Comparing Use of the Internet for Trip Planning Between Leisure and Business Travelers

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Abstract

A number of studies on travelers' use of the Internet have been conducted with an emphasis on leisure tourism. This study is conducted to provide a comparative view on tourists' use of the Internet for travel planning by the purpose of travel. Key changes of travelers' use of the Internet over the past six years are reported to better understand how tourists adapt to the advancement of information technology by the purpose of trip. This article discusses several important implications of these trends for industry practices.

Keywords: Internet, trip planning, purpose of trip, trend, user profiling.

1. Introduction

The expansive growth of the Internet and an increasing adoption of smart phones have a profound impact on the society. With technology continuing to advance, the Internet adoption rate has reached the saturation level among travelers. The proliferation of the Internet has reconfigured not only the structure of the system for travel and tourism businesses but also traveler needs and wants (Inkpen, 1998; Xiang et al., 2014). First, information and communication technology (ICT) continues to change, which, in turn, influences the way travelers access to and use travel-related information. For instance, the Internet is comprised of a great deal amount of information. Therefore, search engines have become a starting point of travel information search using the Internet.

Second, the incredible growth of social media has changed the dynamics of online communications. From posting travel reviews to interacting with travel brands online and sharing travel experiences, travelers are not simply participating, but are actively shaping the travel search. Third, an increasing growth of mobile technologies creates locales for information search whereby on-the-go travelers' needs become prominent in guiding travel decisions (Wang et al., 2012). Mobile technologies directly and indirectly influence travelers' information search strategy (e.g., the ease of spontaneous travel) as well as travelers' location-based activities (e.g., the elimination of activities scheduled in advance, the addition of activities that would not have occurred otherwise). As such, information and communication technology have altered travelers' pre-trip planning behavior, en-route choices, and post-trip evaluation and experience sharing. Therefore, understanding how travelers have adapted to the technology advancement is essential for tourism marketers to develop effective communication strategies.

In spite of the prominent influence of information and communication technology (ICT) over the entire domain of travel and tourism, business travel initially lagged leisure travel in technology adoption. In spite of long debates, the two major differences between leisure and business travel are: 1) the tourist pays for the trip expenses in leisure travel but an employer or association pays for business trips, and 2) the tourist decides on the destination for leisure travel but destinations are determined by an employer or association for business travel (Etherington & Van, 1984; Good et al., 1985; Pender, 2005; Ritchie et al., 1980). Research indicates that the Internet is actively used in leisure tourism because leisure travelers have full control over travel-related product purchase. On the contrary, as business travelers' purchase decisions are primarily influenced by the corporate travel policies and their ability to use time efficiently within business travel schedule, it is argued that the Internet is less actively used by business travelers.

With technology continuing to advance for electronic commerce, more and more corporations are, however, incorporating ICT into their travel policies (Cheung & Lam, 2009). Additionally, business travelers now more than ever require flexibility, adjusting their plans during the trip and adding a leisure trip to their corporate trip. Although industry professionals and tourism scholars have acknowledged that the business travelers and the leisure travelers are different, most tourism marketing research focuses on leisure travelers (Drea & Hanna, 2000). Business travel is an under-researched area and a better understanding of what accounts for satisfaction for the business traveler is needed. Therefore, it is argued that an essential question is how different types of travelers (leisure vs. business) have changed their use of the Internet for travel planning. Xiang and his colleagues (2014) explore key trends in travelers' use of the Internet but this study view travelers as a whole by neglecting unique characteristics of tourists in terms of the purpose of trip, travel experience, and the purchase decision-making process. Therefore, this study aims to investigate key aspects of the use of the Internet for trip planning among American travelers by the purpose of travel over the past six years (2007-2012). This period represents a particular time during which the use of the Internet by the American population stabilized and the important technological developments emerged and grew to dominate the communication landscape (Gretzel, 2010; Wang & Xiang, 2012, Xiang et al., 2014).

This article is organized into the following sections. First, a brief overview of the important technological developments on the Internet is presented. This is followed by online travel planning by the purpose of trip. The research methods and main findings are then discussed. Finally, key trends in travelers' use of the Internet are discussed along with their implications.

2. Evolution Of The Internet And Tourism

Since its commercialization in 1995, the Internet has profound and far-reaching impacts on our social and economic life (Xiang et al., 2014). In particular, the economic power of the Internet has grown and further reconfigured the business paradigm and the structure of tourism system. Thus, the tourism industry has adapted itself to a changing environment and it has adopted various business models in order to continue growing.

The Internet has evolved from Web 1.0 that supports the one-way information dissemination to Web 2.0 that supports rich interactivity and content coproduction. Web 1.0 began as an information place for businesses to broadcast their information to consumers. For instance, businesses could provide catalogs or brochures to present their productions using the web and people could read them and contacted with the businesses. The catalogs and the brochures were similarly advertisements in newspapers and magazines and most owners of ecommerce websites employed shopping cart applications in different shapes and forms (Norasak, 2008). Web 2.0 is, however, known as participatory web where users are no longer the receiver of information, but they can become the author or the participant when they surf the Internet. With Web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, really simple syndication (RSS), wikis, the Internet has changed from a publishing-browsing platform to a participation-interaction platform (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008).

Several other remarkable technological innovations have emerged those additional changes in information search and communication (Xiang et al., 2014). For instance, the tremendous amount of information led to the growth of search engines. The role of search engine in the early 1990s was limited to text-based search. Since 2000, the search engine market has risen and commercial search engines such as Google and Yahoo! have changed the manner of information search and retrieval by utilizing "Search by Image," "Google Voice Search," and "Semantic Search" – a data searching technique in which search query aims to not only find keywords, but to determine the intent and contextual meaning of the words.

The development of the Internet enabled new business models and fostered changes in social life. For instance, Amazon.com has grown to become the top online retailer, generating more than $60 billion in revenue in 2012. The Internet is now populated by a growing number of online retail stores, and it is expected that the number of global online shoppers will grow to 50% in 2018 (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2015). The strong and rapid growth of online retailing has changed the manner in which we shop, and compare product details and prices. Social networks and online communities that support sharing of online product reviews, photos, and videos have also changed the manner in which Internet users consume online information. Facebook (social network) and YouTube (video sharing) are the second and third highest in website traffic followed by Google (Actionable Analytics for the Web, 2015).

The travel and hospitality sector has actively adopted the Internet as a new distribution channel and advertising medium. The adoption of the Internet provided the basis for the development of new reservation systems such as Computer Reservation Systems (CRSs) and Global Distribution Systems (GDSs), which, consequently lowered the entry barriers to new businesses (Werthner & Klein, 1999). As a result, in the late 1990s, a series of online travel agencies such as Travelocity.com, Experia.com emerged to provide direct access to the travel products. These new intermediaries provided new benefits for both consumers and suppliers because they reduced transaction costs, increased volume discounts for consumers, and eliminated the coordination mechanisms form other sales channels (Xiang et al., 2014). In addition, Web 2.0 enables Internet users to compare prices more conveniently with fare aggregators and Meta search engines (Kracht & Wang, 2009). More recently, a range of new online technological applications has emerged as social media to facilitate the distribution and accessibility of tourism information (Pan et al., 2007; Pudliner, 2007).For example, virtual travel communities such as travel blogs and review websites have become an efficient way of obtaining informal information, such as the travel experiences and recommendations of travelers.

3. Travel Planning On The Internet By Type Of Purpose

Trip planning plays a critical role in determining overall travel experience in that a traveler needs to obtain a great deal of information in order to develop a travel plan (Xiang et al., 2014). In addition, trip planning helps the traveler make decisions and build expectations for the upcoming trip (Gretzel et al., 2006; March & Woodside, 2005; Xiang et al., 2014). With the fast pace of technological advancements and their significant effects on tourism, the Internet is primarily used in the early planning stages of the trip (Flognfeldt & Nordgreen, 1999). Google and Ipsos Media CT (2012) investigated how travelers behave online when planning their trip, whether it is for leisure or business. This study found that regardless of the travel purpose, more than half of travelers start the travel booking and shopping process with search on the web, especially with the need for itineraries that may include more than one destination. More importantly, travelers tend to be undecided about on-site travel activity when they begin their online information search process, indicating that more than half of tourists barnstorm or start thinking about a trip online. Research indicates that the use of the Internet and other information sources varies among tourists on the trip purposes of leisure, business, and personal. Leisure travelers tend to start information search with search engines, whereas business travelers go directly to the hotel or airline websites. Online travel agencies (OTAs) are commonly ranked 4th in both leisure and business traveler groups (Mason, 2002). Therefore, it has been argued that tourism marketers must have a solid content strategy, combined with an efficient search marketing strategy when targeting leisure travelers, whereas the importance of having a strong brand is demonstrated through the results on business travelers.

Google and Ipsos Media CT (2012) examine the use of mobile device and computers between leisure and business travelers, and found a long-term growth trend in tourists' use of mobile device (38% of leisure travelers in 2012 vs. 8% in 2009; 57% of business travelers in 2012 vs. 25% in 2009). According to the most recent study conducted by Fadnis (2015), approximately 60% of business travelers own three mobile devices and nearly 88% of them use mobile devices while traveling for business. The top three travel-related activities that business travelers complete with their mobile phone are focused on location: mapping or finding directions, researching local activities, and researching destination information (Fadnis, 2015). It is presumable that business travelers do much of their planning through their managed travel programs, but once they are on the road they do a considerable amount of research on their mobile devices in destination. Similar results are found in the Sabre Travel Network's Biannual Mobile Survey of Business Travelers (2011). The explosion of mobile travel services over the past years has single-handedly "consumerized" business travel. This study found that business travelers look for mobile services that are not only location-based but contextually-aware such as airport navigational tools with the ability to find in-airport businesses but also have deals and offers pushed to their smart phones.

4. Methods

An Internet-based survey was conducted each January from 2007 to 2012 using a portion of an online panel of 300,000 American consumers maintained by Survey Sampling International. The numbers of respondents from each survey ranged from 2,436 (in 2007) to 1,041 (in 2012) and were *post hoc* weighted according to age, race, and gender in order to represent the American traveler population. The differences in a sample size reflect changes in the focus of the annual study on national-regional trends to national-only trends. The first section asked respondents several questions regarding the use of technology in their daily life.

Then, a number of questions followed to ask about a variety of aspects related to their travel during the prior year including the purpose of the trip (leisure, business, both), number of trips, and information sources used for trip planning these trips. If the respondent had used the Internet for trip planning in the past twelve months, a number of questions followed to ask about the extent to which Internet was used, the trip planning experiences including types of websites used, information search activities, online reservation/payment activities, etc. The travelers were then asked questions related to the outcomes of using the Internet for travel planning including the types of products purchased, channels used to make reservations, and the extent to which reservations/payments were made using the Internet. Finally, a set of questions were used to collect demographic information including gender, race, ages of all members of the household, marital status, education level, and total household income.

This study adopted the modified scheme of tourist classification used in mainstream tourism marketing literature to include three tourist groups into the analysis: Leisure Travel Only (those who took leisure trips during the last 12 months), Business Travel Only (those who took business trips during the last 12 months) and Hybrid Traveler (those who took both leisure and business trips during the past 12 months).It is presumable that Hybrid travelers have mixed characteristics of leisure and business travelers and thus, their travel planning behavior and shopping experience on the web is not necessarily resulted from the purpose of trip. Arguably, it is resulted from some personal variables such as travel experiences. Thus, this research classified respondents into three traveler groups of Leisure Only, Business Only and Hybrid travelers to accurately understand the Internet usage patterns for trip planning between leisure and business travelers.

Online surveys conducted from the years of 2007 to 2012 generated in total of9,758 usable responses, where7,087responses (72.6%) were turned as Leisure Only traveler,824responses (8.4%) as Business Only travelers, and 1,847responses(18.9%) as Hybrid travelers. The collected sample slightly biased toward leisure travelers represents the composition of leisure and business traveler population. While corporate travel expenditures contribute more than 50% of the travel industry revenues, business travelers do not constitute the majority in raw numbers (Stephenson & Bender, 1996). According to the UNWTO’s (2011) statistics on the leisure and business traveler population, travel for holidays, recreation and other forms of leisure accounts for over half of all tourist arrivals (54%), whereas only about 12% of tourist arrivals are done for the business and professional purposes, and the remaining 34% travelled for other reasons, such as visiting friends and relatives, religious reasons and pilgrimages, or health treatments. A series of descriptive analysis (e.g., chi-square analysis) and one-way ANOVA were conducted to compare tourists by the purpose of travel from 2007 to 2012 in terms of perceptions and behavioral characteristics related to the use of the Internet for travel planning.

5. Results

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who used information sources including the Internet and a variety of offline sources for trip planning. As expected, the Internet was consistently predominant among the information sources during the course of the last six years across all traveler groups. As shown in Table 1, Leisure Only and Hybrid travelers had actively used the Internet, indicating that the Internet adoption of those travelers had reached a level of saturation. Interestingly, it was, however, found that Business Only travelers’ use of the Internet had declined gradually over time. Nearly 85% of Business only travelers used the Internet for travel planning in 2007 but only about 64% reported to use the Internet in 2012, suggesting that business travelers began to use a variety of information sources which were not previously used vigorously, such as movies, magazines/newspapers, travel brochures, travel guidebooks, and TV. Those inactively used information sources appear to contribute to a rapid drop in the use of automotive clubs (an 8.3% decrease), and travel agents (a 6.0% decrease), and travel suppliers such as airlines, hotels, and rental car agencies (a 5.9% decrease).As can be seen, changes in the percentage of the respondents claiming to use those previously inactive information sources are dramatic in the Business Only and Hybrid traveler groups, while a change in those percentages remains fairly stable in Leisure Only travelers during the period from 2007 to 2012.Leisure Only travelers’ use of information sources are fairly stable, indicating that a dramatic increase or decrease in the use of travel information sources is not detected between 2007 and 2012 with an exception of the use of automotive clubs. Automotive clubs are no longer frequently used by Leisure Only travelers in the last six years: nearly 25% of Leisure only travelers searched for travel information through automotive clubs in 2007, while the percentage dropped to nearly 16% in 2012. It is very important to note that automotive clubs lose its reputation as a major information sources during 2007-2012 across all the travelers groups. It is the only information source that displays a significant loss in the travelers’ use as a trip planning tool among all the traveler groups.

In spite of fairly stable patterns in the heavy use of predominant travel information sources (i.e., Internet, previous experience, word of mouth) during 2007-2012, a couple of noticeable changes are observedamong Hybrid travelers in the active use of previously inactive information sources such as TV (a 17.0% increase), magazines/newspapers (a 10.2% increase), movies (a 10.4% increase), radio (a 7.0% increase), and travel documentary (a 6.7% increase) and travel brochures (a 6.1% increase).

Table 1: Information Sources Used for Trip Planning: Internet vs. Other Sources (%)

Information Source	2007			2008			2009			2010			2011			2012			Change (2012-2007)		
	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H
Internet	84.6	84.7	88.6	84.9	71.0	90.1	84.4	83.5	89.0	86.3	68.9	90.4	90.0	63.0	85.4	86.1	64.3	87.2	1.5	-20.4	-1.4
Previous experience	53.8	46.0	56.8	53.7	37.0	60.2	52.7	38.8	62.3	55.1	31.1	47.8	56.8	26.1	54.9	52.8	23.8	57.6	-1.0	-22.2	0.8
Word of mouth	43.3	30.6	43.6	46.2	23.0	50.8	41.6	18.8	45.9	42.3	21.3	39.9	43.5	15.2	47.8	41.4	16.7	45.3	-1.9	-13.9	1.7
Automotive clubs	24.6	20.2	26.9	18.9	9.0	21.1	20.9	15.3	19.8	16.8	11.5	23.2	18.7	15.2	24.9	16.5	11.9	25.1	-8.1	-8.3	-1.8
Travel agents	12.6	25.0	19.3	10.6	17.0	19.8	9.6	14.1	15.4	10.5	23.0	21.0	13.8	19.6	30.0	10.3	19.0	27.2	-2.3	-6.0	7.9
Travel suppliers	22.0	22.6	28.3	21.2	24.0	31.6	19.2	10.6	32.1	27.9	24.6	38.2	30.8	28.3	37.2	26.6	16.7	39.9	4.6	-5.9	11.6
Travel guide books	20.8	15.3	28.8	17.7	10.0	24.3	19.2	10.6	24.5	17.5	16.4	29.4	19.6	17.4	34.8	16.1	19.0	23.9	-4.7	3.7	-4.9
Travel brochures	20.1	15.3	24.8	19.2	7.0	26.2	18.2	8.2	19.5	18.3	23.0	23.2	20.2	10.9	33.2	16.4	23.8	30.9	-3.7	8.5	6.1
Magazines/newspapers	18.0	12.1	22.3	15.4	12.0	24.6	15.6	7.1	20.4	19.1	14.8	26.8	18.0	17.4	34.0	18.8	23.8	32.5	0.8	11.7	10.2
TV	10.5	8.9	13.5	11.0	8.0	15.5	10.1	8.2	13.5	12.9	21.3	24.1	13.4	17.4	28.9	14.2	11.9	30.5	3.7	3.0	17.0
Travel documentaries	10.2	7.3	15.5	9.5	9.0	16.6	9.3	3.5	12.6	8.3	8.2	16.2	10.1	10.9	22.1	10.4	9.5	22.2	0.1	2.2	6.7
Movies	3.1	0.8	4.4	2.9	4.0	7.2	2.2	4.7	3.8	3.3	9.8	7.5	3.8	4.3	12.3	5.2	16.7	14.8	2.1	15.9	10.4
Radio	3.0	2.4	4.9	3.4	4.0	6.1	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.1	9.8	9.6	2.9	8.7	6.7	3.7	9.5	11.9	0.7	7.1	7.0

Note: L refers to Leisure Travelers, B to Business Travelers, and H to Hybrid Travelers.

Although the penetration rate of the Internet remained nearly constant in the Leisure Only and Hybrid traveler groups during the 2007-2012 period, the percentage of respondents claiming that all of their trip planning was done using the Internet had increased across all the traveler groups. Regardless of the purpose of travel, almost one-third of respondents had planned all aspects of travel planning on the Web during 2007-2012. As expected, a dramatic increase was found among the Leisure only (a nearly 58% increase) and Hybrid (a nearly 50% increase) traveler groups during 2007-2012, whereas a meager increase (only 4%) was found in the Business Only traveler group. Additionally, it was found that the percentage of travelers who indicated that the majority (more than two-thirds) of their trip planning was done using the Internet had increased across all the traveler groups from the years of 2007 to 2012, representing a 25% increase in Leisure Only travelers, a 24% increase in Business Only, and a 13% increase in Hybrid travelers. On the contrary, the percentage of those who reported using the Internet for less than two-thirds of their overall trip planning was dropped significantly in the past 6 years. This suggests that regardless of the purpose of travel, the Internet is able to meet the majority of travelers' information and purchasing needs.

Table 2 shows the types of websites used for travel planning during 2007-2012. Online Travel Agency (OTA) sites (e.g., Expedia.com, Travelocity.com, or Orbitz.com), Travel Supplier sites (e.g., airlines, hotels, or rental cars), and Search Engines were the predominant websites used for trip planning among the three traveler segments between 2007 and 2012. However, a deep decrease was consistently found over the past six years in Business Only travelers' use of the predominant websites, while the popularity of those websites remained relatively stable in the Leisure only and Hybrid traveler groups. Business Only travelers are found to visit a variety of travel websites to plan their trips, indicating that they reduce a heavy reliance of the predominant travel websites and utilize a wide range of websites providing travel-related information such as newspaper/magazine sites (a 23.8% increase), social networking sites (a 19.0% increase), and photo/video sharing sites (a 13.4% increase), and travel guidebook sites (a 7.7% increase). Additionally, it is interesting to note that (1) a decline of the popularity of destination websites, and (2) an increasing popularity of social networking websites across all the traveler groups. Regardless of the purpose of travel, more than 40% of respondents reported to go on destination websites provided by a city, state, or attraction in the year of 2007. The destination websites, however, had experienced a significant lose in their website traffic across all the traveler groups during 2007-2012 and the loss in website traffic was severe among Leisure Only and Business Only travelers (a 7.5% decrease in Leisure Only, a 14.1%decrease in Business Only, and a 0.3% decrease in Hybrid). Regardless of the purpose of the travel, a rapid growth of social networking websites should be also highlighted.

Travelers' use of social networking websites had been meager until the year 2011 but a dramatic expansion of traveler population using social media was observed in the year of 2012. In particular, such an increase in the use of social networking websites was tremendous in the Business Only and Hybrid traveler groups with an increase of approximately 19%, respectively.

Table 2: Types of Website Used for Travel Planning (%)

	2007			2008			2009			2010			2011			2012			Change (2012-2007)		
Website Type	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H
Online travel agencies	62.7	55.6	62.6	58.4	54.5	76.5	57.4	45.1	69.6	68.5	57.4	77.2	72.0	58.7	78.7	67.1	47.6	74.1	4.4	-8.0	11.5
Supplier sites	58.1	56.5	65.9	55.7	52.5	71.4	52.4	43.9	71.2	64.6	67.2	71.5	63.8	54.3	72.7	58.6	47.6	70.8	0.5	-8.9	4.9
Search engines	57.6	54.0	61.3	58.5	54.5	63.6	54.8	50.0	61.1	51.0	52.5	62.7	56.8	39.1	62.5	55.8	40.5	63.0	-1.8	-13.5	1.7
Destination sites	45.3	40.3	48.0	39.4	29.3	46.3	39.4	30.5	44.3	36.4	26.2	44.3	39.2	23.9	45.1	37.8	26.2	47.7	-7.5	-14.1	-0.3
General travel sites	15.6	15.3	17.4	15.7	17.2	21.1	13.8	11.0	16.8	12.2	14.8	21.9	18.7	15.2	24.5	13.2	16.7	24.7	-2.4	1.4	7.3
Travel guidebook sites	10.1	6.5	16.2	8.4	13.1	18.4	8.7	7.3	16.5	8.7	9.8	23.2	10.4	10.9	28.1	10.1	14.2	16.9	0	7.7	0.7
Photo/video-sharing sites	2.4	5.6	3.7	3.4	8.1	10.4	2.4	7.3	3.8	5.1	8.2	12.7	6.8	2.2	15.8	8.3	19.0	17.3	5.9	13.4	13.6
Newspaper or Magazine sites	7.4	4.8	9.7	6.0	8.1	13.4	6.1	3.7	9.8	6.3	13.1	13.6	8.0	10.9	17.8	6.0	28.6	20.6	-1.4	23.8	10.9
Social networking sites	3.1	2.4	3.2	4.1	4.0	10.2	3.5	2.4	5.1	6.6	8.2	12.3	7.9	4.3	16.6	13.6	21.4	22.6	10.5	19.0	19.4

Note: L refers to Leisure Travelers, B to Business Travelers, and H to Hybrid Travelers.

Table 3 shows the changes among the types of travel information searched on the Internet during 2007-2012. Searching for a particular destination, hotel prices or places to stay, and air fares and schedule/flight times were the most frequently conducted online planning activities across the traveler groups in 2007, followed by printing out maps and driving directions, and searching for information regarding things to do at the destination. The number of Leisure Only and Hybrid travelers who searched for particular types of travel information had remained fairly stable during 2007-2012. However, a dramatic decline was commonly found in almost all types of travel information among Business Only travelers with an exception of information regarding shopping, toll-free telephone number, and free travel brochures. For instance, almost two-thirds of Business Only travelers indicated that they searched for information about a particular destination (73.4%), accommodations (76.6%), and airline fares and schedule (63.7%) in 2007. However, only about one-third Business Only tourists were found using the Internet for the identical types of travel information in 2012.

Among the variety of online travel planning activities, the number of travelers who printed out maps and driving directions had also dropped significantly across all the traveler groups with an approximately 20% drop respectively. It is presumed that the proliferation of smart phone and Global Positioning System (GPS) replace some of the previously dominant role of the Internet as travel assistance. On the other hand, tourists need for information on shopping had enhanced over time across all traveler groups.

Table 3: Types of Online Travel Planning (%)

Type of Online Information Searched	2007			2008			2009			2010			2011			2012			Change (2012-2007)		
	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H
Information about a particular destination	74.9	73.4	77.5	73.3	58.6	80.2	69.5	63.4	74.1	66.4	47.5	73.7	72.7	39.1	74.3	69.6	35.7	72.0	-5.6	-37.7	-5.5
Hotel prices or places to stay	70.0	76.6	76.8	66.6	64.6	81.0	63.8	67.1	79.1	68.0	59.0	72.4	75.6	56.5	77.9	69.6	40.5	74.5	-0.4	-36.1	-2.3
Airline fares and schedule/flight times	62.8	63.7	71.2	63.6	56.6	79.1	56.7	46.3	75.0	69.0	60.7	82.5	66.7	58.7	78.3	62.6	42.9	69.1	-0.2	-20.8	-2.1
Printed-out maps and/or driving directions	49.7	48.4	53.8	46.2	44.4	53.7	42.1	47.6	55.7	34.6	32.8	45.6	37.1	21.7	38.3	30.6	26.2	34.2	-19.5	-22.2	-19.6
Things to do at the destination	46.9	42.7	50.3	48.1	29.3	59.1	42.6	23.2	56.0	45.5	31.1	51.8	52.4	30.4	56.1	46.7	23.8	52.7	-0.2	-18.9	2.4
Information about potential destinations to visit	38.3	36.3	45.9	42.9	22.2	56.1	35.9	22.0	49.1	40.1	32.8	47.4	46.4	32.6	54.9	43.4	23.8	56.8	5.1	-12.5	10.9
Rental car prices and availability	37.1	43.5	44.5	35.2	36.4	57.2	30.3	31.7	48.7	37.8	36.1	54.4	40.8	47.8	59.3	37.0	33.3	54.7	-0.1	-10.2	10.2
Any type of travel discount or promotion	37.1	33.9	41.3	38.6	27.3	47.9	36.2	28.0	44.3	36.4	29.5	44.3	44.2	10.9	46.2	38.9	19.0	39.9	1.8	-14.9	-1.4
Dining and entertainment	33.3	29.8	42.7	34.5	37.4	44.4	30.4	24.4	47.8	34.5	27.9	41.7	40.8	21.7	49.8	37.0	21.4	43.2	3.7	-8.4	0.5
Event calendar at the destination	27.4	18.5	32.0	27.5	18.2	36.4	23.7	9.8	35.8	25.1	26.2	31.6	30.8	19.6	36.8	24.5	14.3	32.9	-2.9	-4.2	0.9
Print out coupons	27.2	25.8	29.9	27.2	23.2	35.0	28.0	25.6	32.9	27.2	26.2	33.8	25.1	23.9	30.8	28.8	21.4	34.6	1.6	-4.4	4.7
Travel package for resorts, etc.	25.0	22.6	28.8	28.0	18.2	37.4	22.4	15.9	30.1	21.6	18.0	34.6	25.6	15.2	37.5	23.4	21.4	34.2	-1.6	-1.2	5.4
Cruises	20.4	20.2	24.4	22.2	5.1	27.8	18.0	9.8	28.8	18.4	11.5	21.1	19.0	15.2	29.6	18.7	19.0	27.6	-1.7	-1.2	3.2
Stores or other places to shop	17.6	15.3	19.0	20.7	13.1	31.3	16.1	18.3	22.2	20.2	23.0	33.8	25.1	19.6	35.6	22.6	23.8	35.4	5.0	8.5	16.4
Sites that distribute free travel brochures	11.8	5.6	13.9	10.9	6.1	13.9	10.7	4.9	11.4	8.7	4.9	12.7	9.8	2.2	14.2	8.7	7.1	17.3	-3.1	1.5	3.4
Toll-free numbers	6.1	7.3	10.0	5.4	7.1	9.4	5.5	6.1	7.0	3.3	3.3	5.3	4.5	0	7.5	4.6	9.5	9.5	-1.5	2.2	-0.5

Note: L refers to Leisure Travelers, B to Business Travelers, and H to Hybrid Travelers.

Table 4 summarizes the types of travel products and services purchased online. As expected, air tickets, lodging, and rental car were predominant among all travel product categories purchased online during the course of the last six years. There was very little change over the last 6 years in the percentages of Leisure Only and Hybrid travelers who purchased these items online. However, the number of Business Only travelers who made travel arrangements had been significantly dropped during this time across all the travel product/service categories. Particularly, it was found that they were more reluctant to reserve accommodations (a nearly 21% decrease), rental cars (a nearly 17% decrease), and play/show/concert tickets (a nearly 17% decrease) on the Internet during this time. The only travel product category Business Only travelers purchased more was tickets for museum, festivals and other events. These travel products had gained more attention as a possible travel activity that travelers would like to include in their itinerary. In contrast, Hybrid travelers had purchased more travel products and services on the Internet. While they show an increase in online purchase during 2007-2012, theme park tickets, rental cars, museum/festival tickets, theme park tickets, spectator sporting events, museum/festivals/other events, and sporting activities had noticeably increased over the last six years.

Table 4: Types of Products Purchased Online (%)

Type of Product/Service	2007			2008			2009			2010			2011			2012			Change (2012-2007)		
	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H
Lodging	70.7	73.0	76.5	63.6	59.7	77.8	63.6	69.7	83.2	62.9	63.9	73.2	69.9	68.2	82.3	68.8	51.4	77.6	-1.9	-21.6	1.1
Air tickets	68.2	72.0	73.7	68.5	63.6	83.2	64.0	57.6	76.2	66.9	70.5	80.7	65.5	72.7	80.0	67.6	62.9	75.4	-0.6	-9.1	1.7
Rental car	40.4	46.0	48.7	36.4	46.8	57.5	30.2	37.9	51.4	34.7	45.9	52.6	38.3	45.5	58.4	38.8	28.6	62.5	-1.6	-17.4	13.8
Play, show, concert	19.6	26.0	27.7	23.9	18.2	36.8	19.3	24.2	27.6	18.0	11.5	26.8	23.9	11.4	35.5	20.8	8.6	29.3	1.2	-17.4	1.6
Theme park tickets	14.8	13.0	15.1	17.1	10.4	28.1	12.8	6.1	18.9	14.7	13.1	19.7	18.2	6.8	29.4	18.2	11.4	30.2	3.4	-1.6	15.1
Travel packages	13.8	15.0	14.6	14.0	9.1	24.0	10.4	12.1	12.9	10.2	9.8	19.3	15.5	20.5	27.3	14.5	14.3	25.4	0.7	-0.7	10.8
Tour/excursion	10.9	8.0	11.2	8.5	5.2	17.4	8.9	4.5	10.8	9.9	9.8	13.2	11.3	2.3	21.6	10.6	0	16.8	-0.3	-8.0	5.6
Spectator sporting events	10.2	14.0	15.1	10.2	7.8	23.1	8.0	9.1	15.4	9.1	6.6	18.0	12.0	4.5	24.9	11.3	5.7	22.8	1.1	-8.3	7.7
Museum, festival, other events	9.9	9.0	11.8	11.7	14.3	21.9	8.8	9.1	15.4	9.8	4.9	21.5	15.2	6.8	26.5	14.2	11.4	22.8	3.3	2.4	11.0
Cruise	9.7	10.0	11.5	9.2	6.5	15.9	8.8	3.0	11.9	7.8	13.1	14.0	9.7	13.6	20.4	8.7	5.7	19.0	1.0	-4.3	7.5
Sporting activities	5.2	9.0	9.8	4.3	6.5	12.0	4.6	3.0	9.4	4.9	6.6	13.2	7.2	6.8	20.8	5.0	17.1	18.1	-0.2	8.1	8.3
Recreational vehicles	1.6	4.0	3.1	1.9	3.9	3.6	1.2	6.1	3.1	1.4	4.9	6.6	1.3	4.5	8.2	0.7	8.6	9.1	-0.9	4.6	6.0

Note: L refers to Leisure Travelers, B to Business Travelers, and H to Hybrid Travelers.

As for the distribution channels used by travelers to make online reservations or purchases, the noticeable findings are a decline of direct supplier websites and a popularity of Online Travel Agencies. As of 2007, about two-thirds of travelers claimed that they made travel arrangements through direct supplier websites. However, OTAs had gained a popularity across all the traveler groups during 2007-2012 with an almost 3% in Leisure Only travelers, a 10% increase in Business Only travelers, and a 15% increase in Hybrid traveler. It is interesting to note that Leisure Only and Hybrid travelers had used almost equally OTAs as well as supplier websites during the years of 2007-2012, whereby Business Only travelers had purchased more travel products and services through OTAs during this period. This suggests that OTAs have appealed more to Business Only travelers, while tourism and travel supplier websites has lost its appeal as a distribution channel from business travelers.

Table 5 summarizes the reasons of not buying travel products and services online. As shown in Table 5, many of the issues were identified as barriers among the all traveler groups in 2007. However, those issues were found to be alleviated in Leisure only and Hybrid Travelers during 2007-2012, whereas Business Only travelers addressed those issues more in 2012. An explosive increase was found among Business Only travelers across all the issues not using the Internet for travel planning with an exception of the issue of information overload and confusion. In particular, Business Only travelers were more skeptical about the security issue and the effectiveness of the Internet as a booking channel in terms of cost and time reduction when planning their business trips. Additionally, they appeared to be less motivated to use the Internet due to a high level of satisfaction with personal touch that travel agents had provided over the past six years. Somewhat unexpectedly, the number of Business Only travelers who claimed company policy as an obstacle had increased by 29% over the last six years.

Table 5: Reasons of Not Using the Internet for Travel Planning (%)

	2007			2008			2009			2010			2011			2012			Change (2012-2007)		
Reasons	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H	L	B	H
Issue of security	25.0	23.4	32.4	26.3	17.4	27.5	22.9	0	28.1	7.4	18.3	11.1	8.5	20.0	17.9	8.6	66.7	3.3	16.4	- 43.3	29.1
Too close to departure date	16.7	10.9	10.8	9.6	13.0	17.5	6.7	10.5	15.6	4.4	12.5	9.8	3.5	5.0	5.3	3.2	80.0	6.3	13.5	- 69.1	4.5
Prices/info not up-to-date	16.7	8.9	8.1	9.1	13.0	7.5	8.1	0	6.3	3.2	14.0	8.9	1.2	10.5	5.4	4.0	40.0	3.2	12.7	- 31.1	4.9
No/little personal touch	12.5	17.8	28.4	16.4	8.7	12.5	14.5	10.5	15.6	4.0	11.8	7.2	2.4	10.5	7.9	4.3	40.0	6.3	8.2	- 22.2	22.1
Do not believe in money saving	8.3	6.3	17.6	6.2	8.7	0	7.3	0	12.5	2.2	13.5	7.0	2.4	0	7.9	2.2	60.0	6.3	6.1	- 53.7	11.3
Happy with travel agents	8.3	9.6	12.2	7.9	21.7	10.0	6.1	5.3	12.5	4.7	12.8	7.5	3.2	0	5.1	3.0	60.0	6.5	5.3	- 50.4	5.7
Lack of confidence	8.3	5.8	8.1	6.2	4.3	5.0	5.6	10.5	12.5	1.8	7.8	3.8	0.8	0	5.4	1.0	40.0	3.2	7.3	- 34.2	4.9
Lack of trustworthiness of Websites	8.3	11.4	18.9	14.7	8.7	12.5	9.8	0	9.4	3.9	17.4	5.7	2.5	0	10.3	1.7	40.0	6.5	6.6	- 28.6	12.4
Time consuming	8.3	3.8	6.8	5.7	4.3	0	4.5	10.5	12.5	3.2	11.5	4.4	2.7	5.3	7.9	2.8	25.0	3.2	5.5	- 21.2	3.6
Information overload	4.2	4.3	8.1	3.1	0	0	2.8	10.5	9.4	2.0	9.3	9.7	0.8	10.5	5.4	2.0	0	6.5	2.2	4.3	1.6
Company policy	4.2	2.0	1.4	0.8	13.0	5.0	0.8	0	3.1	6.5	19.4	13.4	6.3	5.3	40.5	5.7	33.3	32.3	- 1.5	- 31.3	- 30.9
Websites' incapability of complex bookings	4.2	4.8	6.8	3.7	13.0	0	4.2	5.3	3.1	2.9	8.7	8.1	1.0	0	2.7	1.3	25.0	3.2	2.9	- 20.2	3.6
Products unavailable online	0.0	10.2	9.5	8.5	4.3	10.0	8.1	10.5	9.4	4.5	16.7	4.8	2.2	0	8.1	3.3	33.3	6.5	- 3.3	- 23.1	3.0
No regular access to the Internet	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.8	0	0	0.8	0	3.1	0.8	7.9	3.6	0	0	0	0.2	25.0	3.2	- 0.2	- 24.2	- 3.2

Note: L refers to Leisure Travelers, B to Business Travelers, and H to Hybrid Travelers.

6. Discussion

The goal of this research is to identify key trends taking pacing during the 2007-2012 period in American travelers' use of the Internet for trip planning by the purpose of trip. The results of this research found several noticeable key patterns that tourism marketers should recognize. The Internet has been the most predominant trip planning tool over the past seven years among the American population. However, travelers have begun to actively use traditional media again in recent years for travel information search and planning. Interestingly, the use of traditional media, such as TV, magazines/newspapers, and travel brochures/guidebooks, is found more heavily in the business and hybrid traveler population, whereas leisure travelers still show a strong preference for the Internet. This may suggest that business and hybrid travelers are now seeking a variety of information sources in order to find less biased information. It is presumable that business and hybrid travelers consciously reduce the reliance on the Internet as a trip planning tool and begin to use multiple information sources to make a good product decision. This conclusion is supported by the finding of the growing popularity of social network sites among business and hybrid travelers.

Although social network websites have gained popularity among all American traveler groups, business and hybrid travelers adopt this information channel more actively than leisure travelers. For instance, while the use of the predominant travel websites (i.e., search engines, OTAs, direct supplier websites) has gradually declined in the business traveler group, whereas those sites remain as the dominant information channels among leisure travelers. It is very interesting to note that business travelers now go online to watch online videos, view travel-related photos, or read travel reviews. In other words, business travelers are becoming more proactive and demanding in consuming travel information that fits their needs. This study also reveals that business travelers are becoming more skeptical about the effectiveness of the Internet as a tool for trip planning. This perception leads to the significant loss in online information search as well as online reservation/purchase of travel products/services. The findings of this research suggest that tourism marketers should pay an equal attention to offline information channels to attract the target traveler segments. The significance of the Internet as a marketing medium has been excessively highlighted since the commercialization of the Internet. However, as travelers are becoming more experienced with the use of the Internet, they no longer rely on a single information channel and this phenomenon is expected to expand to the leisure travel segment.

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