

Anger, Desire for Revenge and Negative Word of Mouth - A Theoretical Review from the View of Consumer Behavior on the Internet

Raiva, Desejo de Vingança e Boca a Boca Negativo - Uma Revisão Teórica sob a Ótica do Comportamento do Consumidor na Internet

Matheus Frohlich Marquetto¹, Marta Olivia Rovedder de Oliveira²

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Abstract

Online stores attract more and more consumers, even in a period of crisis; Brazilian e-commerce has the expectation of high sales of 10% to 15% in 2017. With the growth of sales, there is a tendency to increase the number of complaints and problems that consumers face in their online purchases. The negative word of mouth has attracted considerable interest from researchers in recent years because the Internet has transformed the way we shopped. Previous research has shown that anger is a strong predictor of revenge behaviors and that anger feelings lead to negative word of mouth behavior. Therefore, it is necessary to remember some concepts to better understand this behavior. The present study aims to make a theoretical review regarding negative word of mouth behavior on the Internet, as well as feelings of anger and desire for revenge.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour. Anger. Desire of Revenge. Negative Word of Mouth.

Resumo

As lojas on-line atraem cada vez mais consumidores, mesmo em um período de crise o *e-commerce* brasileiro teve a expectativa de alta no faturamento de 10% a 15% em 2017. Com o crescimento das vendas, há a tendência de aumento no número de reclamações e problemas que os consumidores enfrentam nas suas compras on-line. A propaganda boca a boca negativa atraiu considerável interesse dos pesquisadores nos últimos anos. Para os autores, a Internet transformou a forma como compramos. Pesquisas anteriores demonstraram que a raiva é um forte preditor de comportamentos de vingança e que o sentimento de raiva leva ao comportamento de boca a boca negativo. Por isso, para entender melhor esse comportamento faz-se necessário resgatar alguns conceitos. O presente estudo teve como objetivo fazer uma revisão teórica a respeito do comportamento de boca a boca negativo na Internet, bem como, dos sentimentos de raiva e desejo de vingança.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento do Consumidor. Raiva. Desejo de Vingança. Boca a Boca Negativa.

¹ Doctorate in business administration from Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. Professor at Centro Universitário Unifacvest. The Group's researcher in Marketing at the Federal University of Santa Maria-UFSM. Address: Av. Mal. Floriano, 947, 88501-101, Lages, Santa Catarina, SC, Brazil. E-mail: matheusmarquetto@yahoo.com.br

² Doctor in business administration (Marketing emphasis) from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Assistant Professor of Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. Leader of the Group of studies in Marketing of UFSM. E-mail: marta.oliveira@ufsm.br

1 Introduction

With a differentiated approach to physical stores, online stores attract more and more consumers and, unlike the low sales growth in traditional commerce, they have been increasing their profits. Even in a period of crisis, Brazilian e-commerce had the expectation of high sales of 10% to 15% in 2017, according to ABComm (Brazilian Electronic Commerce Association).

It is noteworthy that, even with the slowdown, the sector was one of the few in the Brazilian economy that managed to have real growth during the recession. Retail sales volume fell by 6.2% yoy while the reduction in e-commerce was only 0.2%. Retail nominal revenue rose by 4.5%, which was below the inflation rate of 6.29% (Sant'Ana, 2017).

One of the elements for increasing revenue of e-commerce will come from new virtual consumers, as another 27 million people will make their first purchase online over the next 5 years. At the end of 2016, digital media influenced 19% of the total sales of retail off-line (excluding food and beverages), which will increase to 32% by 2021. Currently, 6 out of 10 sales are preceded by interaction with web, which will grow to 8 out of 10 sales by 2021 (Forrester Research, 2017).

With the growth of sales, there is a tendency to increase the number of complaints and problems that consumers face in their online purchases. Complaint behaviors are critical to customer loyalty and retention, as well as profitability (Holloway, Wang, & Parish, 2005). By establishing a process of analyzing customer complaints, it is possible to improve the service.

Some research on consumer behavior, such as Chea and Luo (2010) and Kim and Son (2009), have focused on understanding buying and adoption behaviors, but more attention has recently been paid to post-purchase and complaint behaviour. As consumers are increasingly demanding and wanting a better product / service, they tend to feel more dissatisfied with the services they are rendered and the propensity to complain increases (Holloway et al., 2005). According to King, Racherla and Bush (2014), the electronic word-of-mouth (eWom) has attracted considerable interest from researchers in recent years. For the authors, the Internet has transformed the way we look for information; we interact with each other and the way we buy.

Consequently, traditional word-of-mouth behavior has an electronic element that results in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Previously, when consumers needed information, they turned to sources generated by the merchant, analyzed third-party certifications, or sought advice from friends. Electronic word-of-mouth then replaced these methods and became more common, in some cases, as the preferred method of communication (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014).

Previous research has already shown that anger is a strong predictor of revenge behavior (Cathy & Stacks, 2017; Grégoire, Laufer, & Tripp, 2010; Mattila & Ro, 2008; Sánchez-García & Curráspérez, 2011). Consumers who express anger emotions are likely to engage in negative word-of-mouth activities (Grégoire et al., 2010; Mattila & Ro, 2008; Sánchez-García & Curráspérez, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to rescue the concepts of anger and desire for revenge to better understanding the electronic mouth-to-mouth behavior.

The present study aims to make a theoretical review regarding the negative word-of-mouth behavior in the Internet, as well as the feeling of anger and desire for revenge that are predictors of negative word-of-mouth.

2 Theoretical Background

This article aims to make a theoretical review regarding negative word of mouth behavior. The feelings that lead the consumer to have this behavior are explained below.

2.1 Anger

Negative emotions have been widely studied to explain consumers' responses to service failures. Among all the negative emotions that are been studied in the context of service failures, anger has been a widely used construct (Cathy & Stacks, 2017). Anger is associated with evaluating an event as harmful and frustrating. It is destined for another person, an institution or the "I". One crucial aspect that distinguishes anger from other negative emotions is the element of guilt or the belief that we have been voluntarily wronged unfairly (Lazarus, 1991).

Customers may experience anger and dissatisfaction in response to service failure such as billing errors or poor execution. The similarity between anger and dissatisfaction is apparent in the literature. Emotion research describes dissatisfaction as "a negative term related to anger, hate and disgust" (C. Storm & T. Storm, 1987), and marketing literature reports significant correlations between anger and dissatisfaction (Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2003). On the other hand, this same literature also suggests that these specific emotions have idiosyncratic behavior and behavioral tendencies associated with them. While Oliver's (1996) research has shown that dissatisfied clients would rather remain passive than complain, in Roseman's (1991) study, complaining was a common response to anger.

Anger is a strong emotion that often involves guilt and the belief that injustice exists (Bougie et al., 2003). Anger is usually related to behavioral tendencies such as "behaving aggressively" (Bougie et al., 2003, p.379). Anger is also a retrospective emotion that tends to occur when people attribute an incongruent goal event to external sources. This external assignment implies blaming someone for a situation (Roseman, 1991).

Therefore, anger is the most dominant affective reaction to service failures (Kalamas, Laroche, & Makdessian, 2008). Gelbrich (2010) argues that numerous empirical studies have shown that anger is a typical response to an unsatisfactory consumer experience attributed to a company. Bougie et al. (2003: 379) obtained the following experiential qualities of anger:

People associate anger with feelings 'as if they would explode' and 'of being overwhelmed by their emotions'. Typical thoughts associated with anger are 'thinking of violence towards others' and 'thinking of how unfair something is'. Anger is associated with action tendencies such as 'feel like behaving aggressively' and 'letting go'. Actions that are characteristic for anger are 'saying something nasty' and 'complaining'. Finally, typical motivational goals are 'wanting to hurt someone' and 'wanting to get back at someone'.

Anger is one of the most powerful emotions if we consider its profound impact on social relations as well as the effects on the person experiencing that emotion (Lazarus, 1991). It is related to aggression and hostile behavior; therefore, anger can be a powerful predictor of client behavioral responses to product and service failures (Bougie et al., 2003).

A considerable amount of empirical evidence suggests that anger may be related to customer responses to service failure (Bougie et al., 2003). Previous research into the effect of anger on clients' behavioral intentions has shown that when anger increases, clients are more likely to complain and engage in negative word of mouth, and are less likely to repurchase the product or service (Nyer, 1997).

There are several definitions of anger in the Marketing area. Table 1 shows some examples of definitions of anger within the research field of service failure. Although a number of features are common among definitions, there are also significant differences. From the analysis of these examples, one could notice that the definitions are not contradictory, but they show how anger can have different meanings, depending on the context analyzed (Lazarus, 1991).

Table 1

Definitions of anger in the service marketing literature

N.	Definition	Source	Objectives of the study
1	"a strong emotion that involves an impulse to respond and react"	Grégoire et al., 2010, p. 742	Development and testing of a customer revenge model.
2	"a retrospective emotion, which tends to occur when people attribute a goal incongruent event to external sources"	Gelbrich, 2010, p. 568	Examine the relative influence of anger (compared to frustration) in reactions to service failure.
3	"a common and morally relevant emotional reaction to a service failure"	He e Harris, 2014, p. 140	Test anger's influence on moral disengagement and the justification of vindictive customer behaviour.
4	"The key dimensions that distinguish anger from other negative emotions are certainty, control, and responsibility. Anger occurs as a result of individuals' appraisals of high other-responsibility for negative events and high other-control over these negative events"	Bonifield e Cole, 2007, p. 87	Postulate and test the role of anger in reactions to servisse failure and as a mediator in decisions to retaliate against the organization.
5	"anger in response to a service failure arises when customers appraise an event as unfair, with high service provider control [...] and a stable cause [...] anger is associated with appraisals of high goal relevance, goal incongruence and high coping potential"	Bougie et al., 2003, p. 378	Test the unique effect of anger (controlling for dissatisfaction) on consumers' reactions.
6	"Anger episodes tend to be initiated by appraisals of an event as being significant to but incongruent with the consumption goals. [...] blame for any negative event will thus be directed towards the service provider, and the service provider, as the causal agent, will be expected to alleviate the problem."	Menon e Dubé, 2007, p. 269	Compare the relative effects of companies' service recovery strategy on customers' feelings of anger and anxiety

Source: Antonetti (2016).

According to Antonetti (2016), several studies have already shown that negative word of mouth is a consequent attitude to the feeling of anger (Bonifield & Cole, 2007; Bougie et al., 2003; Chang et al., 2015; Gelbrich, 2010; Grégoire et al., 2010; Kalamas et al., 2008; Nyer, 1997). Anger is associated with a range of assessments (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Cronin et al., 2012) related to the punishment of a deviation (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002). Usually consumers evaluate the severity of the failure (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Grégoire et al., 2010) and the anger is tied to the desire for revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010; Joireman et al., 2013), such revenge can occur by propagating the negative eWOM.

2.2 Desire for revenge

From a sociological point of view, Stuckless and Goranson (1992) defined revenge as "the imposition of punishment or injury in exchange for perceived error." Likewise, Cota-McKinley, Woody, & Bell (2001) conceptualized revenge as "the imposition of damages in exchange for perceived injuries or insults."

In a context of consumption Bechwati e Morrin (2003, p. 441) have extended the definition of revenge to the desire for consumer revenge and have conceptualized it as "the feelings of retaliation that consumers feel about a company, such as the desire to do some damage to the company, often following an extremely negative buying experience." In general terms, revenge is "an intense emotional state requiring relief, based on the perception and motivation that someone has been wronged" (Ysseldyk, 2005).

The desire for revenge can also be defined as the need of clients to punish and cause damage to companies for the damages they have caused (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire

& Fisher 2006). This desire is related to the inability of customers to "let go", that is, to leave the problem behind (Finkel et al., 2002). As long as customers keep this desire, over time, they will grudge against the companies and will not be able to forgive them (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003).

Customers can do more than just leave a relationship passively or complain after poor service. Some clients turn against companies and take steps to "get even" (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). Consumers seek revenge against companies, for example, spreading word of mouth, insulting an employee or even vandalizing a physical installation of the company (Grégoire et al., 2010).

We can describe a desire for revenge as constituting the essence of a "struggle" strategy, and it is at the origin of more retaliatory behaviors like private vindictive complaints (Bonifield & Cole, 2007), negative word-of-mouth (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006), and public complaint through online spaces (Ward & Ostrom, 2006).

According to Obeidat (2017), the focus on online revenge intentions is relevant both for to the substantial increase in the number of word of mouth complaints over the internet and to the power of the consumer to complain on sites and platforms where the company can not exclude or modify these posts. Most people who complain online were the "victims" of a series of failures, a situation that leads them to experience vivid desires for revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Bonifield & Cole, 2007).

Specifying patterns of evolution of the desire for revenge over time is important for both theoretical and managerial reasons. As Figure 1 shows, for Grégoire, Tripp and Legoux (2009) the desire for revenge diminishes over time, as their related emotions, negative cognitions and retaliatory behaviors become very costly to maintain. The desire for revenge is associated with extensive psychological resources in terms of emotion (Bonifield & Cole, 2007) and cognitions (Ward & Ostrom, 2006) that are difficult to sustain over time. This desire also leads to retaliatory actions that require energy to trace and proceed without any promise of material gains (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003).

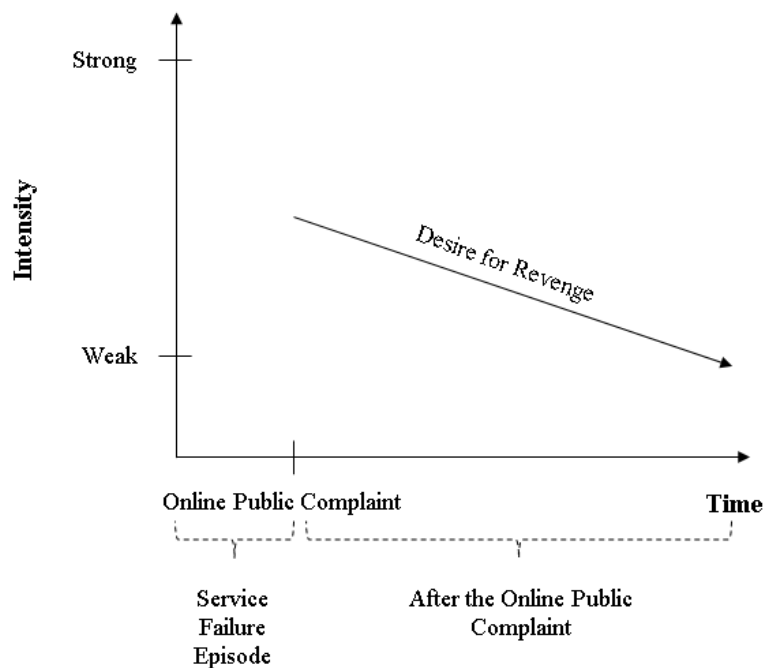


Figure 1 - The desire for revenge over time

Source: Grégoire et al. (2009).

Maintaining a high level of investment seems undeniably costly for clients who, of course, aspire to reduce their psychological costs over time (Tripp and Bies, 1997). Clients may

believe that they have satisfied their desire for revenge by taking public actions against companies such as spreading the word-of-mouth negative on social networks.

After the online complaints, customers may even continue to interact with the firm to find a solution, even if they stop buying items or services, but some consumers abandon the "hope" of finding a solution and begin to avoid the company completely (Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009). At this stage, the consumer starts to look for alternative solutions with competitors and then, after a while, find an acceptable option and no longer need to maintain any interaction with the initial company.

2.3 Negative word-of-mouth

In contrast to private complaint (ie, when clients express their concerns only to the companies), the public complaint involves clients who go beyond corporate boundaries to alert the public to an episode of service failure (Singh, 1988). The public complaint deserves special attention because of the harmful consequences for companies, especially in an online context (Ward and Ostrom 2006).

In addition, Wangenheim (2005) observed that clients are more sensitive to negative information than positive information when evaluating a company. Likewise, Chang and Wu (2014) have pointed out that negative information has a greater effect on consumer buying decisions than positive information. That is, the negative word-of-mouth effect against the company can be very strong (Xia, 2013).

Word-of-mouth behavior was defined as "voluntary post-consumer communications by consumers" (Dick & Basu, 1994) or as "informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, use or characteristics of particular goods, services and/or their sellers" (Westbrook, 1987, p.261). Word-of-mouth conveys a more reliable message, which promotes consumer decision-making, it has a powerful influence, especially on the attitudes, intentions and behavior of consumers (Reichelt, Sievert, & Jacob, 2014). With the advent of the Internet, the word "electronic word of mouth" was born.

The exponential growth of Internet access, and consequently social networks, forums and websites means that a high proportion of word of mouth communication now occurs through the Internet (King et al., 2014). The Electronic Word-of-mouth (eWOM) has been confirmed by previous research as being more influential than traditional word-of-mouth for several reasons. First, information technology allowed the opinions of a single individual to instantly reach thousands of consumers (Nusair, Yoon, & Parsa 2017). Secondly, eWOM can be easily traced, with newer ones reaching consumers through the internet quickly, but older ones remain on the network and can be read indefinitely (Tham, Croy, & Mair, 2013). Finally, several platforms offer the guarantee of anonymity by removing concerns about consumer exposure and privacy (Phelps et al., 2004).

Internet sites such as TripAdvisor, Booking.Com, Yelp, "Reclame Aqui", Ebit, and others allow customers to post reviews, ratings, complaints, stories, photos and videos of their consumer experiences. Consumers are increasingly accessing and using these posts to determine which products to buy, which hotels to choose, where to eat, and even the destination to visit on vacation (King et al., 2014). Surveys have shown that these online reviews are influential in defining customer opinions and purchasing decisions (Weber, Bradley, & Sparks, 2017) because consumers realize that these virtual communities are reliable sources of information (Nusair et al., 2017).

In addition to its effects on customers' opinions and behaviors, online reviews have the potential to increase the profitability of the business or, on the contrary, harm brands and business reputation. For these reasons, online reviews are a growing concern for companies

(Floyd et al., 2014) seeking to reduce the occurrence of eWOM, since it undermines the brand's reputation (Mayzlin, Dover, & Chevalier, 2014).

Chang et al. (2015) warn of the fact that although some clients do not experience a bad consumer experience, it is very easy for them to read the complaints of other customers on the Internet and therefore the behavioral intentions of the people who read reviews are also affected. Table 2 lists reasons for the behavior of word of mouth communication identified in the literature.

Table 2
 Motives for the behavior of word-of-mouth communication identified in the literature.

Autores	Motivo	Descrição
Dichter (1966)	Product-involvement	A customer feels so strongly about the product that a pressure builds up in wanting to do something about it; recommending the product to others reduces the tension caused by the consumption experience.
	Self-involvement	The product serves as a means through which the speaker can gratify certain emotional needs
	Other-involvement	word-of-mouth activity addresses the need to give something to the receiver
	Message-involvement	Refers to discussion, which is stimulated by advertisements, commercials, or public relations.
Engel, Blackwell e Miniard (1993)	Involvement	Level of interest or involvement in the topic under consideration serves to stimulate discussion
	Self-enhancement	Recommendations allow person to gain attention, show connoisseurship, suggest status, give the impression of possessing inside information, and assert superiority
	Concern for others	A genuine desire to help a friend or relative make a better purchase decision
	Message intrigue	Entertainment resulting from talking about certain ads or selling appeals
	Dissonance reduction	Reduces cognitive dissonance (doubts) following a major purchase decision
Sundaram, Mitra e Webster (1998)	Altruism (positive WOM)	The act of doing something for others without anticipating any reward in return
	Product involvement	Personal interest in the product, excitement resulting from product ownership and product use
	Self-enhancement	Enhancing images among other consumers by projecting themselves as intelligent shoppers
	Helping the company	Desire to help the company
	Altruism (negative WOM)	To prevent others from experiencing the problems they had encountered
	Anxiety reduction	Easing anger, anxiety, and frustration
	Vengeance	To retaliate against the company associated with a negative consumption experience
	Advice seeking	Obtaining advice on how to resolve problems

Source: Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004).

Table 3 presents a review of the literature on negative word-of-mouth, which helps to better understand this behavior.

Table 3

The negative word-of-mouth literature

Source	Definition of negative word-of-mouth	Key findings
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Any negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, and available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consumers' desire for social interaction and economic incentives influences WOM behavior. ▪ Consumers' concern for other consumers influences WOM behavior. ▪ Consumers' own self-worth influences WOM behavior.
Wangenheim (2005)	Customers who tell their disappointment about a dropped service provider to others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To investigate post-switching WOM. ▪ Consumers' product involvement, market mavenism, perceived risk, satisfaction with a new provider, and the reason for switching the provider influences by WOM.
Ward e Ostrom (2006)	Consumers who might voice their dissatisfaction with a firm to a few friends and acquaintances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protest-framing theory reveals the interlocking rhetorical tactics consumers use to mobilize a mass audiences against a firm. ▪ Consumers frame their corporate betrayal to the public to demonstrate their power to influence others and take revenge.
Wetzer, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, (2007)	All negatively valenced, informal communication between private parties regarding goods, services and the evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consumers engage in NWOM when pursuing specific goals. ▪ Consumers' goals systematically differ according to specific negative emotions that are experienced.
Grégoire e Fisher (2006)	A customer's efforts to denigrate a firm to their family and acquaintances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposes and tests a justice-based model that incorporates perceived betrayal as the means to understand customer retaliation and the “love becomes hate” effect.
Grégoire et al. (2010)	Customers privately share their bad experiences with friends and relatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perceived greed is found as the most influential cognition that leads to customer's desire for revenge. ▪ A critical distinction between direct and indirect acts of revenge. ▪ Power is instrumental only in the case of direct acts of revenge.
Gelbrich (2010)	Unfavorable communication with other customers that often aims to denigrate a company and to advise others not to use this company's services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This study examines the crucial role of helplessness in explaining idiosyncratic coping responses to anger and frustration after service failure.
Chang e Wu (2014)	Consensus refers to the degree to which others are likely to agree with the negative views of the communicator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consensus and vividness lead to information receivers forming external attributions. ▪ Receiver brand commitment had a moderating effect on both relationships. ▪ External attributions about writers had a positive and direct relationship with source credibility but not with information credibility. ▪ Source credibility had a positive influence on receiver information credibility but not on negative e-WOM adoption

Source: Chang et al. (2015).

As Table 3 shows, there are some negative word-of-mouth definitions in the literature, but they are not exclusive but complementary. In summary, negative word of mouth is any negative statement made by clients who share their disappointment about a product or service with others (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This unfavorable communication for the company sometimes seeks to denigrate and advise others not to buy or use this service. Therefore, it is

extremely important that companies know how to act correctly in the face of customer dissatisfaction.

3 Conclusion

From a managerial perspective, Luo (2009) pointed out that negative word of mouth reports disappointing experiences about certain products and therefore is harmful to companies. Wangenheim (2005) also pointed out that unhappy customers could spread word of mouth about companies or products and thus keep potential customers away from the company, or even increase current customer abandonment rates.

Negative word-of-mouth evaluations have a greater influence on decision makers, are more credible and have stronger effects on brand evaluations than positive assessments. In a report by consulting firm Oxford Metrica, it was found that companies in 2013 had a 82% chance of facing a corporate disaster in the next five years, compared with only a 20% chance in the 1990s. All of this is a result of the Internet and social media, which allow bad news to spread rapidly (Xia, 2013).

With the strength that social networks have gained over the past few years, it is as if each consumer has gained a powerful megaphone and decided to use it to talk about its shopping experiences, whether to praise or criticize. Thus, there is a growing need for companies to improve service by avoiding negative word of mouth behavior on the Internet.

The anger experiences are malleable and could be shaped by organizational reactions to an initial failure. A good reaction on the part of the company may be the provision of explanations and information about the problem occurred, as well as the excuses and some kind of compensation.

Previous researchs have already shown that consumers who experience service failures can make negative assignments to the company and this strongly contributes to the spread of negative word of mouth (Joireman et al., 2013). The literature suggests that explanations and information help people deal with a problem (Gelbrich, 2010; Folkman et al., 1986; Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981). Retrospective information (eg, why did a failure occur?) can mitigate retrospective emotions, such as anger and frustration. Prospective information (e.g.: what will happen in the future?) may mitigate prospective emotions such as helplessness (Gelbrich, 2010).

According to Mattila (2006), explaining the cause of the failure after the fact has occurred may be better, since previous explanations of the event may be perceived as an attempt to manipulate the client. It is necessary that the company has good management and control tools so that situations that lead to the appearance of negative emotions in clients, such as service failure, do not occur.

It is necessary to monitor customer reactions as well as the ability to respond to them as quickly as possible. Businesses constantly need to act on the Internet and cannot wait for problems to arise, must be proactive, monitoring networks and looking for people who posted about the company to offer support.

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