

Attitudes towards Disintermediation in Hotel Reservations: Spanish Travellers' Profile

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Abstract

This paper investigates the attitudes of different groups of travellers for and against the disintermediation of travel agencies. In the travel and tourism sector, the way in which people plan, buy and consume tourism products has been deeply transformed by the Internet and user-generated content (UGC), thus challenging the role of traditional travel agencies. A

web-based survey was carried out among Spanish consumers whose last hotel reservation was made through the Internet. A convenience sample of 986 complete questionnaires was obtained. Multivariate tests were used first to analyse the relationship and dependency between socio-demographic variables and second to look for significant differences between occasional, moderate and frequent buyers regarding their positive and negative perceptions of hotel reservations' disintermediation process. The findings reveal that significant differences exist between online buyers based on their socio-demographic characteristics and their online purchase experience, whereas they do not differ based on their likelihood of being influenced by UGC in their final choices. Another interesting finding is that the Internet is most frequently used for hotel reservations in short-term leisure and short-haul travel. Implications for travel agency managers are discussed and suggestions for further research are made.

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Keywords: disintermediation; user-generated content; socio-demographic characteristics; hotel reservations; travellers; Spain.

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