Article Title

Evaluation of hotel website contents: existence-importance analysis

Citation

Abstract

The purpose of this study is twofold: it aims to examine hotel website features by conducting a content analysis and it analyses customers' viewpoints about the importance of the contents of hotel websites. The study involves a quantitative method of measurement and evaluation of the information provided by hotel websites. It tries to evaluate the richness of definite and ample information dimensions, which as a whole constitutes the information services offered through the website.

Methods

The study is based on two pillars: all five-star hotel chains (113 hotels) in Egypt as the population frame to evaluate the contents of their websites; and a sample of 406 customers selected to examine the customers' views on the importance of the contents of hotel websites. This study proposes a quantitative evaluation frame of all dimensions provided by hotel websites which is developed, tested and validated.

Results

The study has revealed important findings that can help hotel managers to adjust the information on the websites to be more efficient and customer-oriented. A quantitative evaluation frame created for assessing contents for all dimensions of hotel website information and related to customers' viewpoint about the importance of these contents enables exploration of correlations between the existing dimensions of website contents with the importance of these dimensions for customers.

Conclusion

This research has for the first time combined statements from the perspective of two sides, hotel managers and customers, by using a unique quantitative evaluation model, thus enabling the improvement of the existing evaluation models in tourism and hospitality theory. The proposed existing-importance evaluation model offers added value to the so far used evaluation models because it enables existence-importance contents measurement not only in terms of two groups/variables (managers and customers), but it can quantitatively measure existence-importance contents including other important interest groups/variables (such as marketers, web designers, researchers, etc.). The results lead to many practical implications for hotel managers, marketers and web designers. To use the website information as a competitive

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advantage tool, hotel managers should harmonize the web information with customers' preferences, and, according to the study, they should all provide information on prices and rates. By creating an interactive hotel website, hoteliers can increase volumes of sales, improve the brand images and raise the overall outcome of their marketing plans. Accordingly, evaluating customer insight of information quality and the effect on occupancy and sales is vigorous for hotel managers. It is essential for hoteliers to integrate more innovative tools such as those connected to the social media on their websites. According to the findings of the study, the main social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, You Tube, Trip Advisor and Instagram. To accomplish link with customers, hoteliers should foster superior usage on their websites of social media. Although many social media have been operating on chain hotel websites to maximize real interaction, all chain hotel websites should generalize usage of these essential tools to expand more than one target group as they are operative, effective and economical tools. Although TripAdvisor/Facebook users is probably very different, the purpose is to measure the importance of hotel website contents generally from the perspectives of all customers. Therefore, it is important to reconsider all different point of views to rebuild the priorities of hotel website based on all customers' viewpoints. Furthermore, these tools help not only chain hotels but also independent hotels, different categories of hotels, large and small hotels. These tools enable more friendly interaction with customers. Hotel managers need to take into consideration mobile application analytics more than ever before, as it can be used as a medium for business between customers and hotels. It is a powerful marketing channel to increase sales, guest loyalty and enhance their experience before, during and after their stay. Additionally, 24-chat room on hotel websites is dynamic, effective and inexpensive tool which allows customers to communicate swiftly and easily, and it has a lot of other benefits: provides real-time interaction, increases hotel website traffic, builds online groups and promotes loyalty, as well as it increases sales through real-time customer service.