



Full Length Article

An empirical study on the influence of economy hotel website quality on online booking intentions[☆]



Li Li^a, Maojuan Peng^a, Nan Jiang^{b,*}, Rob Law^b

^a School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, China

^b School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 27 April 2016

Received in revised form 12 January 2017

Accepted 13 January 2017

Keywords:

Economy hotel

Website quality

eTrust

Online booking intentions

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential theoretical relationships among economy hotel website quality, eTrust, and online booking intentions in China. A questionnaire survey was performed, and 298 samples were collected from the users of three economy hotel websites (7 days, Home Inns, and Hanting Hotel) in Guangzhou, China. Results of a detailed data analysis demonstrate the influence of the four dimensions of economy hotel website quality (usability, ease of use, entertainment, and complementarity) on eTrust and online booking intentions. Specifically, (1) the usability, entertainment, and complementarity of economy hotel websites significantly positively affected eTrust; on the contrary, the influence of ease of use on eTrust was insignificant; (2) complementarity showed a more positive influence than the three other attributes on online booking intentions; and (3) eTrust significantly positively influenced online booking intentions. These findings contribute to economy hotel online marketing in China by bridging the gap between the exploration of hotel website quality and its influence on online booking intentions.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The reservation behavior of hotel consumers in China is gradually changing along with the increasing popularity of the Internet and the low threshold and ease of use of network technologies. An increasing number of Chinese consumers are more inclined to book their rooms online than on-site or over the phone. According to “China’s Online Travel Market Trend Prediction, 2014–2017” published by EnfoDesk in 2015, the online travel market deals in China will steadily grow and reach 352.4 billion by 2015; this figure is 25.9% larger than that in 2014. By 2017, the market size is estimated to reach 498.3 billion. These figures indicate the bright future of the online travel market in China.

Economy hotels are a new sector of the hotel industry in China that has developed rapidly since 2000 (Shen et al., 2014). However, the economy hotel industry in China currently faces several

challenges. Given the delays in the construction of hotel websites, the economy hotel industry heavily relies on online travel agencies (OTAs), such as Ctrip and Elong. The hotel during the preliminary stage requires network intermediaries for advertising and sales to compensate their inadequate distribution power. However, the rise of network intermediaries has inevitably led to high commissions and a channel monopoly, thereby threatening the hotel industry. Therefore, online direct selling has become a common trend in the development of the Chinese economy hotel industry. Given great efforts to develop direct-selling channels and the constantly increasing investments in economy hotel websites, the hotel industry is concerned with whether hotel websites can offer users a positive experience and encourage online direct sales.

The hotel online booking platform and its related issues have been investigated in literature because of their significance to online travel. Most scholars have evaluated the hotel website from various perspectives, including website design, functions, and characteristics; however, only a few researchers have explored the influence of hotel website quality, specifically economy hotel website quality, on consumer psychology and behavior. Previous studies suggest that hotel website quality profoundly and positively influence the willingness of consumers to book rooms online (Bai et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2015). However, most of these studies have focused on high-end international brands and ignore economy hotels, which also comprise a large market in the industry.

[☆] Li Li and Maojuan Peng are affiliated with the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management of South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, China, where Li Li is a Professor, and Maojuan Peng is a postgraduate. Nan Jiang and Rob Law are affiliated with the School of Hotel and Tourism Management of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, where Nan Jiang is a doctoral student and Rob Law is a Professor.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: liligd@scut.edu.cn (L. Li), pengmaojuan@qq.com (M. Peng), 51146059@qq.com (N. Jiang), rob.law@polyu.edu.hk (R. Law).

Economy hotels are also referred to as “budget hotels” or “limited service hotels” and are different from hotels that provide full service; this type of hotels originated in the United States after the Second World War when the US economy recovered with the development of its highway system (Senior and Morphew, 1990). Zou (2003) defined economy hotels as hotels that provide professional services and affordable price to public consumers. Given that different types of hotels target various classes of customers, their hotel website requirements also differ. Trust plays an important role in online reservations because of the inherent risks in availing online services (Wang and Emurian, 2005). Therefore, hotels must establish trust relationships with their online consumers, thereby affecting the willingness of consumers to book rooms online (Wang et al., 2015).

This study attempts to explore the influence of economy hotel website quality on the online booking intention of consumers. Three economy hotels (7 days, Home Inns, and Hanting Hotel) in Guangzhou, China were selected as research objects. The theoretical relationships among the quality of these hotel websites (usability, ease of use, entertainment, and complementarity), eTrust, and online booking intentions were thoroughly examined. The influence of the four aforementioned independent variables of hotel website quality on eTrust and online booking intentions was tested using the WebQual™ model (Loiacono et al., 2002). The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical model and discusses the main research hypotheses to be tested empirically. Section 3 introduces the methodology. Section 4 analyzes the results. Section 5 discusses and provides the implications. Section 6 presents the limitations and future research directions.

2. Theoretical basis and research hypothesis

2.1. Website quality

Jeong et al. (2003) first introduced the concept “website quality” into the hotel industry. The researchers defined hotel website quality as “the overall excellence or effectiveness of a website in delivering intended messages to its audience and viewers” (p. 162). However, website quality is a key factor in e-commerce because the customers’ perceptions of website quality positively and directly impact their purchase intentions (Chang and Chen, 2008). With regard to website quality, Yeung and Law (2006) investigated the usability of hotel websites. Ma et al. (2008) claimed that website functionality is the most influential factor in determining the success of hotel websites, including the usage and purchase intention of a consumer. Ip et al. (2012) adopted a sophisticated approach to analyze the weights of hotel website functionality. The results demonstrated that “reservation information” is the most important criterion of hotel website functionality.

The perception of customers of website quality is based on the features in a website that meet customers’ needs and impress the total excellence of that website (Mona et al., 2013). Website quality is a multi-dimensional construct (Lin, 2007; Chang et al., 2014). Previous studies have examined website quality from various perspectives. Barnes and Vidgen (2000, 2001a,b, 2002) introduced WebQual serial models from WebQual 1.0 to 4.0. WebQual 1.0 examines the information quality of websites by incorporating the ease of use, experience, information, and communication dimensions. WebQual 2.0 focuses on website interaction, including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, supportability, and empathy. WebQual 3.0 adds design quality to information and interaction quality. WebQual 4.0 replaces usability with design quality because the perceptions of users are more significant than those of website designers. Based on previous research and interviews with web designers and users, Loiacono et al. (2002)

developed the WebQual™ model, which classifies website quality into four dimensions (usability, ease of use, entertainment, and complement relationship) and twelve related core targets. Usability refers to whether the hotel website can provide sufficient information about its products and services; ease of use and entertainment indicate the extent the website is easy to use and pleasant for customers; complementarity represents the complementary relationship between the hotel website and other sales channels (Loiacono et al., 2002).

The multiple nature-based website quality incorporates information, system, and service quality (Lin, 2007). The multiple dimensions of website quality can be categorized as security, enjoyment, information quality, ease of use, and service quality (Hasanov and Khalid, 2015). Hasanov and Khalid (2015) mentioned that website design is an important determinant of website features and is crucial in achieving the quality of service offered to customers through the website.

The growth of the application scope of the Internet has resulted in numerous studies on hotel website in tourism and hospitality management. Most of these studies have focused on the key elements for hotel websites to succeed as online marketing tools. Maier (2012) proposed a new model that tests the web-effectiveness of luxury and upscale hotels using variables, such as reach, content, consistency, and price parity. They found that only six of ten reviewed hotel companies have achieved optimal web-effectiveness for online marketing. Jakovic and Galetic (2014) stated that most five-star hotel websites do not have their own mobile application, which can help consumers obtain immediate and useful booking information.

Some studies have evaluated one aspect or the entire performance of hotel websites. Lee and Morrison (2010a,b) investigated the upscale hotel website performance in South Korea and the United States. The results indicated that most upscale hotels in both countries do not effectively use websites from marketing and upscale hotel perspective. Pranić et al. (2014) studied hotel website performance in a transition country. They found that hoteliers recognize the importance of online presence but most of them are ineffectively using websites in terms of user-friendliness, marketing effectiveness, and Hsieh (2012) investigated the informational dimension of the websites of the top 50 hotel companies from environmental management perspective. The results suggested that less than half of these hotels use web pages to post environmental related information.

The primary deficiency of these studies is caused by several concepts, including website features, effectiveness, and performance; these concepts are perceived relevant to website quality but are not defined clearly. Table 5 shows that no unified standardized tools are available to measure these website-related attributes.

Some researchers have stressed that hotel website quality has a growing importance in different hotel businesses. Hotel star rating is significantly related to hotel website performance (Salavati and Hashim, 2015). Jakovic and Galetic (2014) discussed that websites of five-star hotels will become more of an active generator of hotel business and development than a promotional channel. Abou-Shouk and Khalifa (2016) argued that the website quality dimensions of five-star hotels in Egypt significantly affect the purchasing behavior of customer. The website adoption level in developing countries is far behind that of developed countries (Salavati and Hashim, 2015; Abou-Shouk and Khalifa, 2016). In China, most customers prefer to book economy hotels rather than star-rated hotels owing to their affordable prices and professional service (Huang et al., 2014). Moreover, the market share of the Top 10 economy hotel brands in China accounts for 70% of the total market (Shen et al., 2014). Therefore, the potential of economy hotels in China is high and the official websites of these hotels must be

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5108250>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5108250>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)