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Why Hotel Guests Go Mobile

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WHY HOTEL GUESTS GO MOBILE

Hoteliers appreciate that mobile technology is critical to the success of their businesses.



Many hotels are catering for mobile-centric travelers by offering technologies such as mobile apps, virtual reality, social media, and online communities. Dr. Tingting Zhang, Assistant Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and her collaborators break new ground with their investigation into the attitudes and behavioral intentions of business travelers versus leisure travelers, when adopting mobile technologies for hotel services. The researchers have extended the technology acceptance model (TAM) to provide a framework for understanding consumers' adoption behaviors of mobile technology for the hospitality industry.

The rapid development of mobile technology presents a boom in business opportunities for competitive marketing tools offering services and online transactions to users of mobile devices. Businesses investing in mobile commerce recognize that it contributes to their competitiveness, increasing both their revenues and efficiency, as well as boosting both customer satisfaction and loyalty. Hoteliers appreciate that mobile technology is critical to the success of their businesses. Many hotels are catering for mobile-centric travelers offering technologies such as mobile apps, virtual reality, social media, and online communities.

The hotel industry has to provide for the diverse needs of its clientele. The innovative features of hotel mobile apps enable hoteliers to differentiate among their clients, in order to deliver a more personalized experience for their guests.

Business travelers and leisure visitors are two such different types of guests that behave differently during their stay. Research has shown that business travelers consider location to be most important in their choice of hotels, while leisure travelers are more sensitive to price. Business travelers are more likely to become loyal guests of hotels, whereas leisure travelers tend to shop around and consider online reviews and recommendations. This diversity suggests that business and leisure travelers have different motives in terms of their attitudes and behavioral intentions when choosing hotel mobile apps.

Understanding customer engagement in the hospitality and tourism industries – particularly their technology usage and adoption – is the focus of research being carried out by Dr. Tingting Zhang, Assistant Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management, UCF. Dr. Zhang and her collaborators are breaking

new ground with their investigation into the attitudes and behavioral intentions of business travelers versus those of leisure travelers, when adopting mobile technologies for hotel services.

THE TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM)

This is the first time the behaviors of two primary hotel industry market segments, when adopting hotel mobile technology, have been studied and the research is underpinned by the technology acceptance model (TAM). TAM is one of the most significant models for examining the driving forces behind an individual's intention to use new technology. The model proposes two primary factors that influence users' decisions about how and when they will use new technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

FACTORS INVOLVED IN TAM

Perceived usefulness is essential if a hotel's technology is to be adopted. The belief being that users will adopt technologies that they perceive to be useful for what they want to do. Perceived ease of use is the degree of effort that the user believes is required to operate a system. If a technology is difficult to use, customers may choose to avoid it. In the context of hospitality management, it has been shown that, in addition to increasing user convenience, mobile systems can provide many benefits for hospitality



BUSINESS AND LEISURE TRAVELERS HAVE DIFFERENT MOTIVES IN TERMS OF THEIR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS WHEN CHOOSING HOTEL MOBILE APPS.

customers; indeed, the technology's ease of use plays a pivotal role in users' adoption behavior. Moreover, TAM suggests that positive attitudes towards technology increase intentions to use the technology.

EXTENDING TAM

Researchers have claimed that the two factors used in the conventional TAM model are not enough to explain technology adoption in industries including hospitality. Bearing in mind this vulnerability, Dr. Zhang and her collaborators have extended the model, building an extensive framework that captures the effects of mobile technology adoption in the hospitality industry. They have added constructs such as trust, innovativeness, enjoyment, privacy, and reliability, in order to mold the model to accommodate the particular requirements of mobile technology within the hotel industry.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS

Previous research has demonstrated that the initial interaction between customers and hotels, via mobile technology such as room booking, has a considerable influence on the development of the customer's trust in the hotel. Perceived privacy reflects how private information is collected and used. Loss of disclosure of their private data is a top concern for customers, and influences their willingness to use mobile technology to purchase services. Furthermore, a

reliable online system that protects customers' privacy will have a positive effect on customers' trust. Perceived enjoyment describes the extent to which the customer enjoys using the technology, while consumer innovation portrays the extent that customers are willing to experiment with new products. The latter two constructs convey the fun aspects of technological advancement.

EXPANDING TAM HYPOTHESES

The original TAM model hypothesizes that both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are positively associated with customers' attitudes towards adopting mobile technology. It was also considered that a positive correlation exists between customers' attitudes and their intentions towards adoption of mobile technology.

The additional constructs of the extended TAM model enable Dr. Zhang and the research team to expand the model assumptions and hypothesize that customers' trust in a hotel is positively related to their attitudes towards adopting mobile technology that facilitates that particular hotel's services. They also postulated that both customers' perceived privacy and the reliability of using mobile devices would be positively related to their trust in the hotel, and their attitudes towards adopting mobile devices to facilitate hotel services. In addition, they

have suggested that both the customers' perceived enjoyment of using mobile technology and their innovativeness would be positively related to their attitudes towards adoption.

Research has shown that business and leisure travelers make different decisions with regards to their hotel selections. This prompted the researchers to consider whether the actual relationship between the factors and intentions of using hotel mobile technology is moderated by traveler type. They suggest that this relationship is significantly different between business travelers and leisure travelers.

LIKERT QUESTIONNAIRE

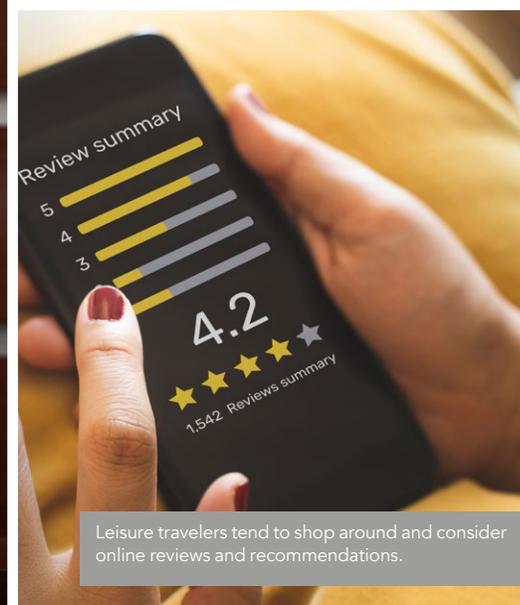
A sample of 683 adult hotel consumers, who had experienced a hotel stay within the previous three months, completed online questionnaires. Most of the respondents (70%) were aged between 25 and 45 years and 55% of participants were female. Most of the participants (75%) traveled once or twice a year. Many of the travelers taking part in the study (65%) had used mobile hotel apps three to five times, but only 5% had used them more than five times. Of the 683 participants, 330 were categorized as business travelers and the remaining 353 were leisure travelers.

The questionnaires employed a seven-point Likert scale, with '1' denoting 'strongly

Business travelers are more strongly influenced by trust, reliability and privacy factors.

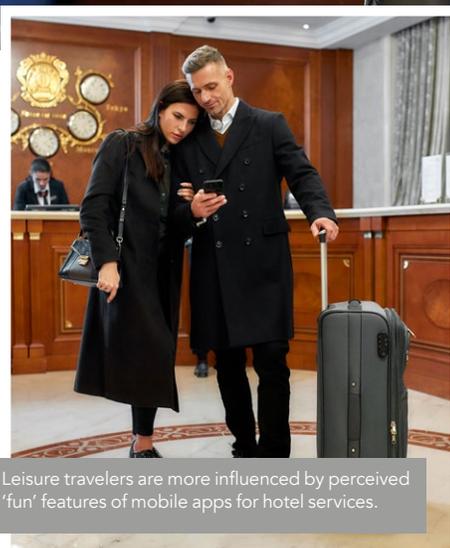


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Leisure travelers tend to shop around and consider online reviews and recommendations.



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Leisure travelers are more influenced by perceived 'fun' features of mobile apps for hotel services.

disagree' and '7' denoting 'strongly agree'. Once the scale had been checked for reliability, the researchers tested the proposed relationships between constructs, performing both single group and multi-group structural equation modeling to carry out the hypothesis testing.

THE RESEARCHERS WERE RIGHT

The study's findings revealed support for all eleven of Dr. Zhang's hypotheses, as well as validating the extended TAM model. The results indicated that both the original factors and the new constructs are important elements for consideration when determining customer adoption behaviors in relation to mobile technologies for hotel

services. In particular, the moderating effect of traveler type on customers' attitudes and intentions towards adopting mobile technology for hotel services is supported.

The traditional TAM factors, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, were identified as influencing both business and leisure travelers in their adoption of mobile technology in their hotel stays.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEISURE AND BUSINESS TRAVELERS

Business travelers are more strongly influenced by trust, reliability and privacy

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF TRAVELER TYPE ON CUSTOMERS' ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS ADOPTING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY FOR HOTEL SERVICES IS SUPPORTED.

factors than their leisure counterparts, when choosing to use mobile hotel apps. On the other hand, leisure travelers are more influenced by perceived 'fun' features of mobile apps for hotel services, i.e., the enjoyment and ease of use of the mobile technology and if they are innovative in nature.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

What does this mean for the hotel industry and wider business community? The study supports the robustness of the extended TAM model, incorporating factors relating to beliefs, risks, personal characteristics and emotions. It reveals the different motives of two groups of hotel guests using mobile technology to facilitate hotel services during their stay at a hotel. This research provides a useful theoretical basis for understanding consumer adoption behaviors of mobile technology for the hospitality industry, which can be extended to other topical spheres.

Dr. Zhang explains how this research can provide practical guidelines for hospitality marketing practitioners, which can be

used to design advertisements targeting customers' confidence and tailored to the particular hotel choices and preferences of various customer segments. These strategies will help hoteliers enhance the effectiveness of their advertising and increase their customers' mobile technology adoption, consequently boosting revenues.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Tingting Zhang and her collaborators investigate the attitudes and behavioral intentions of business travelers versus leisure travelers, when adopting mobile technologies for hotel services.

REFERENCES

Key Paper

Tingting Zhang, Soobin Seo & Jee Ahe Ahn (2019). Why hotel guests go mobile? Examining motives of business and leisure travelers, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 28(5), 621-644. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2019.1539936> [Accessed 3rd November 2020].

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What are your plans for further research into the use of mobile technology in the hospitality industry?

// In the future, I would like to continue the research into consumers' adoption of mobile technologies in the hospitality industry by incorporating more recent advancements, such as live streaming, and virtual agents that are either programmed or a real human being to answer questions/inquiries online. With the young generations (Generation Z) becoming independent customers, the market demand has changed. More instant responses and interactions are desired by the consuming segment to drive purchases and to increase satisfaction. Mobile technologies should serve as an optimal tool for facilitating such prompt interactions and communications between consumers and service providers. //

Mobile technologies should improve the customer experience.

Dr. Tingting Zhang



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