

Segmentation and Explanation of Smartphone Use for Travel Planning based on Socio-Demographic and Behavioral Variables

Abstract

Purpose – Due to the advances in smartphones, many companies in the tourism industry have launched mobile applications intended to reach their target audience. Design of these smartphone strategies requires identification of the profiles of individuals that use tourism services. The purpose of this paper is to explore the predictors of smartphone use for travel planning.

Design/methodology/approach – To achieve this goal, the authors carried out a hierarchical segmentation analysis selecting a group of different socio-demographic (gender, age, education level, marital status, occupation, and income) and behavioral (length of smartphone use and number of yearly leisure trips) variables to explain the use of these devices to search and book tourism products. The study is based on an online survey of 618 Spanish travelers.

Findings – Smartphone use for tourism can be primarily explained according to the users' degree of daily experience of mobile phone internet use. That is, a spillover effect can be identified from the context of everyday mobile phone use to travel planning. Age, gender and the number of yearly vacations can also be distinguished, to a certain degree, through the use of smartphones. Specifically, there is an inverted U-shape quadratic relationship between the variable of age and the behavior of a potential tourist.

Originality/value – The authors conducted a segmentation study selecting a series of different sociodemographic and behavioral variables with the greatest discriminant power to explain the use of these mobile devices for travel planning. The paper concludes with compelling implications for management.

Keywords

Tourism, Segmentation, Smartphone, Travel planning