

8 Examining contextual factors influencing hotel mobile app satisfaction

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Introduction

The acceptance, adoption, and use of mobile applications allows businesses to reach new consumers and enhances the customer experience by properly using the features of mobile technology (Middleton *et al.*, 2014). Distinctive features of mobile technology such as portability, user identification, localization capability, and instant connectivity provide value to hospitality firms and consumers (Picoto *et al.*, 2014). Organizations that use and properly leverage mobile technologies are likely to gain an advantage and provide increase value and revenue to their business. Mobile business, such as mobile apps, provides firms with a unique value proposition by allowing easy, useful, and real-time access to information to consumers and personalization capabilities through client identification and localization services (Clarke, 2001; Watson *et al.*, 2002; Camponovo & Pigneur, 2003; Sharma & Gutiérrez, 2010; Picoto *et al.*, 2014).

The proliferation of new communication technology like mobile apps has changed the manner in which hospitality firms conduct and engage in business, and interact and communicate with consumers (Wang & Wang, 2010; Kansakar *et al.*, 2019). Such technologies have led to increased productivity and efficiency in service delivery by allowing firms to provide services to consumers through more convenient channels (Meuter *et al.*, 2003). Because of the benefits, consumers are insisting that firms provide new and innovative ways to conduct business (Xiang *et al.*, 2015; Kansakar *et al.*, 2019). Because of consumers' changing expectations, firms must

become more consumer focused, flexible, innovative, and adaptable (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2011). Firms have typically responded to consumers' needs by dedicating additional resources to implementing new technologies. However, the branded mobile app has received limited attention in lodging research, leaving the industry with a lack of understanding on how to implement it as part of the firm's mobile commerce strategy (Kim & Law, 2015) and how the consumer is employing and interacting with branded mobile apps (Peng *et al.*, 2014).

Introducing contextual factors allows researchers to understand the impact of technology-specific characteristics to leverage their use when implementing said technology. To that end, the objective of the study is to examine the contextual and cognitive factors that may influence consumer satisfaction with a hotel mobile app. Specifically, the author wants to determine which factor is the best predictor to satisfaction.

Literature review

Technology research in the hospitality industry has been primarily dedicated on consumer acceptance and adoption of technology specifically looking at the influence of motivators, inhibitors, and perceptions (Law *et al.*, 2018). Attitude theories of technology adoption look at factors influencing a user's intention to adopt, such as usefulness, ease of use, performance expectancy, social influence, facilitating condition, and effect expectancy (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). Research regarding mobile applications in the hospitality and tourism industry has focused on the adoption of technologies with Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) being the most frequently cited theory to explore adoption (Law *et al.*, 2018). TAM has been used to study travel and lodging mobile apps (Im & Hancer, 2014; Rivera *et al.*, 2015).

Consumer behavior theories like Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) allow for researchers to study consumer satisfaction by examining the consumer's expectations and their pre- and post-purchase performance to measure satisfaction and its impact on repurchase intentions. This study will use the Expectation-Confirmation Theory as a foundation and include contextual factors to the model. These factors were added as they are an area that needs further exploration in order to improve the customer experience (Law *et al.*, 2018). Examining satisfaction allows for a better understanding of factors influencing the use of mobile

apps. Satisfaction has consistently been of great interest to scholars as it has a strong impact on decision-making behavior (Zhang, 2013). Consequently, a better understanding of satisfaction will lead to practical implications for the design, acceptance, and management of new technologies like mobile apps (Zhang, 2013).

Contextual factors

Mobility

This study examines context-specific characteristics of personalization, mobility and responsiveness that may influence a consumer's satisfaction with a hotel mobile app. Mobility is what makes mobile technology unique and valuable for both the consumer and the firm. It allows firms to reach consumers and eases information search and decision-making (Mallat *et al.*, 2009). In this study, 'mobility' refers to the users' awareness of the mobility value of mobile apps (Huang *et al.*, 2007). The literature proposes that mobility has three elements: expediency, convenience, and immediacy (Seppälä & Alamäki, 2003). The mobility function of mobile devices allows users access to information, immediate communication, and availability to services anytime and anywhere (Mallat *et al.*, 2009). Perceived mobility has been described as a critical factor for mobile service users (Yen & Wu, 2016). Because of this characteristic, it can be expected that mobility is an essential factor of consumer mobile app adoption, use and satisfaction (Yen & Wu, 2016). Mobility has been found to be an important antecedent to the users' assessment of their satisfaction with mobile apps (Lu *et al.*, 2017). Satisfaction has also been examined as an influencing factor to mobility; it has been found that satisfaction exerts a considerable influence on perceived mobility in the context of mobile social networks (Park *et al.*, 2014). Due to the limited research on the aspect of mobility, the author posits the following:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived mobility of the hotel mobile app positively impacts users' satisfaction with a mobile app.

Personalization

Personalization in the information systems environment has been defined as modification of the functions, information, message, or interface with the goal of increasing the personal relevance to the user (Blom, 2000). Similarly, personalization has been described as system-driven, system-initiated and requires adaptive components (Treiblmaier *et al.*, 2004). In electronic and mobile commerce, personalization is a way to gather consumer data, on search and purchase behavior, to make product recommen-

dations to consumers.

In order to achieve personalization, detailed information from the user is needed to make appropriate modifications for the user's needs. In addition, effective personalization requires the system to constantly monitor user behavior, which enables the system to adjust recommendations and/or messages based on the behavior. Personalized systems utilize user profiles that are continuously managed and updated by the system. The hospitality industry utilizes personalization to perform mobile commerce marketing activities like hotel email blasts for promotions based on the consumers' previous visits, or push notifications during a hotel stay for concierge and other hotel services. Research on mobile commerce suggests that personalization increases consumption by improving the fit between the consumers' needs and product features (Wattal *et al.*, 2009). Scholars explain that even though personalization is viewed as an essential factor of the present-day service experience, theory has not been able to converge toward unified findings that clearly establish personalization as an influencing factor of mobile commerce behaviors (Lee & Cranage, 2011; Sutanto *et al.*, 2013). Results from studies examining mobile services and technologies have found that personalization exerts a positive influence on satisfaction in online and mobile contexts like websites and social media apps (Lin *et al.*, 2012; Barnes & Vidgen, 2014; Park, 2014). The influence of personalization has also been examined as part of process quality factors and has been found to indirectly influence satisfaction in the context of mobile apps (Chen *et al.*, 2012). Given the importance of personalization for the successful implementation of mobile commerce to better service and influence consumer behavior (Dickinson *et al.*, 2014), the author proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived personalization of the hotel mobile app positively impacts users' satisfaction with the mobile app.

Responsiveness

The third contextual factor examined in this study relates to the mobile apps responsiveness. Responsiveness discusses the degree to which users can find information pertinent to their request (Burgoon *et al.*, 1999). Responsiveness is included since it is one of the main features of mobile technologies and a motivation for its adoption and use (Choi *et al.*, 2015; Yoo *et al.*, 2015). In addition, it has been identified as one of the biggest challenges the hospitality industry is facing related to the implementation