

Chapter 13

Determinants for Value Creation in Mobile Apps Within the Tourist Experience: An Exploratory Study in a Northern City in Portugal

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the use of mobile applications in tourism context (m-tourism). A survey was applied to a hotel in the city of Guimarães, in the north of Portugal, with a sample of 98 tourists. 94 reported to use these devices in tourism context to access information and share experiences in social networks, taking photos and videos, and using GPS. Users have a preference for free applications and look for the creation of itineraries. The use of the app in offline mode is the most valued feature, as well as the availability of updated and useful information. Only 13,7% of the inquired tourists referred the use of the app of the destination Guimarães, where they were staying. This shows that besides the features, it is crucial the promotion of mobile touristic apps, and the establishment of partnerships and rewards to incentivize its use.

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INTRODUCTION

The constant growth and evolution of technologies and their adoption by consumers have implications in the customer journey and in the orientation of marketing touchpoints (Muzellec & O'Raghallaigh, 2018). Technology is an allied of tourism, with a significant value creation to facilitate and improve the experience through mobile devices, as smartphone, tablets or GPS, in the accomplishment of the most varied tasks in tourism experience (Kim, Park, & Morrison, 2008). With the possibility of accessing the internet anywhere and anytime through smartphones and other mobile devices, the use of mobile apps in tourism experience has been increasing (Sun, Law, Schuckert, Kucukusta, & Guillet, 2017). Tourists tend to become more independent and use the internet for travel planning, with new applications related to hospitality, restaurants and attractions (Tan, Lee, Lin, & Ooi, 2017).

Most tourists, on their trips, use the smartphone or tablet and have easy access to information in real time, with mobile applications, adding value to the tourist experience. In this sense, tourism entities seek to boost their online presence adapted to mobile devices, giving users the possibility to enjoy a more complete and satisfactory experience (Kim et al., 2008). Mobile devices are becoming more important in the tourism sector. Mobile technology is a tool that represents new opportunities for the various entities of the sector to attract consumers. Organizations in the sector should seek to understand this tool in order to develop their services based on the factors that lead to the attraction of consumers, making their services more relevant, effective and attractive (Kim et al., 2008).

Little is known about mobile app features most valued by tourists (Palumbo, Dominici, & Basile, 2013). This study considers the state of the art about consumers' acceptance of mobile technology and look for evidences about the critical features of mobile apps expected by tourists. The research examines tourists' expectations about mobile apps through the analysis of a survey conducted in a hotel in the North of Portugal, Guimarães. This chapter discusses the mobile app features most valued in tourism context and, finally, analyses the use of the official destination app where the respondents were staying at that moment. The results are discussed in the end of the chapter, proposing management recommendations for destination and tourism managers.

BACKGROUND

This section discusses the theoretical background about consumers' adoption of mobile devices and applications. The adoption of technology is related to two fundamental variables - perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). These are subjective perceptions of each individual on performance and effort, respectively, and act according to beliefs. The literature stated that the user may prefer to deal with usage constraints rather than failing in the performance of tasks. However, if the difficulty is high, it may lead to withdrawal. In case the facility is high, it may compensate for its poor utility. The designers and creators of innovations should thus pay great attention to utility, being this strongly linked to the acceptance of innovation, and not only the ease of use in its creation and development.

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