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Digital Cues and E-Trust in Online Accommodation Booking: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The tourism industry has witnessed major transformations, especially in the field of online booking. The review aims to highlight some key determinants of trust in online booking: video word of mouth (vWOM), website quality, service providers self disclosure and analyzes how they relate to booking intention. Through a literature survey on various studies from 2015-2025, the present study emphasizes the growing trend of booking accommodation reservations on digital platforms. Major findings reveal that trust is pertinent to booking decisions; engaging video WOM, quality websites, service providers self disclosure and subjective norms are such factors that greatly add to consumer trust. The study calls for investigation on personalization through artificial intelligence (AI), and potential influences from emerging technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). The knowledge stemmed from the findings is useful to academics and industry practitioners who are keen to engender customer trust and engagement in online accommodation booking.

Keywords – Hospitality industry, E-trust, Video WOM, Website quality, Service providers' self-disclosure, Online booking intention

Introduction

The quick development of information and communication technology (ICT) has accelerated the global tourist industry's growth (Shin & Kang, 2020). This is obvious as the growing number of travellers along with steady growth of the tourism industry are driven by the speedy development of information communication technology. India has become a popular tourist destination globally, attracting visitors with its diverse historical heritage, distinctive cultural offerings, and stunning landscapes (Biswas, 2023).

The rise of social media and Web 2.0, it has been possible for users to contribute reviews and suggestions in addition to producing original material (Liao et al., 2021). Advancement of digital technologies and

progress in versatile digital platforms resulted into extensive use of online booking with great value of source information for consumers and enterprises alike (Mariani & Predvoditeleva, 2019). Since the industry specializes in offering services like rest and relaxation, intangibility is a key trait which sets intangible offerings apart from tangible goods (Della Volpi and Paulino, 2018). Nonetheless, prospective tourists frequently get around this intangibility obstacle in services to a certain degree by using compelling information from other tourists (Kim et al., 2017).

Although various aspects of online booking intention have been explored in literature in the hospitality industry, there still exist some gaps. The factors that have been studied include website quality, trust, online reviews, among others; the factor of self-disclosure has also been studied but mostly from the perspectives of the customers, brands, and patients, while very little attention has been paid to the perspectives of service providers. In addition, although video word-of-mouth (vWOM) is considered a digital cue in the current environment, it has not been well explored in relation to online accommodation booking. Although e-trust has been identified as a critical factor in influencing online booking behavior.

This review paper's primary goals are to:

- (1) investigate the components that affect e-trust in online booking intention.
- (2) pinpoint important research gaps in this field that should be filled by forthcoming studies.

Literature Review

Hospitality Sector

The hospitality industry has undergone a tremendous transition in the previous 20 years, primarily due to the proliferation of technological advancements (Khaliq et al., 2022). Massive modifications have occurred in the hospitality industry of the Indian market, an emerging economic powerhouse, especially in internet travel bookings that include hotel, bus, and train tickets as well as air travel (Mitra & Jain, 2024).

Visitors frequently use a spectrum of internet sources, including blog entries, YouTube vlogs, Instagram hashtags, and review sites like Tripadvisor, to obtain information before selecting a hotel (Park & Lee, 2024). Even though photographs may convey deeper interpretations about an event compared to single-dimensional texts, prior study shows that the hospitality sector has given the visual information less weight than text-based information (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019).

E-trust

Consumer trust is clearly a major determinant of both behavior intention and actual conduct (Shin, 2010). When the accommodation is perceived as trustworthy, it means that its data is reliable, fulfills commitments to guests, delivers truthful evaluations, and displays concrete information (Agag & El-Masry, 2016).

Trust is defined as optimistic trust in the dependability along with reliability regarding an individual or item (Flavián et al., 2005). Customers are more likely to build confidence on a website when they feel at ease conducting business online (Cheng et al., 2019). Owing to the intangible nature of the hospitality sector, visitors' level of confidence in hotel websites has an enormous impact in how they feel about their interactions with them (Amin et al., 2021). The degree of trust and security that allows two parties to reduce perceived risk in transactions has become essential as a result of the expansion of digital networks and people's interconnectedness on the Internet (Hajli & Lin, 2016).

Video word-of-mouth

Video-based word-of-mouth (vWOM) has emerged as a distinct type of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Bi et al., 2019). According to previous research, video reviews are more convincing than other forms of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) due to its multimodal and eye-catching appearance, which allows film producers directly and thoroughly convey their product experiences with viewers (Brand & Reith, 2022). Prior studies have demonstrated that eWOM, can take many different forms, such as written, image-based, and video reviews (Moisescu et.al., 2022).

The utilization of the item is discussed by the reviewer in vWOM, which is regarded as an accurate repository of product information that can affect a customer's inclination to buy (Bezbaruah & Trivedi, 2020). Zhai et al. (2022) found four vWOM characteristics—video information quality, product information visualization, video emotion polarity, and video publisher credibility—that could affect customers' attitudes and actions. However, there hasn't been much empirical research done on how customers interpret these video reviews and how that influences their inclination to buy (Zhai et al., 2022).

Website quality

The overall competence or accomplishment of a website in communicating its intended messages to its audiences and viewers is what constitutes an excellent lodging website (Jeong et al., 2003). Website quality is especially user-friendly and contains qualities such as clear and understandable structuring and the availability of information on the description of the product (Krol, 2019). The website essentially acts as the digital representation of the physical business, shaping customer behavior and encouraging purchasing decisions (Bai et al., 2008).

The low-quality websites lead to customers belief that there are privacy dangers, increasing their awareness of the website's low privacy policy effectiveness and lack of confidence (Guo et al., 2022). Tam et al. (2024) discovered that consumers become inclined to surf and make purchases from high quality websites. The importance of site performance lies in the fact that consumers assess effectiveness of the company's services through a website, which is perceived as electronic service quality (Suryani et al., 2024).

Service Providers' Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure is the act of openly and intentionally sharing new, typically private information about oneself with others in an honest and sincere manner (Fisher, 1984). Service Providers Self-disclosure refers to the sharing of private and personal information by service providers on booking platforms through their online profiles (Akhtar & Siddiqi 2024).

Self-Disclosure has two dimensions: "Depth" refers to the level of intimacy (Alrabiah et al., 2022). It tells how private or sensitive the disclosed personal information is. "Breadth" is the quantity of information shared with others (Ma et al., 2024). Self-disclosure fosters pleasant interpersonal relationships, increases comprehension of service providers, and encourages upcoming mutual conduct (Rodríguez-Priego et al., 2023).

Online Booking Intention

Purchasing intention in e-commerce refers to an online customer's readiness or likelihood to make a purchase (Amin et al., 2021). Digital accommodation reservation intent signifies the guest's inclination to reserve accommodations through diverse digital portals (Biswas, 2023). The online booking intention of a traveller is an indication of their willingness to make reservations no matter through websites or online travel agencies (Biswas, 2024).

Methodology

Systematic Literature Review methodology is employed in order to investigate the current studies related to vWOM, service provider self-disclosure, website quality, trust and online booking intention in the field of hospitality. These studies were identified from several academic journals such as Taylor & Francis, Emerald Insight, Elsevier, SAGE, and Springer. The search terms used in this study include “video word-of-mouth,” “service provider self-disclosure,” “website quality,” “e-trust” and “online booking intention.” Studies from 2015 until 2025 were used for this research. From 72 studies identified, 65 papers were selected based on their applicability. These selected studies come from varied geographical settings such as USA, China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Oman, India and Portugal.

Results & Discussion

This review considers e-trust, vWOM, website quality and service provider self-disclosure as factors involved in the process of online booking decision-making. However, the level of evidences about them is different, as website quality and e-trust receive much more attention compared to the vWOM and service provider self-disclosure.

In the reviewed articles, e-trust was mostly associated with consumers' intentions of online booking and purchasing. E-trust helps consumers to overcome uncertainty and increase their confidence in digital transactions when it is impossible to evaluate services. The importance of trust as a factor in online hotel booking and purchase intentions was found by Amin et al. (2021) and Agag and El-Masry (2016). At the same time, the effect of trust in booking intentions is not universal – Fauzi et al. (2024) showed that trust did not affect the intention to visit a green hotel.

Website quality is the factor which was considered more often among those which are included into this study. Website quality can help consumers to get accurate and available information, overcome uncertainty, and increase confidence. Tam et al. (2024) found out that website quality affected the behavioural intention directly and indirectly, through trust. Trust mediated the relationship between website quality, online reviews, and hotel booking intention (Saha & Biswas, 2025). Also, Kareem and Venugopal (2023) revealed the significant relationship between booking website quality and online booking intention.

However, there is less attention paid to vWOM and service provider self-disclosure. Video contents can provide visual and experiential information, influencing consumer reaction, and the following characteristics of the video were found to be important (Bi et al., 2019; Zhai et al., 2022): video quality, visualization, emotional tone and the credibility of publisher. At the same time, evidence on the role of self-disclosure suggests that it can serve for building trust. Akhtar and Siddiqi (2024) discovered that service provider information disclosure increased consumer trust and booking intentions. Similar effects of service provider information disclosure on trust and booking intention were also shown in the healthcare and branding contexts (Liu et al., 2022; Rodríguez-Priego et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The present review compiles research from 65 articles that have explored the digital elements relevant to e-trust and online booking intention in the context of the hospitality industry. According to the results obtained, website quality has been studied extensively, whereas vWOM and service provider self-disclosure need further exploration. Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that e-trust is a relevant factor that links the process of evaluating digital cues to online booking intention. The present review helps to compile fragmented knowledge regarding digital cues and their role in establishing digital trust and booking intentions. Future research is recommended to use longitudinal and experimental methods in order to develop existing evidence and explore new technologies such as artificial intelligence, personal recommendation systems, augmented and virtual reality.

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