

HUMANIZING FACTORS FOR HOTEL ONLINE BOOKING

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father and mother, family, best lecturers and friends

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ABSTRACT

Humanizing should be implemented for making online booking more suitable for people and make it works in more humane manner. Currently, online booking system faced many problems such as difficulty to interpret the customer satisfaction, lack of interaction, and complicated web design. Through online booking, a business faced a difficulty to understand the behaviours and preferences for every customer based on their booking details. Lack of interaction within customers and businesses through online booking platform also lead to the misunderstanding and dissatisfaction. While, complicated web design will make customers feel hesitate to place a booking through online booking platform. Moreover, based on systematic literature review, studies about humanizing online booking were still undefined. It is important to understand the concept of humanizing and formulate the strategies to boost up customer loyalty and satisfaction towards hotel. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify humanizing factors in online booking procedure. A list of factors was extracted from systematic literature review and then humanizing factors for this study have been selected using Pareto Analysis. Selected factors that have been evaluated in this study are personalization, service quality, web design, and interaction. The methodology for this study is quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires to customer through online distribution. The selected factors were analysed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in the analysis phase to validate the factors. Lastly, validated factors were analysed using Importance-Performance Matrix Analysis (IPMA) to identify the primary important and the best performance factor for humanized online booking. This study shows that all selected factors were accepted and main humanizing factor for online booking is the web design.

ABSTRAK

Memanusiakan harus dilaksanakan untuk membuat tempahan dalam talian lebih sesuai untuk manusia dan menjadikannya berfungsi lebih ke arah kemanusiaan. Pada masa ini, sistem tempahan dalam talian menghadapi banyak masalah seperti kesukaran untuk mentafsir kepuasan pelanggan, kekurangan interaksi, dan reka bentuk laman sesawang yang rumit. Melalui tempahan dalam talian, perniagaan menghadapi kesukaran untuk memahami perilaku dan keutamaan bagi setiap pelanggan berdasarkan butiran tempahan mereka. Kurang berinteraksi dalam platform tempahan dalam talian antara pelanggan dan perniagaan juga membawa kepada salah faham dan rasa ketidakpuasan hati. Manakala, reka bentuk laman sesawang yang rumit akan membuatkan pelanggan berasa teragak-agak untuk membuat tempahan melalui platform tempahan dalam talian. Lebih-lebih lagi, berdasarkan kajian literatur sistematik, kajian tentang memanusiakan tempahan dalam talian masih belum jelas. Ia adalah penting untuk memahami konsep memanusiakan dan merangka strategi untuk meningkatkan kesetiaan pelanggan dan kepuasan terhadap hotel. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor memanusiakan dalam prosedur tempahan dalam talian. Senarai faktor telah diekstrak daripada kajian literatur sistematik dan kemudian faktor memanusiakan yang digunakan untuk kajian ini telah dipilih menggunakan Analisis Pareto. Faktor yang terpilih yang telah dinilai dalam kajian ini adalah keperibadian, kualiti perkhidmatan, reka bentuk laman sesawang, dan interaksi. Metodologi kajian ini adalah pendekatan kuantitatif dengan mengedarkan soal selidik kepada pelanggan menerusi pengagihan dalam talian. Faktor yang terpilih dianalisis menggunakan Analisis Pengesahan Faktor dalam fasa analisis untuk mengesahkan faktor-faktor tersebut. Akhir sekali, faktor-faktor yang telah disahkan dianalisis menggunakan Analisis Matriks Kepentingan-Prestasi untuk mengenal pasti faktor terpenting dan faktor yang mempunyai prestasi terbaik untuk tempahan dalam talian yang telah dimanusiakan. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa semua faktor yang dipilih diterima dan faktor utama bagi memanusiakan tempahan dalam talian adalah reka bentuk laman sesawang.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
CA	-	Cronbach's Alpha
CFA	-	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	-	Composite Reliability
CV	-	Convergent Validity
HF	-	Humanizing Factor
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IPMA	-	Importance-Performance Matrix Analysis
IT	-	Information Technology
LV	-	Latent Variable
QE	-	Questionnaire Expert

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Since the 1980s, Information Communication Technology (ICT), particularly the Internet, are going to lead major trends in the tourism sector (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The Internet has now become a simple way for tourism operator organizations to interact with customers and sold as well as advertised their business (Law & Wong, 2003; Llach, Marimon, Alonso-Almeida, & Bernardo, 2013). Customers all over the world can use the internet to browse for tourism-related information, manual book, transportation maps, arrange restaurants and menus or purchase travel-related services for example booking slot in snorkelling trip for discount online price (Jeng, 2019). Hotel industry had been reliant on agents for long time to sell their products to customers (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). The Internet has been a key component of sustainability competitive advantage and a main success factor for hotels over the past decades (Morisson, Taylor, & Douglas, 2004). The rapid development of the Internet also resulted in lower prices and time savings for customers to search the most convenient hotel (Heung, 2003). In recent years, tourism is among the largest and rapidly growing sectors (Buhalis, 2004). For organizations in the tourism sector, producing a vastly inferior customer experience is a main priority (Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). The hotel industry is located in the umbrella of tourism sector. It is one of the services providers industries that able interaction with customers from diverse cultural backgrounds (Mattila, 1999; Wang, Miao, & Mattila, 2015). Even though the success of IT has contributed to comprehensive IT and tourism research (San Martín & Herrero, 2012), unfortunately, literature in term of customers and their online booking intentions is strangely quiet (Law, Leung, & Wong, 2004; Amaro & Duarte, 2015). Therefore, further study that investigate the customer's intention to make online booking for tourism services is necessary (O'Connor & Murphy, 2004).

1.2 Problem Background

For hotel industry, the main key challenge is to be better connected with customers. By the ability to understand the values that are more significant towards them and identify the values that influence their decision making (Pizam, 2017). Understanding the decision of a customer plays an important role in determining a successful business (Rianthong, Dumrongsiri, & Kohda, 2016). In essence, a business needs to understand the behaviours and preferences for every customer based on their booking details. Customer behaviours in online environments are crucial to understand. Because it helps to boost up customer loyalty towards hotel (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015). The maximum use of information will provide an incredible insight into the connection between customer and hotel services (Rianthong *et al.*, 2016).

Customer satisfaction is considered a determining factor in the current tourism industry. Hotels especially unable to remain competitive unless they meet the expectation of their customers (Forozia, Zadeh, & Gilani, 2013). Managing customer experience and satisfaction properly fundamental in service management and marketing. This is because of it may leading to the behaviour of customer to revisit in future (Liang, Choi, & Joppe, 2018). Incapability of organization to fulfil the requirements by the customer will caused dissatisfaction of services. Dissatisfaction upon services can be a major reason on switching behaviours to others hotel. Furthermore, once an organization not able to provide better quality services. It will lead dissatisfaction among customers and making it more less driven among other competitors.

The community nowadays is much more concerned with the cost on searching hotel and searching time through online booking site. While most hotel currently prefer to provide customers with a range of services, commonly not confined to simple bookings procedure (Corazza, Fasano, & Mason, 2014). This situation will be a major turndown to customer to resort to online booking. Moreover, lack of information availability will cause customers to always feel hesitate to come to the final decision (Zhu & Zhang, 2010; Liang, Schuckert, Law, & Chen, 2017). Inadequate information about hotel that does not correspond to the information provided on the website,

customers will confront the dissatisfaction (Ullah, Rukh, Zhou, Khan, & Ahmed, 2019). In addition, the fact that almost all hotel organizations offer similar products and services with less variation between them also can increased competitive between hotel and active switching behaviours by customer (Victorino, Verma, Plaschka, & Dev, 2005).

In order to compete in today's business world, and need to be profitable in the long term, organizations should not only concentrate on attracting new customers (Mehdi Bagheri & KhorramiSarvestani, 2016). Good customer-organization interaction will influence customer to stay loyal to the hotel. The management of the hotel takes various incentives to attract customers (Aghekyan-Simonian, Forsythe, Suk Kwon, & Chattaraman, 2012), such as implementing new technologies in their website. In the current situations, more customers are loyal to various brands rather than a particular brand, this explain that customer satisfaction itself does not assure loyalty and the intention to switch is unexpected (Jung & Yoon, 2012). It is because the customer has no intention to create a long-lasting relationship (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015). This problem can be avoided by creating customer interaction to understand their storytelling about good and bad of the hotel services. Moreover, there is absence of a systematic procedure to measure the satisfaction and dissatisfaction by customer and the general rating of their experience is usually hard to apprehend straight away (Zhao, Xu, & Wang, 2019). This is because of customers probably not disclose their honest assessment, primarily if they have a negative impression due to considerations regarding destroying the relationship between customer and service provider or considerations regarding the image and reputation of the accommodation (Au, Law, & Buhalis, 2010).

1.3 Problem Statement

For the hotel industry, the most challenging task is the ability to understand and satisfy their customer needs or requests and the thoughts that affect their customer decision-making (Pizam, 2017). In addition, online booking has made it difficult for a company to understand their customer's habits and desires based on their booking

details only because they cannot interpret the customer's face or body language via online booking information. Complicated booking process and the inability to obtain detailed information about the products or services listed on the website is also the problem in online booking. Finally, lack of communication between the management and existing customer as well as the management's attentiveness to undergo a change toward present-day technologies will become the main problem in online booking systems.

The study in online booking for hotel industry that investigate humanizing factor to influence customer satisfaction and revisitation is still not widely discussed in previous research. Although, many researchers mentioned about the importance of customer satisfaction towards organization profits and competitive advantage rather than providing in-depth solution on how to make it works by converging primarily to customers' demands. They have proposed on future innovation and success factor for further works in hotel industry IT infrastructure generally. Furthermore, in context of online booking in hotel industry, the study about humanizing is still undefined.

1.4 Research Questions

The aims of research question come from the intention to improve online booking for hotel industry. The main research question for this study is

“How to identify humanizing factors for online booking in hotel industry?”

To fulfil the main research question, few sub-questions are developed to support main research question. The following are sub-research questions

- (a) What is humanizing in online system?
- (b) What are the current problems in online booking that need to be humanize?
- (c) What are the humanizing factors for online booking in the hotel industry?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

- (a) To describe humanizing in online system.
- (b) To identify current problems in online booking that need to be humanize.
- (c) To identify humanizing factors for online booking in the hotel industry.

1.6 Scope of The Study

The determined scopes for this study are:

- (a) The businesses in hotel industry that have connection with digital travel agencies such as Trivago, Agoda, Expedia, Booking.com and Traveloka for booking purposes.
- (b) The businesses in hotel industry that have website or application for online booking.

1.7 Expected Contribution

This study is expected to give some contribution on supporting hotel industry to understand their customer behaviours. It could increase their annual revenues influenced positive customer behaviours and also maximizing customer satisfaction by identifying humanizing factors in online booking. Moreover, it will help organization to utilize every data available from the online booking more effectively.

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