment and trust (Sanz, Ruiz, & Pérez, 2014), satisfaction (Chenini & Mustapha, 2018) and values (Chiu, Chen, Du, & Hsu, 2018). In addition, attitude and other variables included in the Theory of Reasoned Action and successive theories have been taken into account.

This study includes two internal variables of consumers (trust and satisfaction) and two external variables (site design and eWOM) that are considered very important in the online loyalty literature, to which the intention to purchase online is added. These variables have not been studied together before. The model begins with trust (internal consumer variable) and site design (external variable), which are two fundamental variables in the field of online loyalty (Toufaily et al., 2013).

The hypotheses and the proposed causal model are presented below. The proposed model is included in the third group of studies on e-loyalty in tourism.

3. Model development and hypotheses

3.1. The influence of external variables: the role of site design and eWOM

Increasingly, tourists use the Internet to share their experiences (Ring, Tkaczynski, & Dolnicar, 2016). Tourists use eWOM because it is a primary source of information that reduces risks in the online purchase process of products related to travel and lodging (Yan, Zhou, & Wu, 2018). Particularly in the case of the millennials, conversations on sites are generally deemed both trustworthy and equivalent to offline word-of-mouth communications (Semrad & Rivera, 2018). This form of communication is known as 'electronic word-of-mouth' (eWOM) and is defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former consumers about a product, a site or a company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Litvin et al. (2008) defines electronic word-of-mouth in tourism as all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers. Now, considering that the comments and ratings made by consumers can be made through written texts, images, videos or even applications, it seems evident that certain attributes of sites can determine consumers' perceptions about the possibility of using eWOM and influence eWOM attitude and behavior (Hsu, Xiao, & Chen, 2017; Mariani and &Visani, 2019). In this way, it has been found that consumers' perceptions of a website are relevant, since, these days, the site is vital link between consumers and tourism products (Kim, Lee, & Hiemstra, 2004; Litvin et al., 2008). The characteristics of sites that influence eWOM include, among others, their technical and communicative design (Khan & Hashmi, 2016; Park, Shin, & Ju, 2014). Taking into account the above, the first hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1. Certain characteristics of site design have a direct and positive influence on perceived potential of the site to generate eWOM.

The interest in eWOM is due to its influence on purchase intention and loyalty, both in tourism and in other sectors (Wang, Wang, & Wang, 2018; Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li, 2010). However, the impact of eWOM on customers' actions is more salient for the service industry (Bulut & Karabulut, 2018). The intangible and experiential nature of the online service sector increases customers' perceived risk. Thus, customers tend to search for more information from previous customers who have actually used the service, and so they appreciate the possibility of using eWOM (Hu & Kim, 2018; Lim, 2016; Luo & Zhong, 2015). And as more consumers' value sites with eWOM in order to use them, more scholarly efforts are being made to answer how eWOM influences consumers behavior in tourism, particularly purchase intention and e-loyalty in the case of the Generation Y (Hu & Kim, 2018). However, although the influence of eWOM on online purchase intention and loyalty in tourism has been demonstrated, knowledge about site loyalty is still limited (Serra & Salvi, 2014). Taking into account the above, the following two hypotheses establish that:

Hypothesis 2. Perceived potential of the site to generate eWOM has a positive and direct influence on online purchase intention.

Hypothesis 3. Perceived potential of the site to generate eWOM has a positive and direct influence on site e-loyalty.

3.2. The influence of internal variables: trust and satisfaction

Trust is a decisive variable in electronic commerce because its absence can stop an online purchase and greater trust can stimulate it (Wang, Wang, & Liu, 2016). The importance of trust is based on the risk and insecurity of e-commerce and on the immaterial and intangible nature of tourism (Ritchie, Chien, & Sharifpour, 2017). Considering that in the online context, trust does not arise from a personal relationship, it is defined as the consumers' beliefs or expectations that the online seller will have integrity and will behave in a reliable, ethical and socially appropriate manner (Bilgihan, 2016). Trust also depends on the security of the site (Ardyan, Retnawati, & Farida, 2018). Regarding the consequences of trust, here it is assumed that online trust has a direct impact on satisfaction and indirectly on purchase intention and e-

loyalty, as in other studies (Escobar & Carvajal, 2014; Kim et al., 2015). Despite the importance of trust in electronic commerce, more studies are needed in the context of tourism, particularly due to the contradictory results obtained by other authors in previous studies (Silva & Gonçalves, 2016; Wen, 2010). Based on the above, the following hypothesis dictates that:

Hypothesis 4. Trust directly and positively influences satisfaction.

Satisfaction plays a key role in business strategy, in the sustainable development of companies and in construction and maintenance of long-term relationships with customers (Wang, Yang, Han, & Shi, 2017). In the virtual environment, Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) defined electronic satisfaction in relation to a previous online shopping experience. However, at present satisfaction can be defined as the general and cumulative evaluation about a product or service after an online purchase regarding the customers' needs and expectations (Filieri, Alguezaui, & McLeay, 2015; Oliver, 1980). Empirical evidence has shown that customer satisfaction influences online shopping behavior in tourism, particularly in purchase intention and e-loyalty (Ali, Kim, Li, & Jeon, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). However, because some exceptions have been found regarding this influence, and there are few studies about site loyalty, it is necessary to go deeper into its study (Agyeiwaah, Otoo, Suntikul, & Huang, 2019). Therefore, the following two hypotheses dictate:

Hypothesis 5. Satisfaction directly and positively influences online purchase intention.

Hypothesis 6. Satisfaction directly and positively influences site e-loyalty.

Loyalty is related to purchase intentions, although they are two different constructs (Petrick & Backman, 2002). The intention to purchase online is defined as the declared will to buy tourist products through sites in an e-commerce context. On the other hand, e-loyalty is defined in this study as the willingness to repeat the purchase on the same site or to recommend it to other users, whether it be the purchase of the same or a different product. The influence of the purchase intention on loyalty in electronic commerce has been verified in many sectors (Luo, Chen, Chin, & Liu, 2011), even in the tourism (Olya & Altinay, 2016). The inverse relationship has also been studied, that is, the influence of online loyalty on the purchase intention in e-commerce (Hameed & Kanwal, 2018). Considering that the purchase intention refers to a global or previous attitude or intention towards electronic commerce, the following hypothesis states that:

Hypothesis 7. Online purchase intention has a positive and direct influence on site e-loyalty.

4. Methods

4.1. Research design and data analysis

The study was carried out between the months of January and May 2019 using a quantitative method that was descriptive and causal. The partial least squares structural equation modelling approach (PLS-SEM) has been used in this study for its advantages in the study of human behaviour (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012) and because of its optimal predictive potential when using reflective indicators and a wide range of sample sizes (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Similar to other authors, an Importance-Performance Analysis (IPMA) has also been carried out to determine the internal and external variables to be managed to promote e-loyalty among young people (Albayrak et al., 2018).

Table 1
Details of the sample.
Source: Authors

Year/Gender	Men	Women	Total (%)
1st	94	103	197
2nd	78	85	163
3rd	46	71	117
4th	45	62	107
Total (%)	263 (45%)	321 (55%)	584 (100%)

4.2. Sample and data collection

The sample consisted of 584 subjects (98% were between 18 and 24 years old) (Table 1), and they were chosen randomly. The sample consists of students from different degrees and from different years from a Spanish university. Students have a great commercial and influential importance, and they are an adequate representation of virtual consumers because of their age and because they have a higher level of education than the general public (Gurtner & Soyez, 2016). It is important to note that according to the latest report of the Council of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRSE) (www.crue.org), slightly more than 40% of young people between 18 and 22 years of age study at the University. This percentage increases the percentage remarkably if those who study vocational training are taken into account. For a more accurate assessment, the effect size (0.15) and power (0.90) indicators were specified (Cohen, 1988; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The sample size is in accordance with the rule of ten times the number of variables proposed by Hair et al. (2016) when using structural equations (PLS method). The response rate was 95.58% and the percentage of men and women in the sample is similar to that in the selected degrees.

A questionnaire, designed ad hoc, was used as an instrument for collecting data, as is usual in the literature on the variables included in this study (e.g. Yin et al., 2017). To carry out the design of the scale, a literature analysis was first conducted with the collaboration of two experts to identify the variables, relationships and most appropriate measures for the proposed model, thus generating content validity (Roy, Dewit, & Aubert, 2001). It was taken into account that in other studies the variables included here are usually measured by means of a small number of items, thus avoiding the methodological problems and the costs derived from the use of multiple indicators (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007). Next and according to Huang and Chang (2018), the Delphi technique was used with two groups of experts to construct, through two rounds, the definitive content of items and relationships. After a pretest, the final questionnaire included 12 items (see Table 2) designed following principles of brevity and simplicity and using a Likert scale with 5 response alternatives (1 = no agreement to 5 = total agreement). The items refer to the online purchase of tourist products on e-commerce sites through web, mobile telephony or social networks indistinctly.

4.3. Variables and measurements

The dependent variable in this study is site e-loyalty, that is, consumers' intentions to repeat the purchase on the same site or to recommend it to other consumers, whether it be the same or different products, a single site or several. Therefore, online loyalty is related to a global or holistic experience of e-commerce through sites. The independent variables are site design, perceived potential of the site to generate eWOM, trust, satisfaction and purchase intention. Online loyalty has been measured by two items, one related to the repetition and another to the recommendation of the site (Chen, Yen, Pornpriphet, & Widjaja, 2015). The dimension of site design has been measured using two items, taking into account the contributions of Li, Peng, Jiang, and Law (2017) about site attributes that could influence eWOM

Table 2
Measurement model: Basic data.

Items	% ≥50%	Λ ≥0.70	CR ≥0.70	AVE ≥0.50
Regarding your purchases on online sites of tourism products through Web, mobile and social networks				
DES1 I appreciate the site accessibility, speed and usability.	68.21%	0.887	0.841	0.725
DES2 I appreciate the site interactivity and communicative capacity.	69.86%	0.814		
WOM1 I appreciate the ability to read and write negative comments on the site.	83.56%	0.860	0.884	0.792
WOM2 I appreciate the ability to read and write positive comments on the site.	75.34%	0.919		
TRU1 I like to perceive the company's trust through the site.	88.49%	0.852	0.768	0.625
TRU2 I like to perceive the site's trust and security.	83.84%	0.724		
SAT1 When I have purchased online, I have seen my expectations fulfilled.	76.44%	0.893	0.916	0.846
SAT2 When I have purchased online, I felt satisfied.	76.71%	0.946		
INT1 I intend to purchase tourist products over the Internet site(s).	72.33%	0.911	0.899	0.816
INT2 There is a possibility that I will purchase through the Internet site(s).	80.00%	0.895		
LOY1 I would recommend the site(s) where I bought tourism products.	82.19%	0.871	0.884	0.793
LOY2 I would repeat the purchase of tourist's products on the same site(s).	85.48%	0.909		
I have consumed some tourism products at some time through e-commerce sites.	*97.33%*	———	———	———

DES: site design, WOM: perceived potential of the site to generate eWom, TRU: Trust, SAT: satisfaction, INT: purchase intention, LOY: site loyalty. Source: Authors.

communication. The measures of eWOM are related to the contributions of Filieri et al. (2015) and Abubakar, Ilkan, Al-Tal, and Eluwole (2017). The two items related to trust have been designed according to the contributions of Essawy (2006) and Bilgihan (2016). Satisfaction (SA) has been measured with two items, in a similar way to Tseng (2017). Finally, in the design of the two items to measure purchase intention, the studies of Amaro and Duarte (2015) and Yin et al. (2017) were taken into account. The control variable is the extent to which consumers have made online purchases of tourism products and services onany online site through web, mobile telephony or social networks, to verify the experience and the online purchasing potential of young people. They marked yes or no to answer this item.

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive analysis

All twelve of the items reached an overall score higher than 65% of the maximum possible value if all the respondents had valued the item with five points (Table 2). Three items obtained scores higher than 75%, and six items (50%) obtained scores higher than 80%, including e-loyalty items. The least valued items are those related to the site design, the rest of the items obtained scores above 70%. Regarding consumers, 97.33% of young people surveyed reported having consumed some tourism products or services at some time through e-commerce.

5.2. Identification of latent variables

To identify the latent variables to which the items belong, an exploratory factor analysis was performed. After a series of analyses, a structure of six factors or latent variables was obtained, each with two items (see Table 2). The inclusion of two items per factor was accepted because the variables forming the factors have a high correlation between them (greater than 0.70) and a reduced correlation with other variables (Yong & Pearce, 2013). The latent variables or constructs of the model are: site design (DES), perceived potential of the site to generate eWom (WOM), trust (TRU), satisfaction (SAT), purchase intention (INT) and site loyalty (LOY).

5.3. Analysis of the measurement model

First, to test the eight hypotheses, the *measurement model* was evaluated, which relates observable variables to their latent variables (Hair et al., 2016). The study of individual reliability showed that the observed variables reached the minimum level required ($\lambda \geq 0.70$) (Table 2), thus, it was accepted that the indicators were part of their corresponding constructs (Hair et al., 2016). The study of composite reliability (CR) showed all values were above 0.70 (Table 2). This result shows that the measurement model was internally consistent and that all the indicators or variables observed were measuring their corresponding latent variable (Hair, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Hair, 2014).

To evaluate the convergent validity of the model, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated, which provides information on the amount of variance that a construct obtains from its indicators in relation to the amount of variance due to measurement error. In all cases, the result was greater than 0.50, so it was found that more than 50% of the variance of the construct was due to its indicators (Hair et al., 2016) (Table 2).

Regarding the discriminant validity, this implies that each construct is significantly different from the rest of constructs with which it is not related according to the theory. Following Fornell and Larcker (1981), it was first verified that the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) (on the diagonal of Table 3) was greater than the variance shared between the construct and the other constructs of the model (data that are not found along the diagonal of Table 3) (Chin, 2010). Additionally, when the matrix of cross-factor loadings was obtained (Chin, 1998), the results showed that the indicators were more correlated with their own construct than with others.

5.4. Analysis of the structural model

Regarding the evaluation of the *structural model*, which relates latent variables with others, collinearity was analysed, as well as the algebraic sign; magnitude and statistical significance of the structural path coefficients; the R^2 values (variance explained); the f^2 effect size; the Q^2 indicator; the Goodness-of-Fit test (GoF) and the SRMR indicator, which analyze the overall fit of the model. Particularly the Q^2, GoF and SRMR indicators evaluate the predictive power of the model.

First, it was verified that there was no multicollinearity between the

Table 3
Discriminant validity: criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981).

	DES	WOM	TRU	SAT	INT	LOY
DES	0.852					
WOM	0.472	0.890				
TRU	0.117	0.032	0.791			
SAT	−0.087	−0.017	0.302	0.920		
INT	0.243	0.248	0.257	0.341	0.903	
LOY	0.023	0.174	0.334	0.337	0.380	0.890

DES: site design, WOM: perceived potential of the site to generate eWom, TRU: Trust, SAT: satisfaction, INT: purchase intention, LOY: site loyalty. Source: Authors.

Table 4
Effects, significance and confirmation of hypotheses.

Latent Variables	f^2	Path (β)	T	P Values	CH
H1 Design (DES) →eWOM (WOM)	0.287	0.472	14.285	0.000	Yes
H2 eWOM (WOM) → Purchase Intention (INT)	0.079	0.254	6.838	0.000	Yes
H3 eWOM (WOM)→Loyalty (LOY)	0.024	0.192	3.770	0.001	Yes*
H4 Trust (TRU)→Satisfaction (SAT)	0.100	0.302	5.013	0.000	Yes
H5 Satisfaction (SAT)→Purchase intention (INT)	0.145	0.345	6.837	0.000	Yes
H6 Satisfaction (SAT)→Loyalty (LOY)	0.067	0.248	8.844	0.000	Yes
H7 Purchase intention (INT)→Loyalty (LOY)	0.074	0.267	5.363	0.000	Yes

DES: site design, WOM: perceived potential of the site to generate eWom, TRU: Trust, SAT: satisfaction, INT: purchase intention, LOY: site loyalty. Source: Authors.

constructs, since the inflation index of the variance was in all cases less than 3.3, both in the case of the external model and in the structure model (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014). Regarding the sign of causal relationships, it was found that they all had the same positive sign as their corresponding hypotheses, so there was no need to reject any hypothesis. Thus, it was verified that the exogenous latent variables contributed to explain the variance of the endogenous latent variable (LOY) in a significant way. It was confirmed that in all cases the path coefficients (β) (standardized regression weights) reached levels above the minimum acceptable level ($\beta \geq 0.2$) (Chin, 1998), or even at the optimal level ($\beta \geq 0.3$) (Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Hair, 2014) (Table 4). The weight of the relationship between eWOM and site e-loyalty (LOY) is less than 0.2, however, some authors such as Ramírez, Arenas, and Rondan (2012) take into account relationships with a lower weight ($\beta \geq 0.1$), although with a lower predictive value. On the other hand, all the direct causal relationships obtained a high significance ($P \leq 0.05$), as revealed in the bootstrapping analysis with 500 sub-samples and 200 cases carried out (Lanero, Vázquez, & Gutiérrez, 2011). Therefore, all the hypotheses of the proposed model are confirmed, taking into account that H3 is made with reservations.

Regarding R^2, which varies between 0 and 1, it was found that the previous latent variables, with the exception of satisfaction (SAT), explained sufficient variance of the consequent variables, since the basic indicator R^2 reached in all cases values above the minimum acceptable level ($R^2 \geq 0.19$) proposed by Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011). On the other hand, the f^2 indicator assesses the degree to which an exogenous construct contributes to explaining a specific endogenous construct in terms of R^2 (Cohen, 1988). The values were not high and in fact, they were lower than the minimum accepted level (0.02) (Table 4) (Hair et al., 2016; Wang, 2013).

The indicator Q^2 developed by Stone (1974) and Geisser (1975), calculated in a redundancy-based prediction way, shows values above zero ($Q^2 \geq 0$), which indicates that the model has predictive potential. This result was corroborated by the GoF (Goodness-of-Fit) test, which reached a value of 0.411, which is higher than the minimum acceptable value (GoF ≥ 0.360) (Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & Van Oppen, 2009). Finally, the result obtained by the SRMR composite factor model was below 0.08, which shows that the global validity of the model is accepted (SRME = 0.065, ≤0.08) (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2018) (Table 5). Therefore, it can be said that the model has predictive potential.

5.5. Importance-Performance Analysis

The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPMA) was carried out (see Fig. 1). This method was introduced by Martilla and James in 1977 (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). IPMA contrasts in the PLS context the predecessor constructs' importance in shaping a certain target construct

Table 5
Indicators R^2, Q^2 and GoF test.
Source: Authors

Construct	R^2	AVE	Q^2 (*)
eWOM (WOM)	0.223	0.792	0.168
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.205	0.846	0.073
Purchase Intention (INT)	0.201	0.816	0.142
e-Loyalty (LOY)	0.204	0.793	0.154
Average	0.208	0.812	–
GoF	0.411		

(*) This test is a measure of the extent to which the observed values are reproduced by the model and by its estimated parameters.
DES: site design, WOM: perceived potential of the site to generate eWom, TRU: Trust, SAT: satisfaction, INT: purchase intention, LOY: site loyalty.

(through the total effects), with their performance (through their average scores) (Anderson & Fornell, 2000). The results show (Fig. 2) that in the proposed model, there are no variables with reduced importance and reduced performance. Satisfaction (SAT) and online purchase intention are the most relevant variables of the model because of their high importance and high performance in relation to sitee-loyalty. Both variables are near to the maximum productivity line and require priority attention in terms of resources (Bacon, 2003). However, the site design (DES) is the variable with less importance and lower performance. This variable together with trust (TRU) and eWOM (WOM) have less relevance to achieve online loyalty.

6. Discussion

This study found that the vast majority of young people have used e-commerce in tourism (97.33% of the sample), as suggested by other authors with levels above 95% being highlighted (e.g. Bilgihan, 2016). The high scores achieved by the items confirm the great potential of online purchasing among young people and their positive attitudes towards electronic commerce in this sector (Fyall et al., 2017). It is corroborated by the favorable estimates proposed by some authors regarding the number of trips young people will be making in the coming years (Gardiner & Kwek, 2017).

In relation to the causal model generated, it has been shown that the influence of consumers' internal variables (trust and satisfaction) on e-loyalty is higher than that of their external variables (site design and eWOM), although this second influence should not be ignored. More specifically and in relation to external variables, the findings of other authors have confirmed that certain online site characteristics directly favor the perceived potential of the site to generate eWom and indirectly purchase intention and e-loyalty (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015). The design of the site directly influences eWOM through its accessibility, speed and usability (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014), interactivity and communicative capacity (Luo & Zhong, 2015). The importance of these characteristics is similar for young people (DES1 = 68.22%, DES2 = 69.86%). These findings are useful for site design and eWOM actions that tourism companies could carry out.

Regarding online communication, it is important to note that this study finds that young people are willing to communicate in the eWOM context; that is, they are in favor of reading and writing comments and evaluations on sites, which confirms the potential online influence of this segment (Yan et al., 2018). This favorable disposition to eWOM is somewhat higher in the case of negative experiences (WOM1 = 83.56%) than in positive ones (WOM2 = 75.34%), an important result considering that the impact of negative eWOM on purchase intention and online loyalty is superior to positive eWOM (Berger & Schwartz, 2011).

The findings of other authors related to the influence of eWOM on purchase intention have also been confirmed (Luo & Zhong, 2015). However, the proposals of other authors about the influence of eWOM

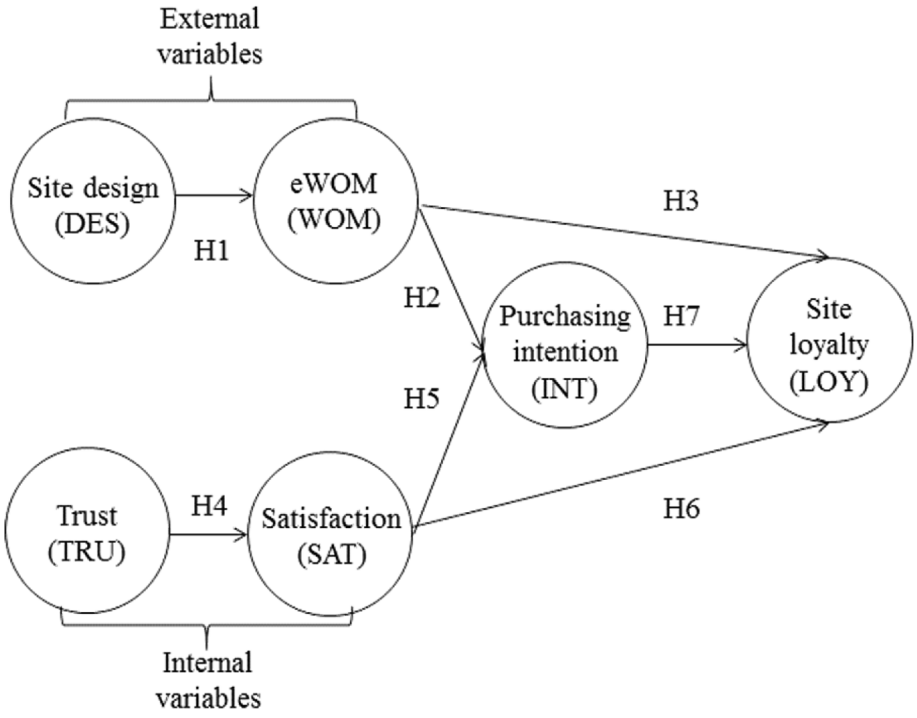

Fig. 1. Proposed research model. Source: Authors.

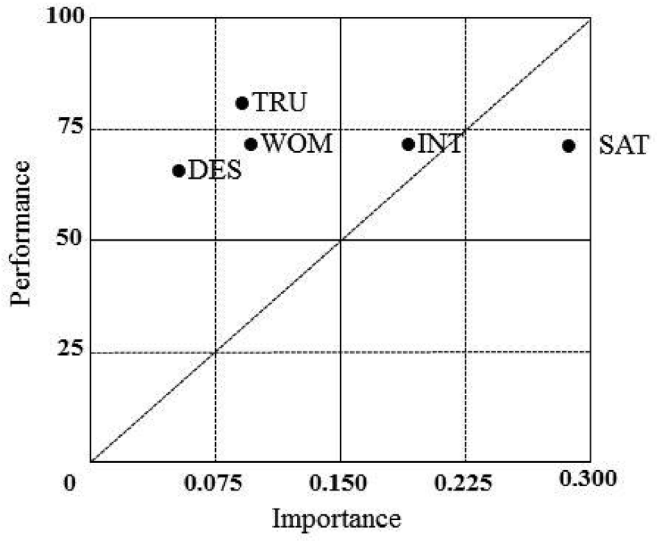

Fig. 2. Importance-Performance results. DES: site design, WOM: perceived potential of the site to generate eWom, TRU: Trust, SAT: satisfaction, INT: purchase intention, LOY: site loyalty. Source: Authors.

on e-loyalty have not been confirmed at all (Zhang et al., 2010). This may be because e-loyalty requires a previous online purchasing experience that will have reduced customers' perceptions of risk and uncertainty. Additionally, the definition of eWOM and e-loyalty used in this study could influence that result. In any case, the purchase intention stated by young people (INT1 = 72.33% and INT2 = 80.00%) is somewhat lower than their loyalty (LOY1 = 82.19% and LOY2 = 85.48%). This high level of e-loyalty manifested by young people does not agree with assertions by other authors about the reduced loyalty of this population segment, at least in the case of tourism (Bilgihan et al., 2014).

In relation to the internal variables, it has been found that in the proposed model, in the case of young people, trust directly influences satisfaction and indirectly purchase intention and e-loyalty, which should be taken into account by tourism companies (Bilgihan, 2016). This relationship is particularly relevant in the context of e-commerce in tourism due to the impersonal nature of the Internet and the immaterial and intangible nature of tourism products (Ritchie et al., 2017). It is noteworthy that data relating to the responses that young people have given to the items of trust (over 80%) confirm that this is a very important variable for them, especially the trust in the company, which is slightly higher (TRU1 = 88.49%) than trust in the site (TRU2 = 83.84%). It is therefore feasible that, taking into account the technological and Internet profile of young people, they demand more trust from acompany through a site, than from the site, itself.

Regarding the influence of satisfaction on purchasing behavior and online loyalty, it is noteworthy that, although this relationship has sometimes been contradictory in the literature (e.g. Sobihah, Mohamad, Ali, & Ismail, 2015), in this study, it has been found that the relationship is direct and positive, as other authors have proposed (Kim, Chung, & Lee, 2011). Therefore, it is confirmed that when young people feel satisfied and their expectations are met, they are more willing to make purchases online and to repeat the purchase on the same site or to recommend it (Wu & Hsu, 2015). However, this influence is not very high, with the impact of satisfaction on purchase intention being greater ($\beta = 0.345$) than on e-loyalty ($\beta = 0.248$). This may be because achieving loyalty in the online context is more difficult than in the offline context (Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2015). These results also show that other variables, included or not in the model proposed in this work, also influence intention and loyalty.

Purchase intention and e-loyalty are different constructs, although they are related. Online purchase intention is defined as the desire or general disposition to acquire a product or a tourist service through electronic commerce, whether it is the first purchase, something unlikely in the case of young people given their high level of consumption, or a subsequent one (Morosan & Jeong, 2008). On the other hand, e-loyalty is conceived as the intention to repeat the purchase on the same site or to recommend it to other users (Llach et al., 2013). Considering that the impact of the relationship between purchase intention and e-loyalty is significant ($\beta = 0.267$), it is concluded that to achieve greater

e-loyalty, it is necessary that the consumer has a general intention to use e-commerce. This is interesting because in the case of purchase intention, companies have less power of influence than on e-loyalty. As observed in the IPMA analysis, satisfaction and purchase intention are priority variables to achieve e-loyalty regarding the allocation of resources.

7. Conclusion and implications

This paper has responded to the concerns and suggestions of other authors regarding the need to study more thoroughly the process by which e-loyalty of young people in tourism is formed, and particularly site e-loyalty. This need is due to the commercial and financial benefits that e-loyalty produces, particularly in the case of young people, a digital segment with high purchasing power and influence. The interest in this area of study is also because of the brakes on e-commerce due to the insecurity of purchasing tourism products online, which is associated with their intangible nature, as well as the insecurity of e-commerce itself.

At theoretical level, a model for the formation of site e-loyalty has been generated that is statistically significant and practical, which facilitates its application by tourism companies. The model includes consumers' internal variables (trust and satisfaction) and external variables (site design and eWOM), and also online purchase intention. These variables are considered relevant by other authors and have not been studied together previously. All these contributions and considerations improve the theoretical and practical knowledge about the formation of e-loyalty. The proven rigor of the structural equation methodology (PLS) used has allowed us to generate a causal model to predict with sufficient significance the purchase intention and site loyalty. This methodology has been successfully applied by other authors in this field and in relation to the variables used.

Regarding management implications, the results lead to the conclusion that tourism companies should make efforts in two main areas of electronic commerce to achieve-loyalty: one related to the external environment of consumers and the other referring to their internal one. However, it must be taken into account that the influence of internal variables on online loyalty is greater than that of external ones. Regarding the external variables, efforts must be devoted to market research to design quality sites that are adapted to the profile of the young population segment. Particularly important in relation to design and in the case of young people is that the site is interactive, fast, easy-to-use, interactive and facilitates communication. This will determine the consumer's perceptions regarding the possibility of reading and writing positive and negative comments, thereby influencing online loyalty. For this, it is crucial to know first, in a marketing and market orientation context, the expectations, needs and desires of young consumers in relation to the site design and eWOM relevance, instead of taking into account only those of the computer professionals linked to a company.

As for the internal variables, taking into account that young people place great importance on trust, tourism companies must increase the perceived security young people feel with respect to the site and to the organization itself. Improving the expectation that the company and the site will fulfil what has been promised will be very useful to improve the satisfaction derived from online purchases and thus favor purchase intention and e-loyalty. Given the results of this study, the efforts of tourism companies to promote the internal variables, that is to improve trust and satisfaction, should be equal to or greater than those carried out to promote quality site design and eWOM. Market orientation is also fundamental in this second line of action.

Three additional conclusions can be drawn. First, the high number of young people who have made purchases of online tourism products or services and the high scores achieved by the items (including e-loyalty items) allow us to conclude that young people have favorable attitudes to electronic commerce. This means tourism companies can more easily develop actions aimed at further increasing online purchase intention and e-loyalty among this segment. Second, the generational approach that has been adopted allows the possibility of carrying out homogeneous e-commerce and digital marketing actions for the entire segment studied, including at a global level. Finally, although online purchase intention and e-loyalty stated by young people is high in tourism, companies must further promote e-loyalty by increasing consumers' purchase intentions using both the internal and external channels mentioned.

7.1. Limitations and future research

The main limitation of this work is related to the selection and combination of the internal and external variables included in the proposed model, given the great diversity of variables in the literature when studying purchase intention and online loyalty.

As for future research lines, the inclusion of other internal and external variables to the subject is recommended, as well as a more in-depth study of the relationship between purchase intention and loyalty. It would also be interesting to extend the study to other young people who are not students.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Dimitrios Buhalis: Conceptualization, Data curation, Validation. **Eduardo Parra López:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Validation. **Jose Alberto Martinez-Gonzalez:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Software, Supervision, Validation.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100409.

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