

M-Devices` Use For Purchasing Tourism Products by the Young Generation

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Abstract

The development of information technologies has revolutionized the buying process for tourism products. Visitors' access to information has greatly expanded, their selection alternatives have multiplied, the acquisition modalities have diversified, and the devices that allow all these changes are getting more and more performing. The use of mobile phones for information and also for buying tourism products is currently a habit for a growing number of visitors. But, indisputably, the majority is represented by the younger generation.

This article analyzes the purchasing behavior of tourism products by the young generation and presents the results of a quantitative marketing research conducted among students from Transilvania University of Brașov. Findings indicate the extensive use of m-devices, the major benefits being usefulness and time saving, but also the fact that m-devices generate pleasure, relaxation and fun. In the future, respondents believe the interest of users will grow even more.

Key words: m-devices, e-commerce, tourism products.

J.E.L. classification: M31, L81, Z33.

1. Introduction

The evolution of mobile technology influenced major changes for e-commerce, and the need to understand the motivation of consumers to adopt m-devices to shop tourism products is more and more important. M-devices are instruments which will influence future developments in the tourism industry, therefore consumers` behavior on smart mobiles` use is an important subject to be analyzed.

The main objectives of this article are the following: the identification of buying behavior when accessing online tourism channels, the assessment of major online tourism platforms and the need to identify the elements which influence young generation`s decision to use m-devices for purchasing tourism products.

2. Theoretical Background

Consumption of a tourism service usually takes a longer time to plan and costs more than the consumption of many other kinds of services (Lu *et al*, 2016, p.77). Therefore, consumers usually conduct an extensive information search to reduce perceived risk involved in the tourism purchase decisions (Xiang *et al*, 2013). Alternatives available through e-commerce technologies enable overcoming these difficulties. To the extent that e-commerce systems` performance correspond to customers` behavioral intentions, they are more likely to adopt technology in their travel planning (Tan *et al*, 2018, p.1635).

Important differences in buying decisions through the use of Internet applications are determined by the age of customers. Younger consumers were found to have heavier usage of mobile technology in the tourism industry as opposed to the older consumers (Mang *et al*, 2016).

The rapid evolution of m-devices (mobile devices) and wireless networks transformed m-devices into a multimedia machine with high performances in the communication process, which furthermore influenced online information and purchase process (Marriott *et al*, 2017). Numerous transformations that have occurred covered several aspects of e-commerce. They targeted the acquisition (mobile shopping), payment (mobile payment), banking activities (mobile banking), etc. (Tan *et al*, 2018). All these adjustments have also occurred in the tourism industry. Currently, with the help of the mobile phone, the visitor searches for the desired information, makes the purchase, then the payment, and finally, the mobile device becomes, as the case may be, proof of reservation, of the access ticket, etc. (Hew *et al*, 2018). The share of m-shopping in tourism is steadily increasing. More than 50% of TripAdvisor's visits are made using the smart phones, Travelport estimates a 70% share of online purchases by m-devices, and such examples could continue (Tan *et al*, 2018).

The online booking and buying process is influenced by a variety of factors. The existing research and literature is quite large (Liu *et al*, 2014, pp.72-73). There are several factors which are considered decisive for the online purchase decision-making. The information search intention is the strongest predictor of Internet purchase intention (Shim *et al*, 2001) and there are different stages of purchase influenced by different elements (Frambach *et al*, 2007). One of the factors with major implications on purchase decision is the perceived price (Chiang *et al*, 2007), and many customers tend to leave the site if the total price was higher than what they were willing to pay for. Hotel offline brand is another attribute which influences the online booking (Verhagen *et al*, 2009), but mostly information gathered in the online searches contribute to shaping the brand image (Kwon *et al*, 2009). Product related factors, mainly the cancelation policy, also influence the online booking behavior. The factor "product review", through its relationships with service quality highly affects customer's decision on purchase (Ye *et al*, 2011). Product components which highlight quality aspects are strong elements for both the producer and the consumer in terms of market economy and fierce competition (Neacșu, 2018) and, at the same time, company's specialists need to promote a correct view in this field (Madar, 2016). Based on the preponderance of the emotional factor in relation to the rational one in terms of tourism services, the way the potential consumer reacts to stimuli coming from the consumption of tourism services and how he perceives the "universe" of a destination becomes essential in creating the image of the tourism product (Stăncioiu *et al*, 2013, p.40).

Moreover, website quality is a significant factor determining intention to purchase online tourist products, the presence of a bulk of required details and service quality being very important attributes (Wen, 2012). More websites that allow online booking have emerged, diminishing the role of traditional travel agencies (Vijoli *et al*, 2016). Payment methods, especially the variety of payment methods provided by online vendors will increase purchase intention (Chen *et al*, 2010), while technical protections and security statements in the e-payment system will significantly enhance the customer's perceived security, customer's trust and purchase intention (Wen, 2012).

3. Methodology

The analysis of the young generation behavior when using m-devices to purchase tourism products is based on a quantitative marketing research carried out among the students of the Transilvania University of Brașov.

The research method chosen was survey based using a questionnaire administered through computer as a tool of data collection (CAWI – Computer Assisted Web Interviewing). The questionnaire comprised 16 questions which were included into three sections. The first section comprised six questions which aimed to assess the general behavior of respondents regarding habits, products, platforms and also the confidence in the procedure of booking tourism services online. The second section comprised eight questions which identified the main elements that contribute to the decision to use m-devices to purchase tourism products. The final section of the questionnaire included identification questions, respectively age and gender.

From the total number of 2624 students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Administration of Braşov, Transilvania University of Braşov, there were recorded 252 completed questionnaires. Students who chose to respond defined the sample used in the present research.

The objectives of the research were the following:

- Identification of buying habits when accessing online tourism channels;
- The assessment of the major online tourism platforms;
- Identification of the elements influencing the decision to use m-devices to purchase tourism products.

4. Findings

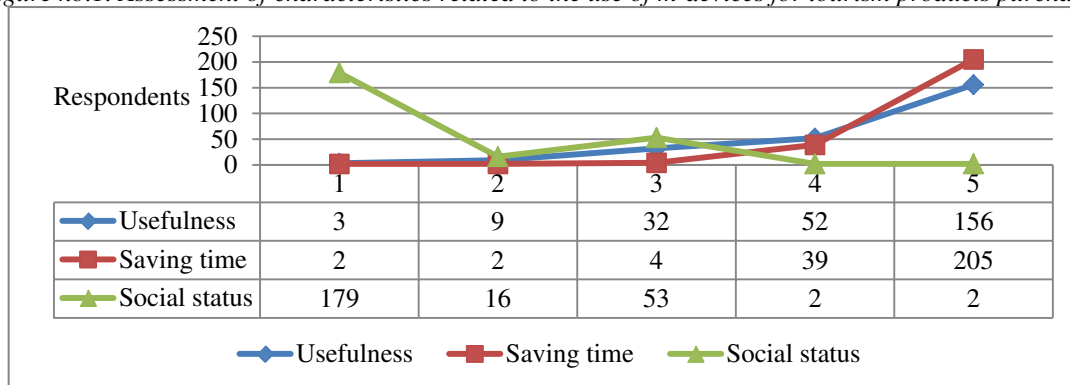
The habit of using e-commerce to buy tourism products is a constant of the younger generation. The results indicate that over 75% of the interviewed persons use online channels for this purpose. The range of tourism products bought online by the respondents include: accommodation services (90%), airline tickets (70%), access tickets for tourism attractions (33%), train tickets and package tours (11%).

The respondents indicated that online navigation comprises many needed and valuable information in order to decide to continue with booking and purchasing, such as: price, booking conditions, location, the distance from city center or airport/railway station, comfort, included services, facilities, and also the payment methods. When asked about their confidence regarding online booking and purchasing, only 29 persons, i.e. 11.5% of the respondents are reluctant in using the online channels. The payment methods most frequently used were: the own card (151 respondents, 60%), the card owned by parents or one of families` member (79 respondents, 31%), while 9% of respondents chose to use tourism agencies` services in order to book and purchase tourism products which were analyzed by themselves through online navigation. Asked if they would recommend to friends the same online channels used for prior tourism products acquisitions, 241 out of the interviewed persons (95.6%) said they would recommend.

The online platforms which were assessed were Booking.com, Trivago, Vola, Airbnb and Agoda. The results highlight that Booking.com enjoys the highest level of confidence, followed in order by Trivago and Vola. Airbnb obtained the lowest level of confidence, while Agoda is a platform with a low impact within the analyzed sample, only 19 persons having heard on it.

Another objective of the research was related to the use of m-devices to purchase tourism products. 158 respondents (62.7%) acknowledged their preference to use the mobile phone instead a computer/laptop in this respect. There were analyzed several characteristics on satisfaction achieved by using m-devices to purchase tourism products: usefulness in daily life, saving time and the improvement of social status. Respondents were asked to rate this characteristics from 1 (total disagreement) to 5 (total agreement). The results are presented in figure no, 1.

Figure no.1. Assessment of characteristics related to the use of m-devices for tourism products purchase



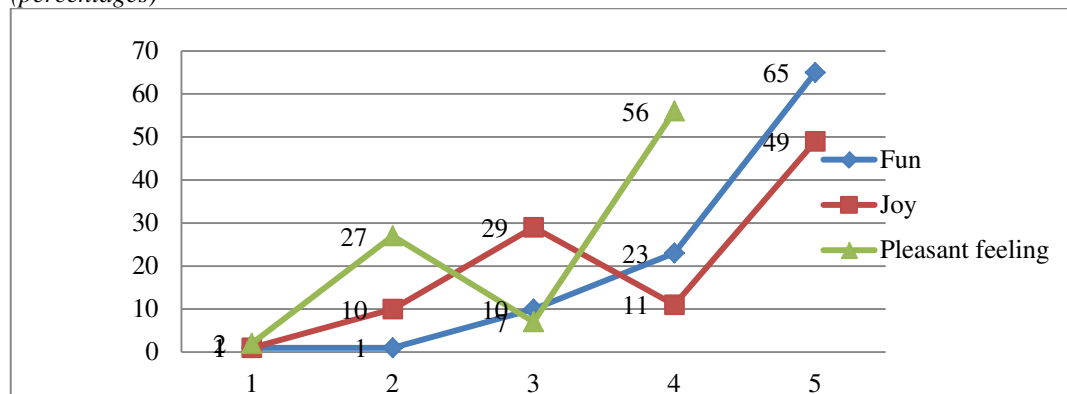
Source: Authors` own research

Usefulness and saving time are characteristics with high percentages of total agreement, while the improvement of social status as a result of the use of m-devices for tourism products` purchase has recorded high levels of disagreement.

Furthermore, the respondents rated the fact that they have the knowledge necessary to use m-devices to purchase tourism products, the fact that they could reach help from friends and family members when needed and also the fact that people they communicate with regularly use m-devices to purchase tourism products. The results show that 78% out of the respondents consider they have the necessary knowledge to use m-devices, and 87% could find help when necessary. As for the assessment regarding the regular use of m-devices by people they regularly communicate with, results are different. The majority of the respondents (51%) confirmed agreement with this statement, 17% have a neutral opinion, 12% out of them disagreed the statement, 11% declared the total agreement and 9% confirmed total disagreement.

The research also highlighted the status of their opinion in the process of using m-devices when purchasing tourism products. They rated from 1 to 5 the joy to use m-devices, fun and the pleasant feeling. The recorded percentages for the five levels of rating are presented in figure no. 2.

Figure no. 2. The rating for feelings generated by using m-devices for tourism products` purchase (percentages)



Source: Authors` own research

The respondents assessed their willingness to use m-devices in the future for purchasing tourism products. The results show that 76% out of the respondents intend to use in the future m-devices to tourism e-commerce, 59% would always try to use m-devices to purchase tourism products in daily life, while 83% consider that their interest to use m-devices to purchase tourism products will increase in the future.

Finally, the financial security was assessed, being differentiated online platforms from websites. Online platforms are considered more secure than websites, 57% out of the respondents stating their total agreement with platforms` financial security. As for the websites, the ratings are quite different, 54% out of the respondents have a neutral opinion in relation to this statement, 10% of respondents consider the websites are unsecure, while 18% consider websites as being secure enough.

5. Conclusions

The use of online information and purchasing systems in tourism eased the selection of tourism products. The development of m-devices has generated a new stage in web navigation. The analysis presented in this article revealed that the young generation appreciates that their use in tourism distribution gives them many benefits. The most significant of these concern ease, utility, time savings, fun, joy, and overall, a pleasant feeling. The biggest drawback, still unsolved, is the lack of confidence in the ability of these systems to guarantee financial security.

The young generation shapes the profile of the future consumer. Using m-devices will become a constant and also a necessity of everyday life. As a result, tourism distribution will be deeply marked by these technological developments. Solving the current problems regarding the use of online systems, especially for the purchase of tourism products, adapting tourism companies to communicate with the effective and potential consumer exclusively via Internet or rethinking the activities of traditional travel agencies are challenges that will mark the tourism industry in the near future.

6. References

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