Analysis of The Influence of Virtual Travel Services and Digital Information on Tourists Behavior in Determining Destinations

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Abstract

This research aims to study the influence of information media and virtual travel agents on consumer decisions when booking tourist accommodations. This research uses a qualitative approach. Information collection methods include user diaries, focus groups, and open interviews. According to the analysis, millennial consumers choose accommodation based on functional factors such as price, location, cleanliness, service, and facilities, but we also pay attention to community aspects such as shared spaces. This research tends to use information media and online travel agencies as well as trust reviews from strangers on the web. Online social influences, particularly other users' comments and evaluations, have a significant impact on their decisions. Therefore, accommodation providers need to pay attention to their reputation and consumer reviews. Photos of accommodation are also important in forming consumer perceptions, although they may not always reflect reality. Developing a marketing strategy that emphasizes price, facility, and service advantages, as well as understanding the needs of millennial consumers, will help increase the hotel industry's attractiveness in today's competitive market.

Keywords: Travel, Consumers, Hotel, Competitive Market.

1. Introduction

In the development of the tourism industry, the role of tourism intermediaries has experienced significant changes along with advances in information and communication technology, especially with the emergence of the Internet and ICT. The tourism industry is undergoing reintermediation as new tourism intermediaries emerge on Internet platforms, replacing traditional ones. In this context, news outlets and virtual travel agents are two notable travel intermediaries [1]. Travel agent provide services and information to travelers through their online platforms. Through this platform, tourists can provide comments, recommendations, and numerical evaluations regarding hotel accommodations and other tourist attractions. This allows travelers to be proactively involved in the process of searching, selecting, making decisions, booking, and recommending accommodations. This development shows that tourists' role in accessing information and conducting transactions in the tourism industry is increasing, while the role of traditional intermediaries is starting to shift. Given these changes, the tourism industry needs to continue to develop appropriate strategies to utilize information and communication technology to improve the tourist experience and operational efficiency [2].

The hotel industry is one of the most active subsectors in terms of questions and real-time exchange of opinions between consumers via various screens and gadgets. In this context, the abundance of recommendations and user evaluations available on various websites gives rise to the phenomenon of online social influence [3]. Millennial consumers tend to be very active online and trust recommendations and reviews from fellow online users. Therefore, comprehending the impact of online social influence on the purchasing behavior and decisions of millennial consumers in the context of hotel tourism accommodations can offer valuable insights for the hospitality industry to better understand and engage with this significant market [4]. Travelers of all ages use the Internet and travel websites, but millennials are increasingly involved in travel planning. The millennial generation utilizes a variety of information and communication devices, as well as various Internet channels [5]. They seek information from various sources, including TV, documentaries, videos, and social media. This generation is also more likely to make online reservations, consider more potential destinations to visit, and actively seek out activities such as shopping and eating [6]. They also seek a broad travel experience and are more open and receptive to online advertising. Therefore, understanding the preferences and behavior of the millennial generation in travel planning is very important for the hospitality and tourism industries to adapt their marketing and service strategies [7].

Comprehend the tourism system as a system that establishes a web of connections around tourism, defining its functions [8][9]. The process of selling tourism products generates the meeting of tourism supply and tourist demand, which forms the system's starting point. The geographic location of the offer attracts consumers. Tourism products consist of a combination of resources, services, and equipment that meet the motivations and expectations of a particular market segment [10]. Tourism distribution is necessary to market tourism products and bring them closer to consumers. Tourism distribution is a bridge that brings together producers and consumers. In other words, these methods facilitate the product's availability on the market [11]. In this context, understanding the dynamics of tourism distribution and the relationship between supply and demand is essential for tourism managers to plan effective and efficient marketing strategies [12]. In the tourism industry, the distribution process becomes more complex due to service characteristics such as intangibility, heterogeneity, seasonality, simultaneous purchase and consumption, expiration, and high costs [13]. These characteristics prevent the physical transmission of tourism products, instead providing customers with information. Distribution channels are needed to convey this information to customers. Distribution channels in tourism are defined as a series of independent organizations that intervene in the process of making a product or service available for consumption [14]. The tourism distribution channel is a structure consisting of organizations whose aim is to facilitate and provide to the market the tourism products offered by suppliers. In other words, tourism distribution channels help connect tourism service providers with consumers through a variety of means, including travel agents, travel websites, online bookings, and other platforms.

2. Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach, which consists of two main parts. The first part is a bibliographic review, where researchers search and read books and academic articles to study key concepts such as online travel agents, information media, reintermediation, the phenomenon of online social influence, and other concepts relevant to the research. The second part is phenomenological research, in which researchers explore, describe, and understand what individuals have in common based on their experiences with certain phenomena. This research examines the phenomenon of online social influence and the millennial generation's use of information media and online travel agencies. Information collection methods used include user diaries, focus groups, and open interviews. The aim of this method is to understand the meaning of actions from the consumer's point of view and the vision of professionals working in infomediaries and travel agent. This method assists in gaining a deep understanding of how the millennial generation interacts with information media and travel agent in the context of their travel planning.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the research results, it appears that users tend to assess the functional aspects of accommodation, such as price, location, cleanliness, services, and facilities provided. This information is easier to find on the website and allows a more objective comparison between different accommodations. On the other hand, interviewees who use web platforms tend to rely on travel companies and the role they play in providing services and facilities. In focus groups, participants appreciated the functional aspects of accommodation but also highlighted community attributes such as common spaces and shared facilities. This shows that users' experiences and preferences may vary depending on their context and needs. Additionally, the use of more than one website to search for accommodation information indicates that users are willing to conduct careful searches to find the best option according to their needs and preferences. Differences in preferences between individual users and interviewees working in the travel industry demonstrate the complexity of understanding consumer behavior when choosing accommodation. Therefore, it is important for the travel industry to pay attention to these various aspects in planning and marketing their products. Paying attention to user needs and preferences can help travel companies improve their user experience and operational efficiency, as well as strengthen their position in the competitive tourism industry.

Meanwhile, interviewees referring to web platforms also considered that millennial consumers primarily value functional aspects of accommodation. However, they also highlight the importance of community aspects, such as the shared spaces shared by the accommodations. This shows that millennial users not only pay attention to functional features but also seek social and collaborative experiences while staying at accommodations. It is important to note that millennial consumers often use more than one website to search for accommodation information, indicating that they are willing to conduct careful searches to find the best options according to their preferences. Furthermore, millennial consumers tend to trust strangers' comments and numerical evaluations on the web, indicating that online social influence plays a significant role in their decision-making. In this context, accommodation that is able to provide a balanced combination of functional facilities and community spaces can

be more attractive to millennial consumers. By taking into account their diverse preferences and needs, the hotel industry can increase its competitiveness and enhance the stay experience of millennial consumers.

Millennial consumers show a tendency to prefer functional aspects when choosing accommodations. When choosing a place to stay, they pay more attention to practical considerations such as price, practicality, and functionality. While these factors remain paramount, it's important to note that social and security elements can also influence their choices. This shows that, although millennial consumers tend to prioritize functional aspects, other factors can also be an important consideration in their decision-making. When it comes to accommodation preferences, millennial consumers pay little attention to brand image, prestige, status, or accommodation hierarchy. They also pay little attention to traditions or the continuity of generations that have always lived in the same place. That is, they prefer to make choices based on more practical and functional factors rather than symbolic or traditional considerations. Attention to the diverse needs and preferences of millennial consumers is critical for the hospitality industry. By understanding these preferences, the industry can develop more effective strategies for attracting and retaining millennial consumers. By adapting their offerings to the preferences of millennial consumers, the hospitality industry can improve their stay experience according to their expectations and needs.

Accommodation attributes that are valuable to millennial consumers include factors such as affordable prices, strategic location, adequate facilities, and friendly and responsive service. However, it is also important to highlight that millennial consumers are highly dependent on travel companies and the role they play in the travel planning process. This indicates that online travel platforms, including online travel agents, significantly impact the purchasing decisions and accommodation preferences of millennial consumers. Therefore, accommodations that successfully attract the attention of millennial consumers may need to collaborate with online travel platforms to increase their visibility and appeal in the market. Furthermore, millennial consumers tend to consult more than one website about accommodation, taking advantage of the wealth of information available. They are willing to submit more than one query on different platforms to get the proposal that best meets their expectations. Their search took less time than they had previously imagined, and they used as many filters as possible when looking for platforms. Therefore, it is important for accommodations to have a strong presence on various online platforms and ensure that the information provided is accurate and attractive to millennial consumers. In the context of online social influence, comments and numerical evaluations from other users on web platforms play an important role in millennial consumers' decision-making. Many of them rely on these comments and opinions to gain additional information and build confidence in a particular accommodation. Therefore, accommodations must promptly respond to user feedback and ensure that their reviews reflect positive user experiences. Finally, it is important to note that millennial consumer preferences and habits may change over time, especially with technological developments and new travel trends. Therefore, accommodation needs to remain flexible and responsive to changes in consumer behavior, as well as continuously monitor trends and innovations in the hospitality industry to remain relevant and competitive in a changing market.

The profile of millennial consumers shows that they actively use more than one website to search for information about accommodation, indicating a level of flexibility and diversity in searching for the best options. They also tend to actively use filters to narrow their choices, showing that they have a clear understanding of their preferences. Although they may spend less time than previously expected searching for accommodations, they tend to be more efficient in searching for information and use multiple sources to obtain complete and relevant information. Millennial consumers' ability to use various websites and filters shows that they have skills in accessing and filtering information online. They also have the ability to evaluate the information they find and make informed decisions based on their preferences and needs. This shows that millennial consumers are a smart and critical market segment in their purchasing process. It is important to understand millennial consumers' search and purchasing behavior for accommodation. They tend to look for information that is accurate, relevant, and easily accessible. Therefore, accommodations need to ensure that the information they provide on their websites and other online platforms is complete, up-to-date, and attractive to millennial consumers. By understanding millennial consumer preferences and behavior, accommodations can increase their appeal in the market and win the competition in the competitive hospitality industry.

Numerical comments and evaluations greatly influence millennial consumers' decisions in booking accommodations. This shows that consumers tend to rely on the experience and judgment of others when making decisions. Therefore, for accommodation providers, it is important to have a favorable reputation and get positive reviews from consumers. Positive reviews can help increase consumer confidence in accommodations and be a deciding factor in their decision to book. Conversely, negative reviews can influence consumers' perceptions and reduce their likelihood of ordering. Therefore, accommodation providers need to strive to provide quality services and ensure that their customers' experiences are positive. Additionally, millennial consumers tend to trust reviews from strangers on the web more than recommendations from acquaintances. This shows that consumers value objective opinions from people who have experienced the service more than recommendations from people they know. Therefore, accommodation providers need to focus on improving the quality of their

services and ensuring that reviews from consumers are positive. Overall, comments and numerical evaluations are very important in influencing millennial consumers' decisions about booking accommodations. Therefore, accommodation providers need to pay attention to their reviews and strive to improve the quality of their services in order to meet consumer expectations and receive positive reviews.

Comments made by users on web platforms have a significant impact on millennials' decisions to book accommodations. They tend to trust and value comments and opinions from fellow users because they provide additional information and details necessary to make the right decisions. This shows that millennial consumers really pay attention to other people's experiences when choosing accommodations. To build a good reputation and appeal to the millennial generation, accommodation providers must pay attention to and respond to user comments and opinions. Responding well to comments can also demonstrate to potential customers that the accommodation provider cares about their guests' experience and is willing to correct or fix any issues that may arise. The difference in perception between the millennial generation as consumers and reference platforms is also intriguing to note. Millennials tend to value user comments and opinions more in their decision-making, while reference platforms see numerical evaluations as a more influential factor due to their ease of understanding and use as a first indicator in choosing accommodation. However, both agree that comments provide additional information and details that help build consumer confidence in accommodations. Therefore, it is important for accommodation providers to consider these two aspects in their marketing and reputation management strategies. By understanding and responding to the needs and desires of millennial consumers, accommodation providers can improve the quality of their services and strengthen their brand image in the market.

This shows the importance of online social influence in the decision-making of the millennial generation. They tend to trust comments from strangers on the web because they are considered more objective and can provide a broader view of the experience of using the accommodation. It also reflects how technology and digital connectivity have changed the way consumers search for information and make decisions, with the opinions of strangers on the web having a significant impact on consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. This conclusion underscores the importance of comment volume in millennial consumers' decision-making. They tend to be more motivated to book accommodation if there are a lot of positive comments, while a lot of negative comments can hinder their decision. However, consumers are also aware of the subjectivity of comments and opinions, so they may undertake additional evaluation before making a final decision. Millennial consumers also consider accommodation prices, information provided by web platforms, and photos of accommodation as important factors in decision-making when booking accommodation. This shows that, besides comments and numerical evaluations, these aspects also play a role in influencing their decisions.

Photos of accommodations also have an impact on millennial consumers. Seeing these images gives them confidence about the accommodation and encourages them to make a booking. These photos often misrepresent reality, they know. The importance of photos in millennial consumers' decision-making demonstrates that visualization plays a significant role in shaping their perception of an accommodation. Attractive and representative photos can increase consumers' interest in placing an order, while images that do not depict reality can reduce their trust and interest. Therefore, for accommodation providers, it is important to ensure that the photos published are representative and reflect the actual condition of the accommodation. This not only helps to increase the interest of millennial consumers, but it also builds a positive reputation for the accommodation on online platforms. In addition, travel companies and online platforms must provide millennial consumers with clear and accurate information about accommodations. Complete and detailed information can help consumers make better decisions and increase their trust in the service provider.

In this research, the focus on the pre-travel phase provides an in-depth understanding of millennial consumer behavior in choosing accommodation. Additionally, expanding this research to other population segments, other types of accommodation, and other reasons for travel could provide more comprehensive insights into consumer preferences and behavior in the hospitality industry. Studies involving older generations, such as Generation Z, may reveal differences in accommodation preferences and booking habits. These recommendations emphasize the importance of continued interaction between the tourism industry and consumers, utilizing new intermediaries such as information media and travel agent. To improve the tourism experience, the industry must continually adapt to changes in consumer behavior and preferences. Developing strategies that are more personalized and oriented towards consumer needs, as well as increasing the accessibility of relevant and useful information, can help the tourism industry remain relevant and competitive in this digital era.

4. Conclusion

We can conclude from an analysis of millennial consumer behavior when choosing accommodation that functional factors like price, location, cleanliness, services, and facilities provided are the main considerations for them. However, community aspects such as shared spaces and shared facilities are also a concern, albeit to a lesser extent. Millennial consumers tend to use information media and online travel agencies as the main tools

for searching for information about accommodation, with a tendency to trust comments and reviews from strangers on the web. They also tend to use more than one website to search for information, demonstrating a degree of flexibility and diversity in seeking the best options. In addition, accommodation also play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions, although consumers realize that these photos often do not reflect reality. This study also highlights the importance of developing effective marketing strategies that emphasize excellence in terms of price, facilities, and service. Understanding and responding to the needs and desires of millennial consumers can help accommodation providers increase their appeal in a competitive market. In addition, these conclusions underline the importance of continued interaction between the tourism industry and consumers, using new intermediaries such as information media and travel agent. Thus, the hospitality industry needs to continue to adapt to changes in consumer behavior and preferences to enhance their travel experiences and remain relevant in this digital era.

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