



Chapter XVIII

The Perception of Managers on the Impacts of the Internet in Brazilian Hotels: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

The present study has an exploratory nature and aims to analyze the perception of managers on the efficiency, access importance, use as a communication tool, benefits and difficulties of Internet use in Brazilian hotels and also its effects according to the facilities rank and property size plus managers' age and experience time. It has been used as a questionnaire to collect data from the managers of 35 hotels in the city of Natal, RN, Brazil. By using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Tukey test, results showed that there is almost no significant difference on the perception of managers on the impact of Internet use in hotels. However, those variables that were different show that for younger and less experienced managers and luxurious hotels with more than 50 rooms, there is a more favorable perception on the impacts of the Internet.

INTRODUCTION

Business and leisure are being increasingly linked in countries, societies, people and companies that are being connected in most diverse ways. Such links are constantly being reinforced by two of the most growing and biggest industries in the world: Tourism and IT (Information Technology).

Note the importance of Information Technology and its significance for the Tourism Industry, as organizations use the WWW for interactivity and competitiveness. The key factor for successful organizations is their willingness to do business in this new way.

Technology has been increasingly developing a major role in the Tourism area, particularly in hotel operations and, must be a relevant part of hotel activities. According to studies and data, the use of technological tools will allow more competition for hotels.

Technology will be the catalyst of change, a source of growing connectivity and one of the most important factors in distinguishing success among hotel companies. Few issues have greater importance to the hospitality business than the technology decisions that will be made in the coming years (Van Hoof et al., 1995; Buhalis, 1999; Cline, 1999).

The tourism area, from which hotels are a segment, has an outstanding performance in global businesses, for it moves US\$3.5, which is equivalent to 11.7 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product and also has a 4.1 percent growth prospects a year, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2001).

In tourism, the use of information technologies for basic functions is becoming usual (Lage, 2000) – conferences, business meetings in distant places, training, designed routes and airlines, reservations and tickets purchased through computer systems, tourist shops, restaurants – all these services have led tourist companies to adopt more updated methods in order to increase competition. Consumers are already becoming familiar with new technologies; they demand more flexible, interactive and specialized products and services, which will bring new management techniques from the intelligent use of IT used to accomplish tour companies business processes (Buhalis, 1998).

Though many experts and businessmen agreed that the Internet is probably the most important technological tool, it is still relatively new and misused in hotel industry (Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 1997).

Viewing this scenario of Internet use in hotels, most precisely in the city of Natal, estate of Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil), we had posed a research question- *which factors affect the perception of hotel managers on the impacts of the Internet in their facilities?*

In order to answer that question, field research was conducted to identify the factors that contribute to the perception of hotel managers relating to Internet use in their hotels. The following specific aims were defined:

- Describing the hotel and manager profiles and their organizational and individual features of Internet use, respectively.
- Determining which aspects of Internet use are considered important to hotel managers, identifying their individual perceptions in terms of efficiency, access importance, use as a tool of communication, benefits and difficulties of Internet use in hotels.
- Identifying which organizational and individual factors contribute to the perception of managers as to the use of the Internet in hotels, particularly according to the number of rooms, rate, the manager's age and their experience in the hotel business.

This article is divided in five parts – the first one in the introduction itself. On the second part, we present basic concepts and a theoretical background. The third part deals with

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