

## ONLINE MARKETING IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A STUDY ON THE ONLINE HOTEL BOOKING IN B2B MARKETS

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### ABSTRACT

Online marketing methods used by companies to book hotels on business trips are subjects of reflection in the literature, in common sense and in some empirical studies. This article is also a theoretical and conceptual contribution to companies and managers on the subject, as it presents the results of an online study, of a quantitative nature, based on a sample of 206 Indian business executives who answered a questionnaire on social networks. Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, from May 20th to 28th, 2022. The objective of the research was to comparatively analyse the methods of booking hotels in business to business (B2B) with the aim of measuring the importance of the internet in these markets in India.

Descriptive analysis and application of statistical tests were used to facilitate the interpretation of collected data. The results show that the proportion of booking hotels, on business trips, preferably via the internet is the highest possible option. On the other hand, before making a purchase, companies resort more frequently to search engines and hotel websites. However, the results do not confirm that the internet is the preferred method in B2B markets.

**KEYWORDS:** Internet, Booking Hotels, Motivations, Sources of Information,

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been an exponential increase in the use of the internet and social networks, channels that break down various barriers to communication. According to the most recent data from the National Statistics Institute, 93% of Indian companies with 10 or more employees connected to the internet via broadband, and 60% had a corporate website. With regard to social networks, these are used by 35.5% of companies with 10 or more employees to connect with customers, suppliers and business partners. Therefore, access to information is much easier and faster, since several actions can be carried out through a simple click: purchases, payment of bills, request for help, among many other actions.

This theme was chosen not only for personal reasons but also because B2B research in the field of online marketing and electronic commerce, namely in the tourism sector, is scarce. On the other hand, it was considered necessary and relevant to contribute to the knowledge of companies as a way of providing decision-making related to online marketing management, a field of marketing on the rise, based on information resulting from an empirical research effort and not just in theoretical frameworks. Doing this research would result in obtaining new results; therefore, they would translate into an innovative contribution for both parties interested in this investigation.

Given the scenario presented at the beginning of the introduction, hotel units connected to the internet also increase the frequency of use of websites and social networks. In this way, these companies have greater opportunities to expose and share their information, opinions, values, products and services.

It was mainly in this context that the interest in developing an investigation on the subject in title arose, with the aim of showing the growth of the internet, online marketing, hotel sites and social networks, and to validate or eventually refute the idea that companies and business executives tend to book hotels on business trips on an increasing basis via the internet.

As specific objectives, the authors sought to understand how companies and their staff use search engines, hotel sites and social networks to book hotels on business trips, and what their main motivations are.

Based on the literature reviewed, the following research question was formulated: - What methods of booking hotels on business trips are preferably used by companies and their staff and what are their real motivations?

This investigation intends to analyse whether, in B2B markets, online hotel bookings occur preferentially over the internet and what are the motivations for adopting the various existing booking methods used by Indian companies.

The possible answer in Business-to-Consumer (B2C) markets would probably be more easily validated, while in B2B markets there are some doubts, which is why it is imperative to design and implement this research project. As Siqueira (2011) points out, in B2B markets, online sales are more complex and less driven by emotion, unlike B2C markets. On the other hand, there is more risk associated with the purchase, people involved in the purchase process, which makes trust in the supplier Booking a hotel means booking a hotel essential. The hypothesis that companies book hotels on business trips preferably via the internet, among others, is based on the literature review (see section 2).

To achieve the general objective and the specific objectives, the methodology followed was based on the analysis of the most current literature that generated some hypotheses, and on the development of a quantitative study having resorted to descriptive analysis and application of statistical tests.

Section 2 of this article reviews the literature and Section 3 explains in more detail the methodology followed in the empirical study. In the last section (section 4) all results are analysed and discussed using statistics and specific software.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

As Scott (2012) points out, in all communications, organizations should think about the customer's benefits and not their own. This is, in fact, one of the fundamental principles of marketing management in companies and institutions. And one of the benefits is the fact that they can have information in good time, something that the networks allow, increasing even the content (FAYON, 2006, p. 30) and the satisfaction with the possibility of searching and booking directly (RAMOS et al., 2008). Garai and Saratzaga (2012) even say that information is the soul of tourism and what people buy is not something tangible, it is essentially information provided by agents in the sector such as travel agencies or other intermediaries.

As stated by Biz and Lohmann (2005), the internet network through which marketing techniques are applied, has eliminated part of the barrier of time, cost and distance, making information available and communication faster and more interactive. Thus, travel agencies

may be in a process of disintermediation, as well as hotels due to the growth of the internet, and therefore, these companies in the sector are going through a redefinition of their functions with a focus on providing a superior range of information to the customer and knowledge, since infomediaries assume importance (CÂMARA, 2012), such as hotels.com, so training its human capital, which must be equipped with knowledge not only of services but of technologies and their use, is crucial. Personal contact is the traditional approach method in B2B environments that allows interaction to take place (MICHAEL et al., 2003), and therefore, training staff in communication that facilitates this relationship is the first step in professionalizing communication in the sector. And this field includes sales, after sales, administrative professionals and also administration and senior management.

However, today we are witnessing a redefinition of functions and processes, embodied in innovation of a technological nature that contributes, to a large extent, to the growth of companies in the tourism sector and is one of the factors that makes companies more competitive (PÉREZ, 2008)

The new information and communication technologies provoke radical changes in the operationalization, distribution and structuring of the tourism industry. They are used by professionals to search for information, identify suitable products and services and make reservations. They can reduce costs and response times in companies in the tourism sector.

All of these are positive aspects of the adoption of new technologies and the internet by companies in the tourism and travel sector (BUHALIS, 2004). But, despite these benefits, the author four years later and following the review of articles published over 20 years on internet applications for tourism concluded that virtuality in tourism is still primitive.

Cruz and Gândara (2003) stated that the presence of a hotel on the internet cannot be seen solely as a way of sharing information, but also as a transaction channel. The authors predicted that electronic mail would help to change the way of doing business, mail that allows interacting with various audiences through email marketing campaigns, an example being the dissemination of newsletters. On the other hand, they warned that online sales require market studies, online marketing strategies and commercial support. These suggestions are valid for both B2B and B2C. Newsletters have indeed proven to be a popular marketing medium (DAVID and ROGERS, 2006).

Traditionally produced in print format, their combination of eye-catching photos and short news has proven to be an effective vehicle, strengthening the relationship between destination/place and customer by providing a regular flow of information. Therefore, as mentioned more recently by Cuesta and Alonso (2010), offline marketing is no longer independent, but rather blended marketing, that is, online marketing tools are integrated with traditional ones, complementing them and not interfering with each other causes its existence.

Currently, virtually all companies, whether small or large, have a corporate website. The objective is to share information about the company and products, so being a place where potential customers expand their knowledge; it must be very well organized and structured. The image must be taken care of. There are even companies making specific pages available for their brands (HERRERA and BLANCO, 2010). But as Wertime and Fenwick (2008) refer, marketing professionals need to create dynamic websites that constitute real discussion forums. Bailey (2001) also emphasizes that online marketing does not depend only on how well a company's website is built and designed. It's a combination of many factors that not only work together, but depend on each other, providing more online visibility, better customer experiences, and proper visitor understanding.

Nowadays, when professionals look for information they can access details of information in video, images or brochures (SCOTT, 2012). On the other hand, if companies insert links to Facebook on pages and blogs, for example, they increase the possibilities of sharing photos of their products. With regard to social networks, these will register new advances causing changes in the way of advertising, but changes will also occur in consumers (GRENNAN et al., 2011) for whom online networking platforms make it possible to articulate a list of other users with who share connections (HAN, 2011). Because all this is possible, it is also important to control the presence of a brand on the internet and ensure that everything is clear about it and that it is represented consistently on all pages as well as on your website (SMITH, 2011).

Bodnar and Cohen (2012) point out five reasons for using social networks in B2B: (1) understanding customers; (2) acquire deeper knowledge about the pioneering companies in B2B social networks; (3) generate greater revenues with smaller marketing budgets; (4) establish business relationships; (5) learn from B2B marketers most focused on educating customers with content. However, social networks are not a one-size-fits-all solution, they are

most effective if integrated with the corporate website, email marketing campaigns, online advertising and other online marketing tools.

The internet has grown not only as a communication channel but also as a sales channel and, therefore, in the short term, it will imply greater competition for the hotel industry because there is more information and to accelerate the pace of commercial work as a way of providing answers in real time to the interactivity that the internet imposes. (COSTA, 2008). One of the advantages of electronic commerce for the buyer is the possibility of acquiring products/services at a more competitive price. As Kannan and Kopalle (2001) say, the differences between physical and virtual value chains are what motivate the importance of dynamic pricing on the Internet. Since the price of a product/service can essentially be information, it is malleable on the internet and potentially more dynamic than in the physical world. Offering lower prices to loyal buyers is not problematic because it will satisfy their expectations. Likewise, dynamic pricing through up-selling and quantity discounts is also transparent. Noone et al. (2011) emphasizes that there are a number of key factors that influence pricing decisions, including demand, price sensitivity and competitive price positioning. Hotels end up positioning themselves against the competition also based on price.

Abranja et al (2012) say that not only hotels, but also travel agencies and tour operators had to think about strong adaptations to capture more and new customers. Travel and accommodation are two of the main fields most purchased through ecommerce, so no company can fail to be associated with this type of commerce. Thus, sales portals began to emerge, sites where you can check prices, book hotels, but also travel packages, airline tickets, car rentals and much more, confirming Tesone's thesis (2010) that said that there is a drastic change in marketing due to the evolution of technologies and information systems, which implies that managers are aware of the evolution of electronic commerce and the need for effective management of customer relationships.

Based on the literature review and the results of the survey in which more than 300 respondents participated, an attempt was made to deepen the investigation through a quantitative study.

It was intended to confirm that: (H1) companies book hotels on business trips preferably via the internet, based on Biz and Lohmann (2005) who recognize the internet's enormous potential; (H2) companies book hotels on business trips directly at the hotel by telephone due

to the confidence in the service, since Michael et al (2003) recall direct contact with companies as the most traditional method and which remains today; (H3) companies book hotels on business or work trips directly through the hotel's website because it is faster, since almost all companies have a website (HERRERA and BLANCO, 2010); (H4) Companies book hotels on business trips via the internet because it is faster.

As Ramos et al. (2008) you can search for information and make appointments directly; (H5) companies book hotels on business trips via booking due to price. New intermediaries appear on the internet (CÂMARA, 2012) and price is a differentiating factor (NOONE et al., 2011); (H6) companies book hotels on business trips at the travel agency due to trust in the service. Once again, we recall Michael et al (2003) who emphasize direct contact; (H7) The most effective ways of booking hotels on business trips are the internet and booking, taking into account what Biz and Lohmann (2005) said about the benefits of the internet and Câmara (2012) about new intermediaries.; (H8) Before booking a hotel on a business trip, search engines and hotel websites are the main sources of information, this is because the variety of types of content on these channels stands out (SCOTT, 2012); (H9) Shared news or comments on hotel websites, on search engines and social networks, about service problems at a particular hotel, have a negative impact on the decision to choose, with this hypothesis seeking to validate the influence of the contents of the websites, since the consumer buys information (GARAI and SARATZAGA, 2012), from search engines and social networks, networks so valued by Han (2012), and by Bodnar and Cohen (2012) in the case of B2B markets.

## METHODOLOGY

The literature review was carried out with the aim of locating the theme: internet, online marketing and e-commerce, hotel web pages and social networks. From the texts found, those that are directly related to the theme of this study or that have an additional contribution were selected.

The typology of the investigation in question is, therefore, quantitative and descriptive statistics are used, as a sample of business staff was worked with, and in this way the results obtained in the questionnaire were analysed.

For data collection, a questionnaire with closed questions was applied, giving the interlocutor options for his response with ordinal type scales. The questionnaire was created with the

Lime Survey application generating a link and being applied, between May 20 and 28, 2022, on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn and on the authors' official pages on the Internet. 206 business executives responded to the online questionnaire.

Statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In the following section we present and discuss the results obtained by testing the hypotheses that were formulated, taking into account the proposed objectives, in line with the formulated problem.

## RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the answers allowed contemplating more female staff (60%) than male (40%). With regard to the ages of the participants in the study, 46% are between 31 and 40 years old, 29% between 41 and 50 years old, 16% between 23 and 30 years old, 7% between 51 and 65 years old, and 1 % between 18 and 22 years old and over 65 years old respectively. The predominant level of education among the respondents is a bachelor's degree (47%), followed by a master's degree (21%), postgraduate studies (16%), with compulsory education (10%) and a doctorate (6%).

The Indian companies that employ these staff are mostly from commerce and services (86%). Industry represents only 14% of this study's sample. As for its size, 21% have more than 250 employees, 43% between 1 and 10 employees, 20% between 51 and 250 and 16% between 11 and 50 employees. The proportion of booking hotels (see Table 1), on business trips, preferably via the internet is the highest possible option (43.6%).

|   | No   |     | Yes  |     | ig    |
|---|------|-----|------|-----|-------|
|   | req. |     | req. |     |       |
| Directly at the hotel<br>(phone hidden) | 46   | 1,6 | 8    | 8,4 | ,000* |
| Directly at the hotel<br>(website)      | 46   | 1,6 | 8    | 8,4 | ,000* |
| Internet                                | 15   | 6,4 | 9    | 3,6 | ,524  |
| Booking                                 | 25   | 1,3 | 9    | 8,7 | ,000* |
| Travel Agencies<br>Trips                | 40   | 8,6 | 4    | 1,4 | ,000* |
| Airlines                                | 00   | 8,0 |      | ,0  | ,000* |



|       |    |     |   |    |       |
|-------|----|-----|---|----|-------|
| Other | 94 | 5,1 | 0 | ,9 | ,000* |
|-------|----|-----|---|----|-------|

\*  $p \leq 0,05$ **Table 1** - Preferential booking of hotels

The proportion of companies that preferentially book hotels on business trips via the Internet is lower than the proportion of companies that do not preferentially book hotels on business or work trips via the Internet (43.6% vs 56.4%), although the difference is not statistically significant, Binomial test,  $p = 0.524$ . Regarding the remaining options, the proportion of companies that do not use them is always significantly higher than the proportion of companies that use them.

As can be seen in Table 2, the three main reasons why companies book hotels on business trips directly at the hotel by telephone are speed (18.1%), confidence in service (16.2%) and telephone support (11.8%).

|                              |      | NO  |  | YES  |     |
|------------------------------|------|-----|--|------|-----|
|                              | req. |     |  | req. |     |
| Speed                        | 67   | 1,9 |  | 7    | 8,1 |
| Convenience                  | 84   | 0,2 |  | 0    | ,8  |
| Confidence in Service        | 71   | 3,8 |  | 3    | 6,2 |
| Phone Support                | 80   | 8,2 |  | 4    | 1,8 |
| Price                        | 84   | 0,2 |  | 0    | ,8  |
| Opinion from Other Customers | 99   | 7,5 |  |      | ,5  |
| Others                       | 98   | 7,1 |  |      | ,9  |

**Table 2** – Reasons for making an appointment by telephone

The difference in proportion between marking for reasons of speed or for reasons of confidence (18.1% vs 16.2%) is not statistically significant, McNemar test,  $p = 0.125$ .

The three main reasons why companies book hotels on business or work trips directly on the hotel website are speed and convenience (21.1%) and price (15.2%), as can be seen in Table 3.

|   |      | NO  |  | YES  |     |
|---|------|-----|--|------|-----|
|   | req. |     |  | req. |     |
| Speed   | 61   | 8,9 |  | 3    | 1,1 |
| Convenience   | 61   | 8,9 |  | 3    | 1,1 |
| Price   | 73   | 4,8 |  | 1    | 5,2 |
| Online<br>Customer<br>Testimonials<br>line          | 85   | 0,7 |  | 9    | ,3  |
| Flexibility in<br>customer<br>account<br>Management | 91   | 3,6 |  | 3    | ,4  |
| Others  | 99   | 7,5 |  |      | ,5  |

**Table 3** – Reasons for booking through the website

The difference in proportion between marking for reasons of speed and convenience or for reasons of price (21.1% vs 15.2%) is statistically significant, McNemar test,  $p = 0.000$ .

The following table (Table 4) confirms that the three main reasons why companies book hotels on business or work trips via the Internet are speed (32.4%), convenience (30.4%) and price and the possibility of comparing alternatives (26.0%).

|                    |      | NO  |  | YES  |     |
|--------------------|------|-----|--|------|-----|
|                    | req. |     |  | req. |     |
| Speed              | 38   | 7,6 |  | 6    | 2,4 |
| Convenience        | 42   | 9,6 |  | 2    | 0,4 |
| Price              | 51   | 4,0 |  | 3    | 6,0 |
| Online<br>Customer | 53   | 5,0 |  | 1    | 5,0 |

|  |    |     |   |     |
|--|----|-----|---|-----|
| Testimonials line                          |    |     |   |     |
| Flexibility in customer account Management | 95 | 5,6 |   | ,4  |
| Possibility to compare alternatives        | 51 | 4,0 | 3 | 6,0 |
| Others                                     | 01 | 8,5 |   | ,5  |

**Table 4** - Reasons for booking via the internet

The difference in proportion between booking on the internet for reasons of speed or convenience (32.4% vs 30.4%) is not statistically significant, McNemar test,  $p = 0.125$ .

The difference in proportion between marking for reasons of speed or reasons of price/possibility of comparing alternatives (32.4% vs 26.0%) is statistically significant, McNemar test,  $p = 0.000$ .

Table 5 allows us to verify that the three main reasons why companies book hotels on business or work trips through booking3 are price (31.4%), speed (25.5%) and convenience (25.0 %).

|                                   | NO   |     | YES  |     |
|-----------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|
|                                   | req. |     | req. |     |
| Speed                             | 52   | 4,5 | 2    | 5,5 |
| Convenience                       | 53   | 5,0 | 1    | 5,0 |
| Price                             | 40   | 8,6 | 4    | 1,4 |
| Online Customer Testimonials line | 68   | 2,4 | 6    | 7,6 |
| Flexibility in customer account   | 92   | 4,1 | 2    | ,9  |

|            |    |     |  |    |
|------------|----|-----|--|----|
| Management |    |     |  |    |
| Others     | 99 | 7,5 |  | ,5 |

**Table 5** - Reasons for booking by booking

The difference in proportion between marking for reasons of price or speed (31.4% vs 25.5%) is statistically significant, McNemar test,  $p = 0.000$ .

The three main reasons why companies book hotels on business trips or work at the travel agency are Trust in the service (21.6%), convenience (13.7%) and because they have a contract with the agency (11.8 %), as can be seen by reading the data in Table 6.

|                              |      | NO  |  | YES  |     |
|------------------------------|------|-----|--|------|-----|
|                              | req. |     |  | req. |     |
| Speed                        | 88   | 2,2 |  | 6    | ,8  |
| Convenience                  | 76   | 6,3 |  | 8    | 3,7 |
| Confidence in service        | 60   | 8,4 |  | 4    | 1,6 |
| Price                        | 94   | 5,1 |  | 0    | ,9  |
| Contact with the agency      | 80   | 8,2 |  | 4    | 1,8 |
| Opinion from other customers | 02   | 9,0 |  |      | ,0  |
| Others                       | 99   | 7,5 |  |      | ,5  |

**Table 6** - Reasons for booking at the travel agency

The difference in proportion between appointments due to Confidence in the service or Convenience (21.6% vs 13.7%) is statistically significant, McNemar test,  $p = 0.000$ .

29.7% and 24.7% of customers consider that the most effective ways to book hotels on business or work trips are the internet and booking, respectively (see table 7).

|                                 | req. |     |
|---------------------------------|------|-----|
| Directly at the Hotel (Phone)   | 4    | 8,7 |
| Directly at the Hotel (Website) | 7    | ,3  |
| Internet                        | 4    | 9,7 |

|                 |    |      |
|-----------------|----|------|
| Booking         | 5  | 4,7  |
| Travel Agencies | 9  | 5,9  |
| Other           |    | ,6   |
| Total           | 82 | 00,0 |

**Table 7** - Effective forms of marking

The difference in proportion between considering that the internet is a more effective way to book hotels on business or work trips when compared to booking (29.7% vs 24.7%), is statistically significant, Binomial test,  $p = 0.046$ .

Search engines and hotel websites are the main sources of information (see Table 8) before booking a hotel on a business or work trip, 68.1% and 52.5%.

|                 | No   |     | Yes  |     |
|-----------------|------|-----|------|-----|
|                 | req. |     | req. |     |
|                 | 79   | 7,7 | 5    | 2,3 |
| Airlines        | 56   | 6,5 | 8    | 3,5 |
| Hotel Website   | 7    | 7,5 | 07   | 2 5 |
| Social Networks | 66   | 1,4 | 8    | 8,6 |
| Co Workers      | 71   | 3,8 | 3    | 6,2 |
| Relatives       | 93   | 4,6 | 1    | ,4  |
| Travel Agency   | 57   | 7,0 | 7    | 3,0 |
| Others          | 93   | 4,6 | 1    | ,4  |

**Table 8** - Main sources of information

The difference in proportion between hotel websites as the main sources of information before booking a hotel on a business or work trip and friends as a source of information (52.5% vs 23.5%), is statistically significant, test of McNemar,  $p = 0.000$ .

A very high proportion (60.3%) considers that shared news or comments on hotel websites, on search engines and social networks, about service problems at a particular hotel, have a negative impact on the choice decision. This proportion is significantly higher than the proportion of subjects who consider that shared news or comments on hotel websites, on search engines and social networks, about service problems at a given hotel, have a positive impact on their decision to choose (31.8%), Binomial test,  $p = 0.000$  (see table 9).

|          | Frequency | Percentage | Valid % |
|----------|-----------|------------|---------|
| Positive | 5         | 27,        | 31,8    |
|          | 7         | 9          |         |
| Negative | 108       | 52,        | 60,3    |
|          |           | 9          |         |
| None     | 1         | 6,9        | 7,8     |
|          | 4         |            |         |
| Total    | 179       | 87,        | 100,0   |
| Missing  | 2         | 12,        |         |
|          | 5         | 3          |         |
| Total    | 204       | 100,0      |         |

**Table 9** – Impact of news on hotel websites

A very high proportion (60.3%) considers that shared news or comments on hotel websites, on search engines and social networks, about service problems at a particular hotel, have a negative impact on the choice decision. This proportion is significantly higher than the proportion of subjects who consider that shared news or comments on hotel websites, on search engines and social networks, about service problems at a given hotel, have a positive impact on their decision to choose (31.8%), Binomial test,  $p = 0.000$  (see table 9).

To test the formulated hypotheses, a significance level ( $\alpha$ )  $\alpha = 0.05$  was used as a reference to accept or reject the null hypothesis. As we are comparing the difference of two paired proportions, the McNemar test was used. The difference of two independent proportions was analyzed using the Binomial test.

## CONCLUSION

In this last section, the results of all research hypotheses are presented, the limitations of the study are described and contributions to science, companies, their managers and suggestions for future research are pointed out. On the other hand, the literature review and the fieldwork carried out allow us to draw some conclusions about the methods of booking hotels on business trips, thus achieving the objective of this study, which consisted of understanding the ways in which companies and respective staff use the internet to make their hotel bookings and what their true motivations are for using other traditional booking methods.

Table 10 presents the results of the research hypotheses defined following the literature review as a theoretical contribution and the results of an online survey as well as statistical indicators.

| H's | Content   | Result |
|-----|---|--------|
| H1  | Companies book hotels on business trips preferably via the internet   | IN     |
| H2  | Companies book hotels on business trips directly at the hotel by phone for confidence in service  | IN     |
| H3  | Companies book hotels on business trips directly through the hotel website as it is faster  | IN     |
| H4  | Companies book hotels on business trips over the internet because it is faster  | IN     |
| H5  | Companies book hotels on business trips via booking due to price  | IN     |
| H6  | Companies book hotels on business trips at the travel agency due to trust in service  | IN     |
| H7  | The most effective ways to book hotels on business trips are the internet and booking   | IN     |
| H8  | Before booking a hotel on a business trip, search engines and hotel websites are the main sources of information.   | IN     |
| H9  | News shared or comments on hotel websites, search engines and social networks about service problems particular hotel, has a negative impact on the choice decision | IN     |

Table 10 : Hypothesis

It appears that although companies use the internet, which, as Biz and Lohmann (2005) say, has enormous potential, it is not clear that booking hotels on business trips is predominantly done online. Therefore, H1 is neither true nor false. On the other hand, H2 is true because, as Michael et al (2003) refer, direct contact with companies is the most common, so booking hotels on business trips directly at the hotel by telephone is validated. Companies that book via the hotel website (H3) and the internet in general (H4) do so because it is faster. These two hypotheses were also confirmed by the investigation. Still with regard to booking hotels on business trips, the reason for resorting to booking is actually the price, as postulated in H5, so that differentiation by price, as highlighted by Noone et al (2011) is even a reality of the new intermediaries.

Despite the use of the internet, hotel websites and new online intermediaries, companies also value booking business trips at their travel agency due to the trust they have with them, so H6 is also true, and also It is true, as mentioned in H7, the most effective ways of booking hotels on business trips are the internet and booking. Câmara (2012) had already considered that intermediaries have benefits for companies. Not only hotel websites but also search engines are the main source of information as defined in H8, so this hypothesis is also true. Scott (2012) had already advocated that the variety of online content is decisive in the purchase process. This is why H9 is also validated by the present investigation, since companies consider that shared news or comments on hotel websites, on search engines and social networks, about service problems at a given hotel, have an impact negative in the choice decision. Garai and Saratzaga (2012) even say that the online consumer buys information from search engines and social networks, networks valued in general by Han (2012) and by Cohen (2012) in the specific case of B2B markets.

This study therefore offers some implications for companies and their managers, as it is clear that the internet dimension is significant despite not being the only one in relation to current and potential hotel customers. This contribution makes the research carried out relevant to an area of current knowledge, not only for its objectivity, but also for its specificity.

## **RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

As a limiting factor of the investigation, it can be highlighted the fact that the companies were not identified in geographic terms and that it was not possible to obtain a clear result on the first hypothesis (companies book hotels on business trips preferably via the internet) because it was neither validated nor refuted.



A suggestion for future studies may be to investigate the same topic in more detail, since in B2B markets reality differs from what happens in the B2C market. It might even be worth doing, for example, a comparative study between booking hotels online in B2B and B2C. However, we believe that this article, through which the results of the present study are shared with the scientific and business community, is in itself an asset because it not only diagnoses the current situation but generates relevant outputs so that companies can eventually redefine its communication and marketing strategy, although it is essential to continue empirical studies on the subject, as well as reviewing the literature.

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