

Impact of Online Reviews on Hotel Booking Intention: With Special Reference to Star Class Hotels in Sri Lanka

T G G S Abeysekara

Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
sasmiabeysekara@gmail.com

Nisal Gunawardane

Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
nisalgunawardane@kln.ac.lk

Due to the rapid growth of Internet as a great tool for sharing and disseminating of information, online reviews have become an essential source of information. When conferring to the existing literature, there's inconclusive literature to be solved whether the online reviews have a real impact on booking intention towards the star class hotels in Sri Lankan context. Also, there are lack of previous works regarding the controlling role of brand image relating to this phenomenon. Therefore, this study is aimed at empirically investigating the impact of online reviews on hotel booking intention of star-class hotels in Sri Lanka. The quantitative research approach was adopted, and the study developed a research model based on the literature and tested it empirically by gathering data from 246 domestic travelers through an online survey. The results of the research revealed that online reviews are having a significant impact on hotel booking intention. Consequently, the usefulness of online reviews, reviewer expertise, volume of online reviews and the negative online reviews have a positive and significant impact on hotel booking intentions. In addition, it was found that brand image is having a significant impact on the relationship between online reviews and hotel booking intentions. The findings of this study contribute to the hotel sector, especially hospitality practitioners, who can use the recommendations provided by the study in order to enhance their consumer review management system. it's recommended to conduct future studies focusing on both domestic and inbound travelers and the effects of online reviews on revisit intention.

Keywords: *Brand Image, Hotel Booking Intention, Online Reviews, Sri Lanka, Star Class Hotels*