



Article Title

Engaging Customers in Value Co-Creation through Mobile Instant Messaging in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry [Summary]

Citation

Lei, S. I., Ye, S., Wang, D., & Law, R. (2020). Engaging Customers in Value Co-Creation through Mobile Instant Messaging in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 44(2), 229–251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348019893066>

Abstract

Tourism and hospitality service providers have been seeking ways to engage customers in the value creation process to deliver personalized experiences. Such practices have been facilitated by the rapid development of information communication technology. Extant research on online customer engagement focuses mostly on computer-based platforms. Mobile instant messaging (IM) has rarely been explored despite its substantial potential for firm–customer interactions. On the basis of service–dominant logic and computer-mediated communication theories, this study examines customers’ perceived co-creation experience facilitated by mobile IM. It empirically tests the influencing factors and effects of such co-creation experience. The findings extend the theoretical framework of value co-creation to a context mediated by mobile IM. Managerial suggestions are provided for tourism and hospitality organizations.

Keywords online customer engagement, mobile instant messaging, value co-creation experience, service–dominant logic, computer-mediated communication

Summary:

The findings from this study unearth new factors affecting customer engagement in the context of mobile Instant Messaging (IM) value co-creation in tourism and hospitality. This study provides practical suggestions for tourism and hospitality service providers to improve their customer engagement strategy through mobile IM.

First, practitioners may improve the design of their mobile IM channels by enhancing the MR and SP features. For instance, they may consider incorporating functions that can deliver information in various formats (e.g., location, images, animations) or deliver multiple social cues (e.g., expression icons).

Identifying attributes in the mobile IM interface that can be utilized to strengthen human personality may also be helpful (e.g., showing employees' names or photos). Second, training is necessary to educate employees the importance of prompt reply and lively conversation. A balance between the former and latter is necessary, as the findings indicate both are equally important. Employees should be well-trained to react professionally, especially in cases when customer requests are unexpected. Policies can be developed to ensure timely responses are provided to customers who expect immediate feedback. Last, the nonsignificant moderating effects of Turge imply that practitioners should ensure that customers can perceive a high level of MR and SP, regardless of the urgency level of their communication needs.

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