

Customers' Attitudes toward the Use of Online Travel Agency Websites' Travel Services: A Literature Review

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Abstract:

The use of online travel agencies (OTAs) has experienced a surge in popularity in recent years, as a rising number of individuals depend on the internet for the purpose of organizing and reserving their travel arrangements. The objective of this literature study is to present a comprehensive analysis of customers' perceptions regarding the utilization of online travel agency (OTA) websites' travel services. The data for this review was obtained exclusively from the Google Scholar database, covering the period from 2008 to 2023. The extant body of literature pertaining to online travel agencies (OTAs) has delineated three primary domains of interest: the assessment of customer inclination to engage in transactions through OTAs, the determinants that shape customers' choices to avail OTA services, and the challenges encountered by OTA platforms. OTA channels have emerged as a valuable support mechanism for both enterprises and travel agencies, necessitating the implementation of several strategies to foster a favorable client disposition towards OTA services.

Keywords: *attitude, customer, travel service, Online Travel Agent, loyalty*

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Introduction

The growing volume of online sales demonstrates the undeniable significance of websites to the success of travel and tour companies. Due to the physical separation between buyers and sellers and the absence of face-to-face interaction, customers typically view online distribution channels as extremely risky. Customers will purchase travel products or services from reputable travel agency websites. Moreover, customers shop online not only to accomplish a task, but also to enjoy the experience. According to (Winarko and Husna, 2020), although hedonic beliefs and values are significant in the context of online purchases, there are no studies that examine customer attitudes when utilizing OTA services. As a result of the significance of this issue in an era of advancing technology, tourism is experiencing rapid growth. In addition, the customer's attitude when using travel products and services on Online Travel Agent (OTA) is the determining factor in determining their trust and loyalty to the product.

Hotel businesses, tourism professionals, and travel agents are not unfamiliar with OTA hotel bookings. OTA gradually becomes a strategic sales channel, resulting in a new business breakthrough. OTA is a term used exclusively in the tourism - hotel industry to refer to agents, units that sell hotel rooms, tours, and air tickets on an online platform (Pan et al., 2013). The OTA channels contain all the information required for tourists to have a clear and precise view of a hotel, homestay, resort, etc., and to make a reservation through these channels. In addition to communication channels, hotels will collaborate with OTAs and upload information, images, and prices to their website management system. The hotel will pay the online travel agency a commission for successful bookings.

OTA channels have demonstrated their significance in the hotel industry. (Thornton, 2019) reports that only five-star hotels in Vietnam have a low rate of bookings sold to agents, with OTA online travel (25.6%) ranking second in the market, behind the number of rooms sold to tour operators and travel agents (30.4%). OTAs' function can be described as: Spreading the hotel's reputation and brand currently, e-commerce is a rapidly expanding industry and an unavoidable development. Therefore, cooperation with the OTA model not only contributes to high profits, but also helps the hotel's brand reach a wide variety of customers without excessive marketing expenditures.

Increase profits for hotels, this mutually beneficial cooperation will not only bring OTA channels commissions, but hotels will also get more and more stable guests, helping to increase revenue significantly. Increasing traffic for hotels Linking and placing websites on the OTA system helps to redirect more traffic to hotels, something that small hotel brands can hardly do on their own. These distribution channels are also used to introduce products, promote business models of enterprises, and help businesses and customers connect easily.

This is a channel that provides information for businesses, bringing advantages in business as well as the company's future development (Vietnam Booking, 2021).

Because mobile apps are easy to download and use, online agents are shifting their business models from web-based services to smartphone apps (Dwikesumasari and Ervianty, 2017). The adoption of OTAs by consumers is a global phenomenon. Since its inception in the United States around 1995, the share of online travel agencies (OTAs) in the online travel booking market has increased to 39% and is projected to reach 41% by 2020 (Feinstein, 2018). Similarly, nearly 70% of all online travel bookings in China during the first half of 2019 were made through OTAs (China Travel News, 2019). Academic research on consumer behavior in relation to OTAs has been prompted by their rising popularity and intense competition. Previous research has examined various facets of consumer behavior, such as satisfaction.

Promotional websites are not restricted by time or location. Websites benefit travel destinations because it allows businesses to coherently develop their position in the market, increasing the destination's market share by bringing customers closer to reality and seeing potential (Oncioiu and Priescu, 2022). In addition to providing tourist destinations with rapid information exchange, websites also provide customers with negligible-cost access to international travel. Businesses can thus reduce their reliance on traditional mass advertising and develop more targeted approaches to potential tourists through websites (Oncioiu and Priescu, 2022).

The research commences by doing a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature on customers' opinions about utilizing the travel services offered by online travel agency websites. The second section provides a fundamental analytical framework, which encompasses the research methodology, results, and discussion, in that order. Ultimately, the conclusion can be found in the final section.

Methods

The research design for this study comprises two essential elements: the identification and analysis of pertinent literature. The methodology for conducting an exhaustive and broad literature search is outlined in the first section. The analysis of the identified literature is detailed in the second section. The research design facilitates an exhaustive examination of the status quo through a review of prior contributions.

Data collection

The review was conducted by identifying relevant academic papers from journals using the Google Scholar database until January 2023. This review encompasses a comprehensive

analysis of scholarly research pertaining to the topic of online travel agencies (OTAs) over the period from 2008 to 2018.

Search strategy

The search terms encompass the following: internet-based travel agency, client perception of online travel agencies, and challenges faced by online travel agency platforms. The selection of these keywords aims to retrieve all relevant articles from the database that expressly address the topic of online travel agencies, while minimizing the inclusion of articles that are only loosely connected to the subject matter. A search was conducted on Google Scholar using the specified keywords, resulting in a collection of 35 research publications. These articles were further screened by the author to ensure their relevance to the topic of online travel agencies. A comprehensive assessment of the article abstracts was conducted by the author to ensure uniformity in the selection and exclusion of items.

Results

Customer intent to purchase via OTA

Purchase intent is an essential component of consumer behavior. Previous research has demonstrated the impact of sociodemographic, risk perception, attitude, and compatibility variables on online travel booking intent (Amaro and Duarte, 2013). The perceived value that a consumer can derive from a product or service is an additional important antecedent of purchase intention (Carlson et al., 2015; Lu and Hsiao, 2010). User perception of value is crucial for OTAs in selecting prospective online travel booking methods (Mohd-Any et al., 2014).

Factors influencing customers' use of OTA services

In the context of travel websites, it influences customer attitudes in the online environment, including perceptions of website quality, perceived benefit, interest, electronic word of mouth, and perceptions of presence. social aspect (Chung et al., 2018). Customer engagement has been associated with numerous concepts, including customer satisfaction with service delivery. According to (Jeon and Jeong, 2017), it is one of the crucial factors for the success of e-commerce in the tourism industry (Lu et al., 2016). Customers in an e-commerce context may be more susceptible than in a face-to-face setting due to the absence of physical elements and human interaction. Consequently, establishing a trustworthy interaction is a crucial factor that can reduce the perceived risk of a transaction and positively influence the purchasing behavior of customers (Kim et al., 2011; Filieri, 2016; Ponte et al., 2015).

Although some website providers have used frequently asked questions and help forums in the digital environment to establish a communication channel, travel providers in the online environment still face additional challenges in establishing customer trust (Ye et al., 2019). Prior research has analyzed the level of customer trust in the online environment, focusing on identifying key antecedents and trust-building mechanisms (Filieri, 2016; Lu et al., 2016).

Increased research has been conducted on the influence of social media presence on travel websites' online purchase intent (Liu and Park, 2015; Tseng, 2017). In order to reduce uncertainty, avoid risk, and seek reassurance, customers frequently rely on reviews from previous customers and occasionally engage in asynchronous communication with online consumers, according to studies (Filieri, 2016). It is evident that customers frequently seek the advice of others when planning travel as part of their decision-making process (Lu et al., 2016).

Human warmth is a service representative's level of empathy and compassion (Kalia, 2013). Customers expect empathy and understanding, but it is often overlooked in the online environment due to its remote and computer-mediated form of interaction (McLean and Osei-Frimpong, 2017; Turel et al., 2013;). know in the online setting (Lu et al., 2016). While it's easier to gauge human warmth in an offline setting, web-based services make it more difficult for customers to use body language and tone of voice to assess emotions and intentions (Daft and Lengel, 1986). Therefore, in the absence of facial cues, live chat representatives who were asked to carefully consider their text responded by suggesting the use of emojis (Luor et al., 2010; McLean and OseiFrimpong, 2017).

In a descriptive quantitative study conducted in Indonesia, (Agustin, 2018) discovered that system, information, and service play a significant role in influencing OTA usage. (Dwikesumasari and Ervianty, 2017) discovered a positive correlation between app image determinants, customer inertia, app knowledge, and customer satisfaction. When utilizing online transaction services in e-commerce, consumers have different perceptions, particularly regarding the level of trust and risk.

Ease of use refers to the assortment of luxuries that consumers associate with using the Internet for various purposes, ease of use of computers is the degree to which individuals believe that using a particular system will be error free (Ariyanto et al., 2020). Perceived usefulness is the extent to which an individual believes that utilizing information systems will enhance their performance. According to this definition, perceived usefulness is a belief regarding the decision-making process. If a person believes this system to be useful, he will employ it. In contrast, if an individual believes that information systems are less useful, he will not utilize them.

According to (Yahyapour, 2008), an attitude is an evaluation of the consequences of engaging in a particular behavior. An individual's technology usage is determined by their intentions. Attitude determines intentions. Attitude is the favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a behavior. A person's intention to utilize or not utilize technology is determined by his or her attitude. Individuals are more likely to use technology if they have a positive outlook and attitude.

The structure and component of trust are complex and multidimensional. The buyer and seller's ability to develop trust during the online shopping process is crucial to completing the transaction and maintaining the relationship. Every business relationship and transaction must be built on the bedrock of trust. However, trust is a requirement that is relatively more important in online shopping than in traditional retail. Due to the unique characteristics of the online shopping environment, consumers perceive a greater degree of uncertainty and greater risk when making decisions when shopping online (inability to see and feel). receive physical products with no direct or indirect interaction). Therefore, consumer confidence in online retailers and Internet Technology plays a crucial role in online purchasing behavior (Ariyanto et al., 2020; Ha and Stoel, 2009; Kim et al., events, 2009). Perceived ease of use is the extent to which customers perceive online shopping to be convenient. If a technology is considered user-friendly, it will be implemented. The ease that customers have encountered when making online purchases, such as the ease of accessing the website and the ease of locating the desired item, will increase the likelihood that someone will perceive its utility and advantages. can encourage consumers to make purchases online. When customers can easily interact with online shopping sites to find product information and online payment methods, they will view online shopping as advantageous (Wen et al., 2011). Perceived usability has a significant impact on perceived utility in online shopping (Lim and Ting, 2012). Perceived usefulness is the extent to which an individual believes that utilizing particular technologies will improve their performance (Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2010).

Perceived usefulness is a major factor in technology adoption because it has a significant impact on the intention to use technology (Rehman et al., 2019; Wen et al., 2011; Yuan et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2009) discovered that perceived ease of use influences perceived usefulness in the context of online shopping. However, (Kim, 2012) found in her study that perceived ease of use had little effect on perceived usefulness online. Perceived usefulness is the extent to which an individual believes that utilizing technologies will enhance their performance (Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2010). (Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2010) contend that repurchase intention is a form of communication that results from an individual's evaluation of a previously used or consumed item. Individuals are more likely to intend to continue using when they perceive that such use is advantageous (Lim et al., 2016).

Successful purchasers of a product are more likely to intend to repurchase that product (Chiu et al., 2009). Again, research (Chiu et al., 2009; Hozhabri et al., 2014; Hung et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2010) demonstrates that perceived usefulness has a substantial impact on online purchase intent. In contrast, (Ramayah et al., 2018) found no significant relationship between perceived ease of use and online repurchase intent. In numerous studies, perceived trust factor has been identified as an attitude-influencing variable. Attitude determines the desired purchasing conduct (Ha and Stoel, 2009; Kim et al., 2009).

Problems confronting OTA channels

Unlike traditional travel agencies, online travel agencies (OTAs) struggle to retain customers on their platforms. As there are always several other OTA channels available for customers to choose from, they can compare prices on various websites before selecting the best option. Occasionally, the customer selection process on an OTA website is not seamless. In such instances, the OTA channel leaves a negative impression or moment on the customer, causing them to lose interest and move on to other websites or apps. to discover the correct and superior things (Agarwal, 2019). As an e-commerce industry, the activities of Online Travel Agents (OTAs) cannot be understated. Not to mention the fact that today's middle-and upper-class consumers place a greater emphasis on experiences rather than material possessions, which affects their purchasing habits. Applications that are reputed to be quick, simple to use, and easily accessible are always the preference of intelligent customers.

Discussion

Implications

The existing literature on online travel agencies (OTAs) has identified three key areas of concern: (i) the determination of customer propensity to make purchases via OTAs, (ii) the factors that influence customers' decision to utilize OTA services, and (iii) the difficulties faced by OTA channels. The aforementioned findings have numerous implications for service providers' efforts to convert prospective consumers into active users and maintain the engagement of existing users. In their online travel agency (OTA) applications, service providers should prioritize the importance of utilitarian features, according to the study's findings. In addition, they should focus on developing economically efficient advertising strategies, improving the quality of physical services offered at travel destinations, and capitalizing on the social value associated with the use of OTA applications.

Limitations

Currently, this study has not examined additional databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. It is anticipated that future research endeavors utilizing these datasets would yield a more comprehensive comprehension of the intricacies involved in the study of

online travel agencies. Furthermore, given the specialized nature of the subject matter, the outcomes of this research can be utilized as a valuable point of reference for future studies conducted in Vietnam. However, caution should be exercised when making generalizations based on the findings. Furthermore, this report does not address the categorization of data based on dimensions such as journal metrics and disciplines of the articles. However, it is worth noting that these dimensions could be explored as potential areas for future research.

Conclusion

OTA channels are now an effective support tool for businesses as well as travel agents; therefore, multiple methods are required for customers to have a positive attitude when using OTA services. A project to improve service quality through optimization. For instance, the quality of a website facilitates accessibility, fostering interaction between people and technology. When customers have confidence in the products and services they use, they will return and develop brand loyalty. There are, however, gaps that must be filled for the tourism industry to flourish through intermediaries, which are OTA channels that require additional research.

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