

# Impact of Social Media on Young Consumers' Hotel Decision-making Behavior

Caihong Zhang\*<sup>1a</sup>; Huabing Yao<sup>1b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Economics and Management*

*Pu'er University*

*Pu'er, Yunnan, China*

<sup>a</sup> [googgog321@163.com](mailto:googgog321@163.com)

<sup>b</sup> [345682502@qq.com](mailto:345682502@qq.com)

## Abstract

Social media emerged quickly with the rapid development of computer and Internet technology as a new type of communication medium. With the rise of social media, it has also become a new carrier of hotel information. Its emergence not only provides convenient information for hotel consumers but also affects the decision-making behavior of hotel consumers, especially the young ones. In this context, this study uses interview and questionnaire survey methods to carry out in-depth research on the factors influencing the purchase decision of young hotel consumers. Firstly, this paper analyzed the young hotel consumers' motivation and behavior of social media through interviews. Based on the interview results, the research adopted a questionnaire survey method for empirical research and found the young hotel consumers' purchase decision is mainly affected by five factors, such as the convenience of social media services, the loyalty of social media use, low-cost purchasing motivation, social interpersonal relationship and the perception of hotel image. On this basis, the paper puts forward corresponding countermeasures and suggestions.

**Keywords:** *Social media, Consumption decisions, Purchase decision, Hotel consumption behavior*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the development of computer and Internet technology, new forms of social media communication have emerged rapidly. And they are constantly seeking change and innovation. Nowadays, the powerful penetration of social media has affected people's cognition, life, travel, and other aspects. The gradual penetration of social media has also brought about a significant impact on hotel consumers' access to information, consumption patterns, and the marketing model of hotel enterprises. At present, the connection between social media and the hotel industry is mainly reflected in the entry of the OTA platform into the hotel industry, which provides consumers with decision-making convenience, optimizes their stay experience, and improves consumers' loyalty to a certain extent, so the hotel can also benefit from it [1].

The Internet is an indispensable part of young people's lives in the current society. According to the

data released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in June 2021, the proportion of China's Internet users aged 20 to 39 Chinese 20-39-year-old netizens in the overall netizens is 37.3% of the country's total Internet users [2]. It can be said that young people are the main users of the Internet, and they actively recognize the modern consumption concepts of information product consumption such as online consumption and electronic consumption. The influence of social media on teenagers' hotel consumption behavior is also significant.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media services are Web 2.0 Internet-based applications. The user-generated content is its lifeblood and it facilitates the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals and/or groups, like blogs, SNS communities, WeChat, QQ, and other platforms [3]. The application of social media in the hotel industry not only provides hotel

operators with a broad sales channel but also allows hotel consumers to participate in the hotel marketing process. For example, Varkaris and Neuhofer pointed out social media influences the way consumers search, evaluate and select a hotel [4]. More and more travelers started to search for travel information through social media [5] and consult user-generated content (UGC) on social media to plan and make decisions on their hotel stay [6]. It can be seen that social media is constantly changing people's lifestyles and buying habits, and it is very likely to affect consumers' purchasing decisions. However, the reasons why social media has an impact on consumers' hotel decision-making is still unclear, especially for the young ones.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Considering that the life expectancy of the modern population has been relatively extended, this paper mainly refers to Chinese researchers' practice and defines the youth as the people between 18 and 35 years old [7]. The research adopts the mixed method of in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys.

The interviews mainly focused on the use of social media by young hotel consumers, the categories of social media commonly used, and the factors influencing the purchase decision of young hotel consumers by social media. During the interview, the authors strictly followed academic ethics and confirmed the interviewee was willing to participate before the interview. The interview content was recorded and transcribed in time. A total of 13 people were interviewed, including students, fitness coaches, teachers, postpartum therapists, and other people from different industries.

The questionnaire is mainly composed of four parts: social media categories that affect the youth groups' hotel consumption, factors that influence youth's hotel consumption decisions through social media, and demographic characteristics. The questionnaire is distributed and collected mainly through [www.wenjuan.com](http://www.wenjuan.com). A total of 210 questionnaires were acquired. Among them, 14 questionnaires (9 of which were over 35 years old and 5 of which were 16 to 20 years old) were excluded, which were considered invalid due to the age limitation of the respondents. Finally, 196 valid questionnaires were collected.

The demographic characteristics of the questionnaire are shown in Table 1:

TABLE 1. PROFILE OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Demographic variables		Freq.	%
Gender	Male	98	50.0
	Female	98	50.0
	18—24	137	69.9
	25—30	44	22.45

	31—35	15	7.65
Education	Senior high school and below	20	10.2
	Undergraduate	161	83.68
	Master	10	5.1
	Doctoral	2	1.02
Monthly income (RMB)	2000	33	16.84
	2001-5000	63	32.14
	5001-8000	42	21.43
	8001-10000	33	16.84
	10000	25	12.76

The study investigated and analyzed the status quo of social media use in youth hotel consumption decision-making. In the survey of commonly used social media, the results show that the most commonly used social media for young consumers to obtain hotel information is highly concentrated, mainly on the two platforms Meituan and Ctrip(see Fig. 1), accounting for 60.25%. It can be said that OTA has become the main tool to stimulate young hotel consumers to obtain hotel information, book hotels, and generate consumption motivation and behavior.

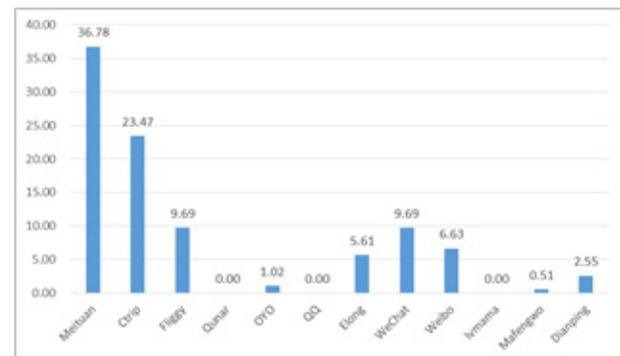


Figure. 1 Example of a figure caption.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Social media enhances the guest experience. Based on interviews and questionnaires, this paper mainly concludes five key factors that influence the purchasing decisions of young hotel consumers in the era of social media and provides some reference for the hotel marketing strategies.

#### 4.1 Convenient service functions

According to the interview results, we know some social media have gained a large number of users since entering people's lives and have exerted a profound influence on the daily lives of young hotel consumers. During the interview, interviewees answered the question "Why do you always use such social media to check-in?" focusing on the convenience of social media. For example, Ms. Song No.1 said, "It is mainly because of

convenience. In general, it has relatively complete functions. For example, when I go to a strange place, I can get various help of such social media to order hotels, take-out food, and movie tickets. It is very convenient. Mr. Zhang No. 10, also said that he used such social media mainly because he was used to it, and it was relatively convenient. After checking in to the hotel, he could also use such social media to book take-out food, which was convenient and fast. According to the questionnaires survey data, 42 people choose this type of social media to book hotels mainly because they think that a certain social media provides a relatively complete range of services. This result further indicates that it is because the function of social media can meet the needs of people in various aspects of daily life, it has brought convenience to people's lives and become indispensable. Therefore, the convenience and diversity of social media services is a factor influencing the purchasing decisions of young hotel consumers.

#### ***4.2 Customer brand loyalty***

Customer loyalty is another key factor that determines consumers' repeat purchase behavior. Loyal customers can not only bring long-term financial value but also have a positive impact on the hotel's future reputation. During the interview, respondents' answers to the question of "Years of use and influence of social media" mainly focused on having used it for a long time. So they did not want to know other social media and felt that it would be troublesome to change social media. For example, Mr. Li No. 4 said: I have used this type of social media for many years, and gradually discovered that it is my first choice when I need it, so I keep using it. The researcher further asked, there are many such social media platforms, do you consider using other social media? The respondent's answer is still "not consider now"; Mr. Li No. 11 also mentioned: I have used this type of social media for 7-8 years. It brings me convenience when I need to book and has become a part of my life. When I go out, this type of social media is a necessary tool for me to obtain hotel information. Combined with the results of questionnaire survey data, 37.76% of people indicate that they do not want to know about other products after using a certain social media for a long time. Social media loyalty is also an influencing factor that affects the purchasing decisions of young hotel consumers.

#### ***4.3 Cheap consumption motivation***

Young hotel consumers are particularly sensitive to price. During the interview, the respondents were asked "What is the preferred factor for hotel purchases using through social media?" The answer to this question mainly focused on cheap consumption. For example, Mr. Zhang No. 3 said: In my work, I mainly use Ctrip

Business Travel, because the platform has a contract with my company, and the payment can be directly deducted from the company's account without my advance payment. Therefore, I can save an express fee for reimbursement later. Ms. Pu No. 5 said: I use this type of social media to book hotels just because I found booking hotels through this type of social media is cost-effective. Mr. Li No. 11 said: When it comes to travel, being able to spend a small amount of money to stay in a better hotel is a good deal.

Based on the conclusion of the interview, the authors also asked a similar question in the questionnaire: "There are many similar social media platforms. If other similar apps have more preferential policies, would you consider giving up the current commonly used hotel booking platform?" Of the 196 respondents, 133 answered "yes", accounting for 67.86%. Therefore, the low-cost consumption motivation is an important factor influencing young hotel consumers' hotel purchasing behavior through social media.

#### ***4.4 Interpersonal trust and relationship***

An individual interpersonal relationship is an important part of social relationships, which are also important for hotel marketing and the promotion of social media platforms. During the interview, respondents' answers to the question "when making a hotel purchase decision, whether the check-in experience shared by friends or the hotels recommended by friends will affect your decision-making?" indicated recommendation of customers' friends can help them to avoid unknown risks, and also allow them to make purchase decisions quickly. For example, Ms. Huang No. 2 said: I prefer to book the hotel where my friends have stayed because I trust my friends more than online third-party platforms. Ms. Wang No. 9 said: the check-in experience shared by my friends is a reference for me. Mr. Liu No. 12 also said: friend's recommendation has an impact on my hotel purchase decision because I believe in friends.

The authors also asked the same question in the questionnaire: "When you book a hotel through social media, will your relatives/friends/colleagues' shared check-in experience through moments and space become some reference information for you?", 76.02% of respondents chose "yes". Therefore, interpersonal relationship, especially trust among surrounding people, is a factor that cannot be ignored to analyze the hotel purchasing behavior of young hotel consumers through social media.

#### ***4.5 Hotel image perception***

Consumers' perception of the hotel's image is an important factor in the success of a hotel's purchase

decision. At the same time, it is significant for the hotel to formulate its marketing strategy. During the interview, respondents to "Which way do you prefer to display hotel room types? On pictures or videos? Why?" This type of question mainly focused on the desire to show the hotel room through video, because the video type is comprehensive and not easy to be distorted when the hotel room is displayed. For example, Ms. Song No. 1 said: showing the room with pictures is easy to be distorted. Ms. Huang No. 2 also pointed out: showing the room by pictures is just like the pictures on the food packaging bag, it is for reference only because it is impossible to fully understand the real hotels. Ms. Cai No. 13 said: Because the picture display may be processed by the merchant. So the room condition presented is not comprehensive.

Based on such results, the authors asked two similar questions in the questionnaire: 1. Which type do you prefer to show the hotel room type, by pictures and videos? 2. Why do you prefer to choose such a display method? Among the whole respondents, 126 of 196 respondents prefer to display the hotel room through video, accounting for 64.29%. When asked about the reasons for choosing the video display, 48.98% of the people believed that this kind of display method is well-presented, comprehensive, and not easy to be distorted. Therefore, the perception of hotel image is an influencing factor that affects young hotel consumers' purchase behavior through social media.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

The rapid development of the Internet today has prompted social media to play an irreplaceable role in hotel marketing. The study found five main factors that affect young hotel consumers' purchasing decisions: convenience of service functions, customer brand loyalty, and motivation of seeking low-cost consumption, interpersonal trust, and perception of hotel image.

Based on the above conclusions, the following countermeasures are put forward: When facing numerous hotel social media sales platforms, hotel operators should understand the current business scope and functions of the platform before signing cooperation contracts; pay attention to the impact of interpersonal relationships on

consumers, and encourage consumers to use instant messaging social media platforms to share their experience to increase the visibility of the hotel and promote the purchase of consumers around them; when hotel information is provided on the hotel's social media sales platform, the room type display method in the form of pictures should be iterated into a video display, which can not only increase the trust of hotel consumers but also increase the user stickiness of the social platform.

## REFERENCES

- [1]C. Raab, O. Berezan, N. Christodoulidou, L. Jiang and S. Shoemaker, "Creating strategic relationships with online travel agents to drive hotel room revenue: An OTA perspective", *J Hosp Tour Technol*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 125-140, 2018.
- [2]CNNIC., "The 48th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China", available at: [http://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwzxbg/hlwtjbg/202109/t20210915\\_71543.htm](http://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwzxbg/hlwtjbg/202109/t20210915_71543.htm) (accessed 26 September 2021).
- [3]JA. Obar, SS. Wildman. "Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the special issue", *Telecommun Policy*, Vol. 39 No. 9, pp. 745-750, 2015.
- [4]E. Varkaris, B. Neuhofer. "The influence of social media on the consumers' hotel decision journey". *J Hosp Tour Technol*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 101-118, 2017.
- [5]N. Chung and C. Koo, "The use of social media in travel information search", *Telemat Inform*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 215-229, 2015.
- [6]V.S.K. Browning and B.A. Sparks, "The influence of online reviews on consumers' attributions of service quality and control for service standards in hotels", *J Travel Tour Mark*, Vol. 30 No. 1/2, pp. 23-40, 2013.
- [7]Y. Li. Contemporary Interpretation of the Concept of Youth [J]. *Journal of Beijing Administration Institute*, Vol.5, pp.73-77, 2007.