

Digitization of customer interactions : between efficiency and experience in hotel services

رقمنة تفاعلات العملاء : بين الكفاءة والخبرة في الخدمات الفندقية

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Abstract:

Digitalization plays a crucial role in the hospitality sector. It has profoundly transformed the way hotels interact with their clients and manage their operations. Thus, the purpose of our study is to examine the importance of digitalization in hotel management seeking customer satisfaction. The adopted methodology is based on a field survey of Atlantis Hotel guests targeting their experience, preferences and suggestions, with the aim of obtaining valuable information to improve services and overall guest satisfaction. The obtained results show that digitalization has become an essential element of the modern hotel strategy. It allows them to improve the customer experience, optimize its operations and remain competitive in a constantly evolving market.

Keywords : Hotel digitalization ; Client experience ; Digital transformation ; Strategy

Jel Classification Codes : Q55, Q33, L83, Z32

ملخص :

تلعب الرقمنة دورًا حاسمًا في قطاع الخدمات الفندقية. لقد أحدث تحولًا عميقًا في طريقة تفاعل الفنادق مع زبائنها وإدارة عملياتها. وبالتالي، فإن الغرض من دراستنا هو دراسة أهمية الرقمنة في إدارة الفنادق سعياً إلى رضا الزبائن. تعتمد المنهجية المعتمدة على مسح ميداني لنزلاء فندق أتلانيس يستهدف تجاربهم وتفضيلاتهم ومقترحاتهم، بهدف الحصول على معلومات قيمة لتحسين الخدمات ورضا النزلاء بشكل عام. تظهر النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها أن التحول الرقمي أصبح عنصراً أساسياً في استراتيجية الفنادق الحديثة. فهو يسمح لهم بتحسين تجربة الزبائن وتحسين عملياتهم والبقاء قادرين على المنافسة في سوق دائم التطور.

كلمات مفتاحية: رقمنة الفنادق؛ تجربة الزبون؛ التحول الرقمي؛ إستراتيجية

تصنيف JEL: Q55, Q33, L83, Z32

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INTRODUCTION

In fact, the tourism sector- the hotel field in particular- has recently undergone profound changes through the integration of new methods and sophisticated tools into the various hotel management operations. Indeed, nowadays' hotel industry has become very competitive; it offers a variety of accommodation options to meet the growing customer expectations. To maintain competitiveness and to attract customers, hoteliers need to incorporate technological advances into their enterprises. Accordingly, digitization has actually impacted the whole hotel industry from reservations to data management; it offers automation and personalization of services too. According to (Levy L. , 2009), digitization is also bringing a cultural transformation in this field through impelling hotels to adjust themselves into the new technologies and train their staff as well. The impact of digitization on hotel management is very significant throughout the exploration of the way hotels have adopted digital technologies and the benefits and the involved challenges. Besides, digital marketing offers accurate systems that enable hotels to achieve their objectives with better precision. This impels hotels to take advantage of this trend. Hence, this study highlights the importance of digitization in hotel management, the optimization of hotel operations, online clients' booking behavior and the digital influence on decision-making and clients' satisfaction.

Our study answers the following problematic: "How does digitalization improve operational efficiency and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry?"

Likewise, this study answers other important questions, namely:

Can hotel management be improved by meeting clients' expectations throughout digitalization?
How do clients book online?

Does digital technology have any impact on clarity, decision-making and clients' satisfaction?
As a step to answer these questions, we have formulated working hypotheses that are in fact our draft answers to our questions:

Hypothesis 01: Digital technology provides a new way of communication between hotel and client through digital marketing in particular.

Hypothesis 02: clients realize their bookings via the official hotel websites.

Hypothesis 03: Through a delicate satisfaction of clients' demands and requirements, the use of digital technology improves the quality of hotel services.

As a step to answer these questions and confirm or disprove these hypotheses, the methodological approach adopted in addressing this issue is inspired from the microeconomic approach. It is based on quantitative analysis using data from a field survey made on the Atlantis hotel's clients, i.e., our sample, in the city of Bejaia.

1- Literature review on the significance of digitalization in the hotel industry

According to (Badrinath, 2015) and (Nowak, 2018), the digitalization of the hotel industry, as shown by AccorHotels, has become a crucial strategy to sustain a competitive advantage. According to (Jevtić, Boris, Milan, & Dragan, 2023), this evolution was encouraged by the need to adjust to changes in clients' behavior and the growing online distribution. Conversely, the recognition of the digitalization effect on the catering field is not yet comprehensive (Iryna & kiryliuk and others, 2023).

According to (Marina Y and others, 2019), it is crucial to digitalize hotel management in order to improve internal processes, develop data processing and customer understanding and the customization of services as well. According to (Abdelaziz & Naama, 2023), it also has a significant influence on employees professional outcome by focusing on digital transformation aspects such as strategy, culture, human aspect and procedural and technical aspects. Further, this development is considered an essential provision for ensuring the proper functioning of hotels, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the increasing importance of e- commerce (Cheng & Tong Xue, 2023)

According to (Singh & Puri, 2021), digitalization and the most recent advancements in the hospitality industry play a key role in improving clients' satisfaction and to the success of the hotel business as a whole. Besides, he claimed that digitalization and the latest advances in the field of hospitality are seen as indispensable factors to improve clients' satisfaction and the overall success of the business. (Perreault & Pettigrew, 2014) support this statement by highlighting the chief importance of customer service in strategic decision-making and its impact on marketing decisions.

Moreover, according to (Belvaux & Notebaert, 2015), the digitalization of clients' relations plays a crucial role in contemporary commercial strategy through emphasizing the integration of digital solutions in distribution and communication. This constitutes a particular significance in customer loyalty where digitalization can significantly affect the customer experience. Further, digitalization and the most recent advances in the hotel field play a key role in improving customer satisfaction (Mounaim, Tighazri, & Boutaqbout, 2023). Finally, (David, 2018), revealed the advantageous interaction between technology and customer experience in the automation area in hotels, in particular. This research shows the key importance of digitalization and technological advancements in improving clients' satisfaction in the hospitality industry.

2-Methods and Materials

In the present paper, we chose a quantitative method based on a field survey. We relied on questionnaires designed to collect useful information from a large sample. Due to this approach, we were able to assess specific variables and study the links between them using thorough statistical methods. This allowed us to acquire precise and generalizable results. Additionally, thematic analysis was used as well to identify recurring topics in the collected data. It requires great precision and the intellectual and intuitive skills of the researcher too.

Our field investigations lasted 28 days (March 2023). Firstly, we used descriptive statistics to analyze the collected data presented in tables and graphs. Due to the closed questions, we were able to perform a flat sorting and a sorting of elements resulting from a comparison of some obtained results. Then, we cross-sorted the tables and formed graphs from the survey results as a step to deeply conduct the analysis. Furthermore, we commented on the different obtained results.

A corpus of totally anonymous 150 units is used to distribute the forms to clients of Atlantis hotel². The majority of clients showed commitment by positively responding to our request and showed great cooperation; they enthusiastically answered the questions. Overall, we validated 100 questionnaires. Nevertheless, there were obstacles during our conduct of this investigation. Few customers have shown their inconsistency either by not responding or by not respecting their commitment. The mentioned reasons are identical and are linked either to their lack of free time or to their unavailability for their short stay at the hotel.

Moreover, our study emphasizes the significant influence of digitalization on the hospitality sector. It highlights for hospitality establishments the importance to constantly adjust to the changing needs of their clients by integrating cutting-edge technologies to improve the overall customer experience. Likewise, we would like to acknowledge the valuable help of two master students whom we supervised and whose theme was proposed by us. These master students are studying Hotel Establishments Management (HEM)³.

² A 5 Stars hotel in Bejaia

³ BENBENLAID Randa, FODIL Abdelatif Kamel, MEH, graduation year 2022-2023

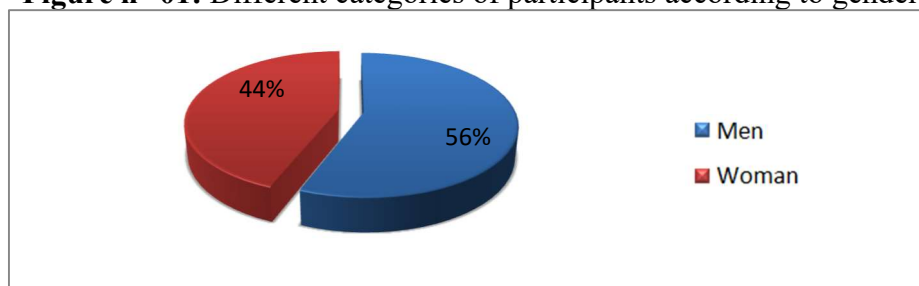
3- Results and Discussion

3-1- Flat sorting of results

This part purposes to present, analyze and interpret the results obtained from the collection of information from clients who stayed in the hotel.

3-1-1 Division of participants by gender

Figure n° 01: Different categories of participants according to gender

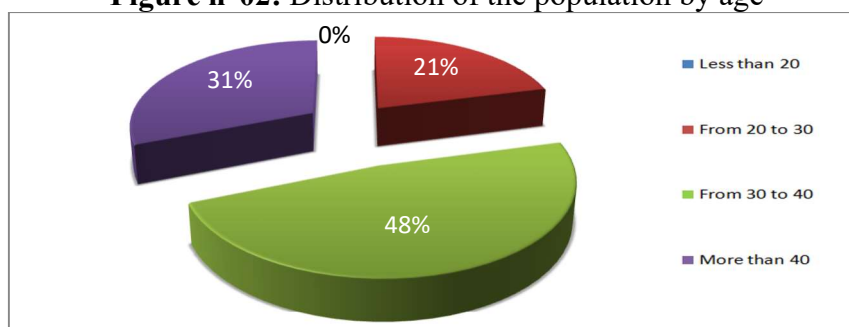


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: This study suggests that the gender distribution in this population has certain nuances. In fact, some contexts demonstrate a higher percentage of men than women. Among the 100 interviews, 56 men and 44 women were interviewed. This proportion represents 56.0 and 44.0% of the whole sample, separately.

3-1-2 Participants' ages

Figure n°02: Distribution of the population by age



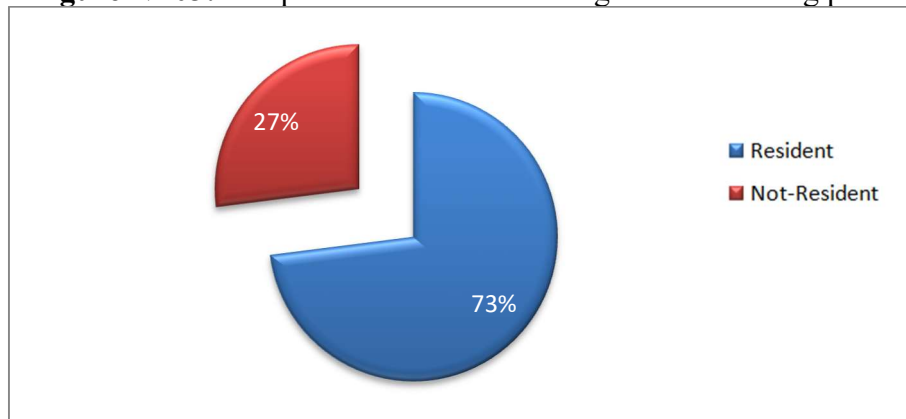
Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment:

Indeed, in exploratory research, the target is a diverse group. However, as individuals age, their survey response patterns may possibly change. Explicitly, older respondents often have more stable opinions and similar response styles across different modes. Nevertheless, they may also witness a decrease in response rates even if this is not consistent across all modes. More to the point, different types of investigations can be influenced by elements like follow-up and investigation method. For this, we selected the youngest individuals. The age distribution of the sample shows that 48% of those interviewed are between 30 and 40 years old while 31% are over 40 years old.

3-1-3 Housing situation of participants:

Figure N° 03: Sample distribution according to their housing place



Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

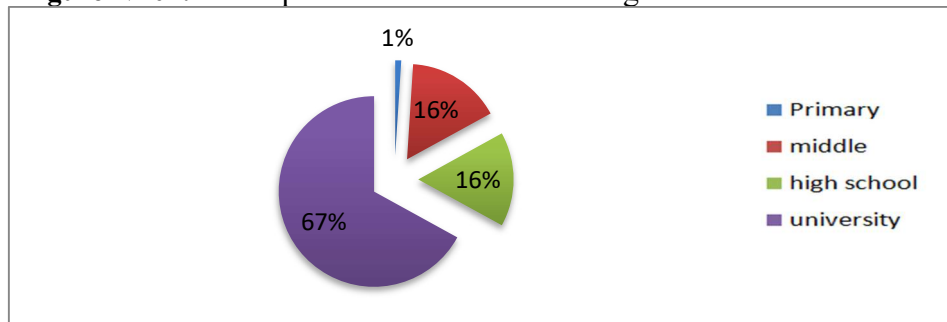
Comment:

The present study suggests that domestic and international tourists have divergent preferences and behaviors. On the one hand, domestic tourists often seek cultural and budget-friendly options. International tourists seek privacy, quality and adventure, on the other hand. This influences their ratings and spending habits in different areas of tourism.

The tourist sample under study is composed of 73% national residents and 27% foreign non-residents representing a total of 100 participants. This composition presents an appealing overview of the preferences and behaviors of domestic and foreign tourists. This provides stakeholders of the tourism sector with a better reporting of their offers and services to meet the particular requirements of each group. Likewise, such a distribution can provide information as well.

3-1-4 Participants division according to their level of study:

Figure N° 04: Participants distribution according to their level of studies.



Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

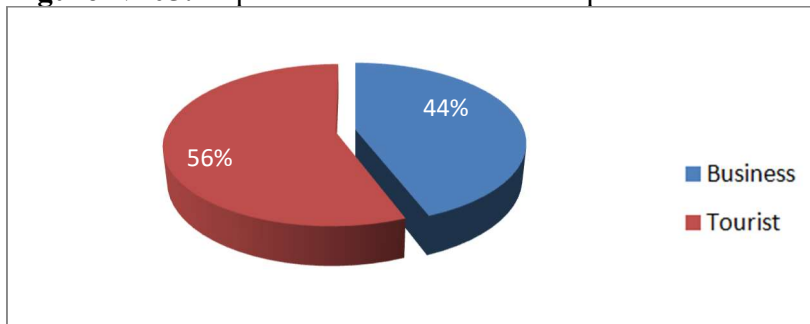
Comment: Different aspects of tourism are sturdily influenced by educational level such as decision-making processes, environmental stances, entrepreneurial skills, travel mode preferences, demand for educational tourism types and professional outcomes in the field of tourism. In our study, the majority of respondents are academics; they represent 67% of the sample. In addition, 16% are high school students and people of middle level while only 1% of them have elementary level. Moreover, this diversity in education levels provides us with the opportunity to cover different perspectives about the preferences and behaviors related to the tourism sector.

3-2 Hotel digitalization: Results' flat sorting for a general overview

Clients are increasingly relying on digital services during their stay. They use mobile apps for online registrations, digital keys, virtual custodial services, and in-room tablets for service requests and facility information too. The information below represent the results regarding the use of digitalization by Atlantis hotel clients.

3-2-1 Type of present customers in the hotel:

Figure N° 05: Population distribution of the present customers

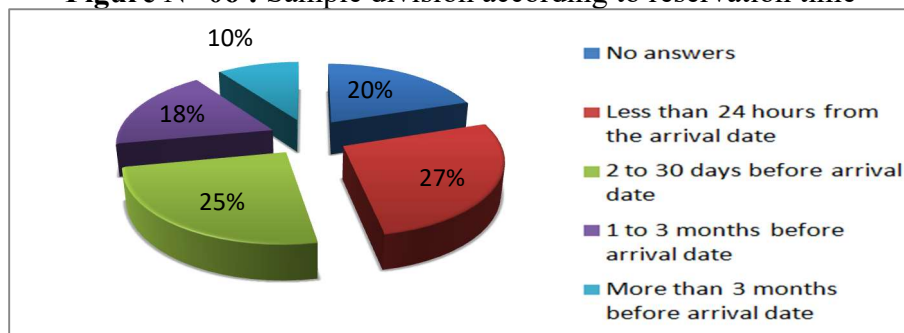


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: The division of the travel customer sample can vary depending on a number of factors. The latter comprise location, agency type and market trends. In this sense, it is important to highlight that more than half of the participating clients have a merely tourist goal with a share of 56% and 44% of business customers.

3-2-2 Deadline for booking hotel rooms before arrival date

Figure N° 06 : Sample division according to reservation time



Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

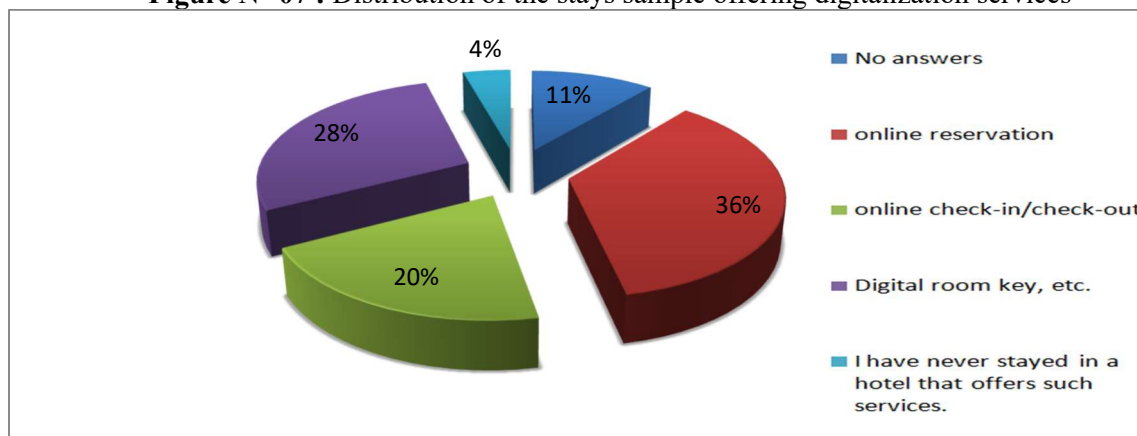
Comment: The timing of hotel room reservations is a key factor both for clients seeking the best deals and for hotels looking for maximizing their incomes. Indeed, understanding the dynamics of last-minute bookings and the favorable time for booking a hotel room can have an important impact on the decision-making process of potential clients.

An important increase in probable booking took place in the last week before the stay date. Moreover, perceptions of hotel availability and the risk of room unavailability influence last-minute booking decisions.

This study reveals that clients often book hotel rooms closer to their stay date -especially during the last week- because of availability concerns. Besides, it seems that some participants prefer booking at the last minute (27%) 24 hours before the arrival date. Others decide to book two to thirty days earlier, and they represent a rate of 25%. Overall, numerous elements can influence the diversity of booking times such as room availability, flexibility of travel dates, offered tariffs, nature of the stay (business or leisure) and personal preferences.

3-2-3 Use of digital services during their stay in a hotel

Figure N° 07 : Distribution of the stays sample offering digitalization services



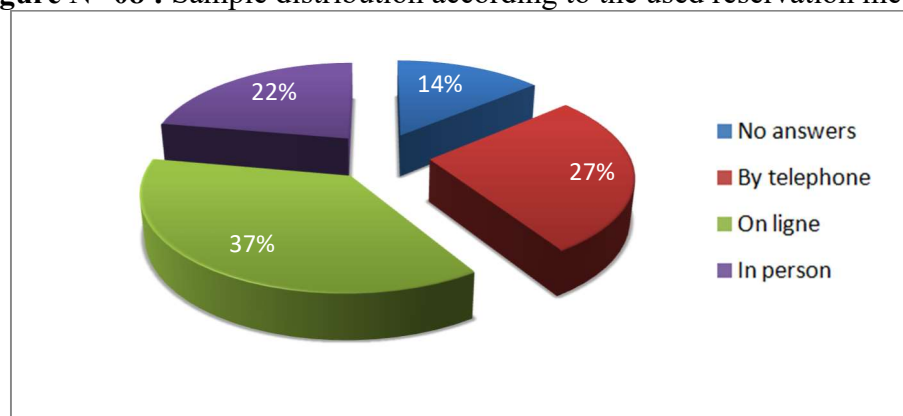
Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: In fact, the results of this study suggest that digital technologies improve customers' experience in hospitality throughout offering personalized services and facilitating interactions thanks to psychological mechanisms, privacy concerns, and the use of new technologies. Moreover, most of the surveyed persons booked online. This implies an increasing trend to favor online booking platforms (more than 50% of respondents specify that they used online services for booking or for an online check in/out).

Further, digitalization plays an essential role in improving customer experience in the hospitality sector. Mobile apps, voice-enabled digital assistants, innovative software solutions, IoT and digital concierge chatbots are pivotal technologies that help personalizing and enriching the client experience. Likewise, these technologies enable more efficient interaction and better understanding between staff and clients through meeting modern expectations for personalized services and privacy management. Henceforth, the adoption of these digital tools by hotels can lead to an amplified customer satisfaction and an enhanced stay experience.

3-2-4 The used booking method

Figure N° 08 : Sample distribution according to the used reservation method



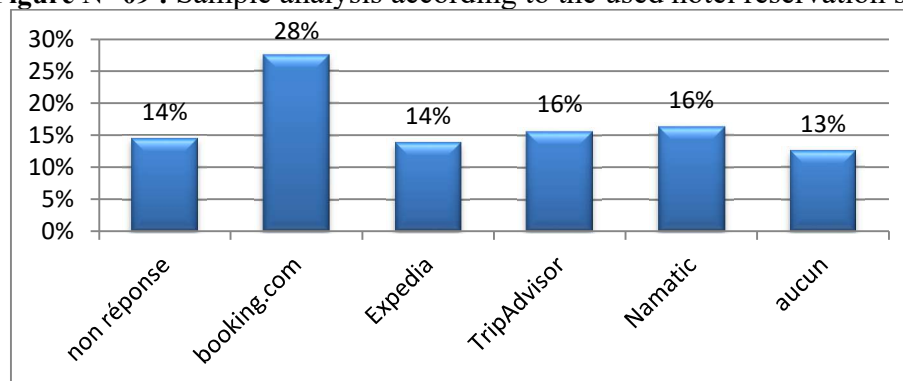
Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: Hotel booking is a field that witnessed significant growth with the arrival of the internet. Now, clients have multiple options for booking a hotel such as online, by phone, travel agencies or other intermediaries. This study revealed that customers' hotel booking preferences are influenced by a variety of factors ranging from expediency to cancellation policies.

In addition, most of the surveyed clients used online reservation (37%) while the others used telephone reservation (27%), on site (22%); a proportion of 14% did not receive replies. At present, with the introduction of new technologies, for many clients, online booking has become an ideal option mainly for those looking for luxury hotels or coming from far away. More to the point, booking choices are influenced by payment and cancellation policies. Customized advice based on client preferences and recommendation systems contribute to the improvement of the booking experience and customer satisfaction. Clients' dedication and loyalty are sturdily influenced by customers' preferences for mobile services and concrete hotel features. Accordingly, it is crucial for online travel agencies to consider a range of customer preferences to improve the booking experience and remain competitive in the market.

3-2-5 The used hotel reservation sites

Figure N° 09 : Sample analysis according to the used hotel reservation site



Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: Concerning the decisions to choose hotel booking sites, they are influenced by different elements like easiness of use, trust, attitude, recommendations, information quality and specific characteristics of hotels as safety, hygiene and itinerary.

Moreover, several online booking platforms are favored for hotels like Booking.com, Expedia, Hotels.com, Airbnb, Agoda and TripAdvisor. Clients can find and book accommodation on these platforms that frequently offer price comparison features and users' reviews.

This research's data reveal that the highly requested booking site is Booking with a rate of 28%.com, followed by TripAdvisor and Nomatic (16%) and Expedia (14%). Nevertheless, users are inclined and have higher intentions to visit third-party hotel booking sites compared to hotel websites because of their supposed usefulness and ease of use. This clarifies the more or less high rate of non-response or none of the proposed sites (13% and 14% of responses).

3-3 Results' flat sorting, hotel digitalization and customer relations:

The shift to hotels digitization is transforming customer relations by offering quality services mainly online reservations, mobile applications and personalized services. Eventually, customers are looking for more convenience and personalized interaction. Indeed, digitalization must be integrated by hotels as a step to improve the customer experience and maintain their loyalty and -above all- to be more competitive in the relentlessly evolving market. These technologies must be integrated by hotels to improve the client experience and sustain their competitiveness in the changing tourism market. The flat sorting results linked to hotel digitalization can be presented as follows:

3-3-1 Digital equipment used in the hotel room

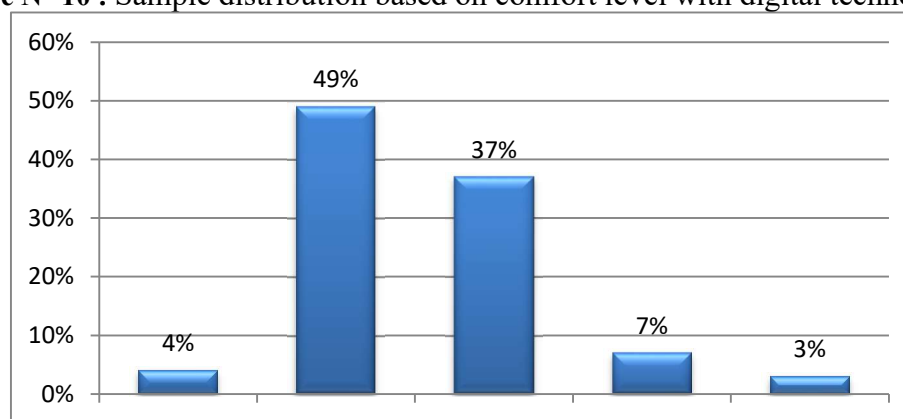
Practically, digital devices in hotel rooms may differ depending on the hotel. Among these devices, we find: a smart TV with access to streaming services, cell phones docking stations,

air conditioning systems and lighting control via an iOS or Android app. In fact, the aim of these devices is to improve the customer experience and afford better comfort. Technology becomes more and more prevailing in hotel rooms in the hospitality field. Due to these digital devices, clients have the opportunity to benefit from customized leisure and manage their rooms' setting.

Our survey denotes that television is the most used device in hotel rooms for entertainment and information. Wi-Fi is essential for clients to stay connected and use online services. More to the point, the air conditioner is important so that clients can adjust the temperature as they desire. Yet, lighting control, curtain control and the safe are less utilized possibly due to traditional switches or lack of usual need for adjustment. Further, affording quality TV, reliable Wi-Fi and a working amplifier can improve the customer experience in hotel rooms.

3-3-2 Comfort level with digital technologies

Figure N° 10 : Sample distribution based on comfort level with digital technologies.

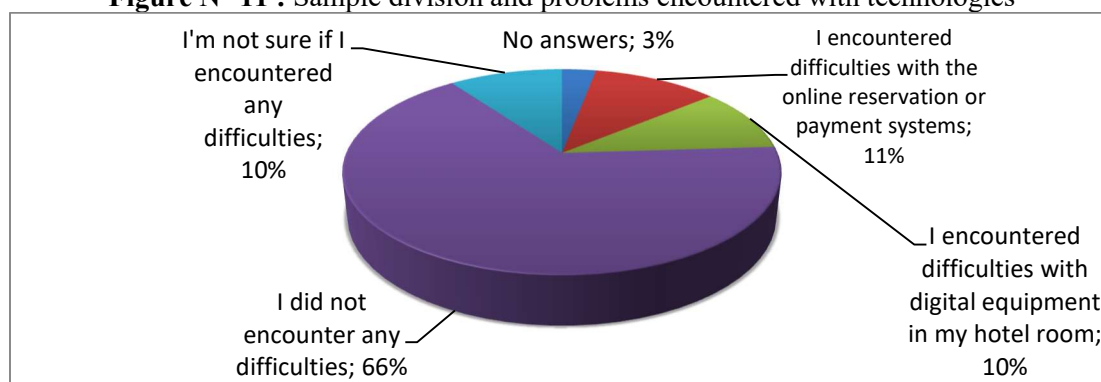


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: This division demonstrates that the majority of respondents are comfortable or incredibly comfortable with digital technologies in their hotel stay (49%). Yet, a certain percentage claimed being uncomfortable or having difficulty using these technologies. This impels us to suggest that hotels should consider this diversity of comfort with technology and offer alternatives to satisfy every client's needs.

3-3-3 Difficulties with technology during a hotel stay

Figure N° 11 : Sample division and problems encountered with technologies



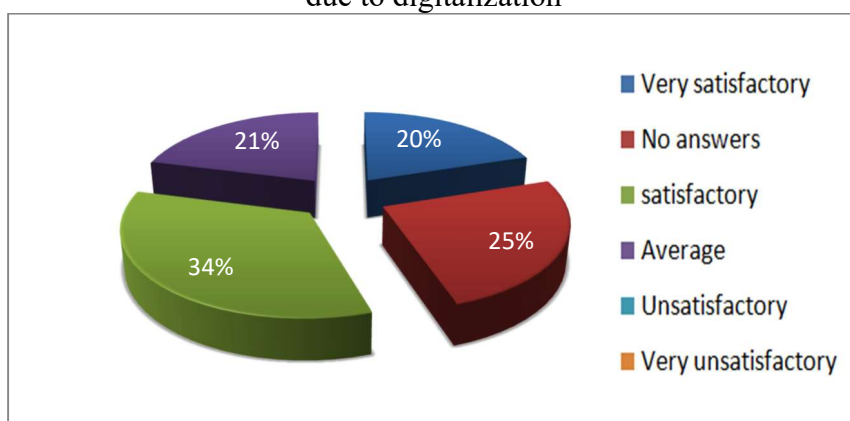
Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: The results emphasize the variety of experiences hotel clients have had when using technology in a hotel setting. More to the point, online reservation or payment systems have been reported by some customers. Others have faced issues with digital equipment of their hotel

rooms. Also, most of the respondents claimed they have faced no difficulties. This implies that hotels have successfully managed to offer technology services without important difficulties. Yet, ten respondents were unaware of their difficulties. This makes us suggest that they had miscellaneous experiences or minor problems that did not result in major inconveniences.

3-3-4 Sample allocation using digitalization to assess the hotel room reservation experience

Figure N° 12 : Sample distribution through assessing the hotel room reservation experience due to digitalization

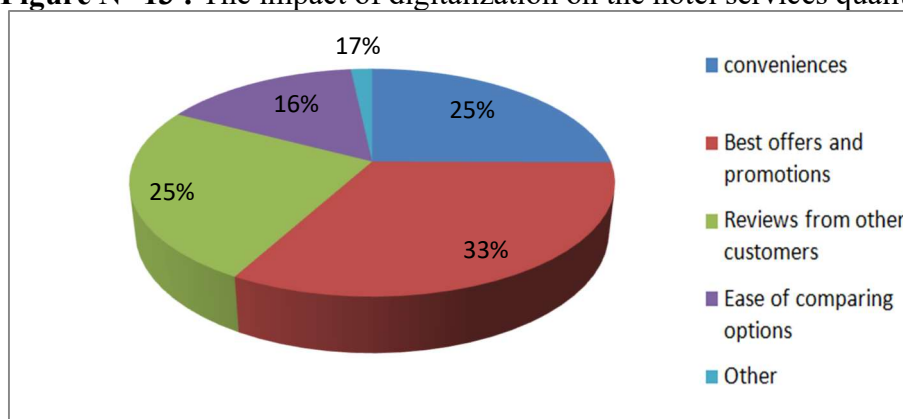


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: The objective of the distribution of samples is to assess the client's room reservation experience through the use of digitalization. In fact, most of the respondents claimed their satisfaction from their reservation experience of hotel rooms. Further, the extremely positive reviews emphasize the substantial benefits of digitalization in meeting customer expectations.

3-3-5 The main customers' motivation in hotel booking

Figure N° 13 : The impact of digitalization on the hotel services quality

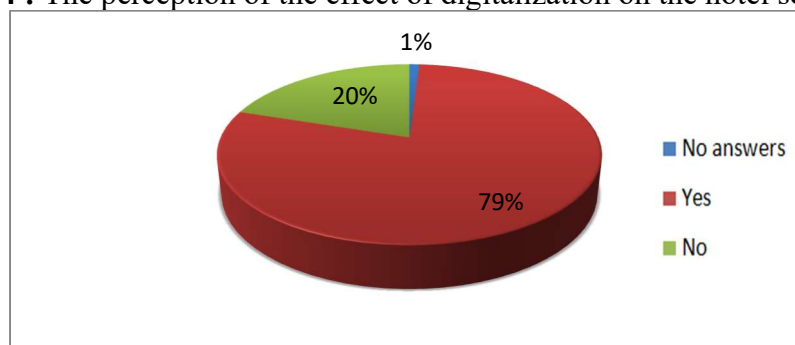


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: We assert that the best offers and promotions, convenience as well, are the two key criteria for choosing a hotel according to the obtained responses. 76 surveyed customers prioritize the best offers and promotions when selecting a hotel (33%). Convenience is the second most important criterion with 58 responses and with a rate of 25%. 57 interviewed individuals consider the opinions of other customers with a rate of 25%. Conversely, 36 interviewed welcome the easiness of comparing operations (16%).

3-3-6 Perception of the impact of digitalization on the hotel services quality

Figure N° 14 : The perception of the effect of digitalization on the hotel services quality

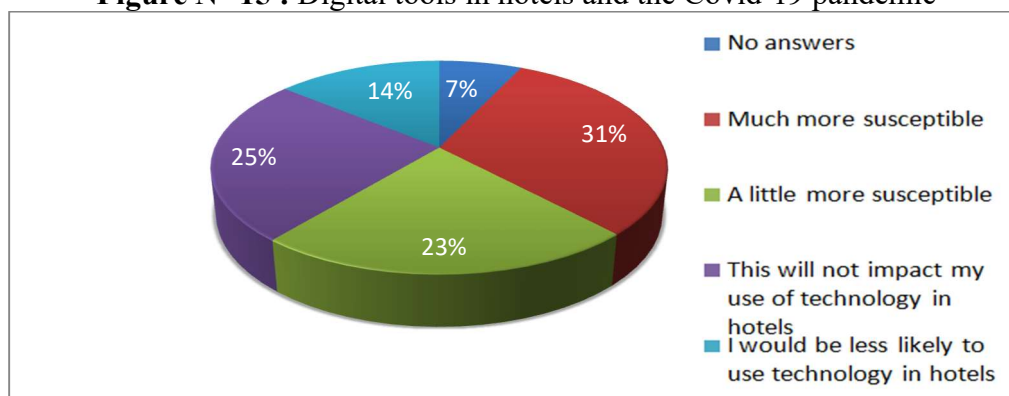


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: Among the 100 individuals we have interviewed, 79 persons avowed that digitalization has a beneficial effect on the quality of hotel services. In contrast, a number of people have not claimed the beneficial impact of digitalization. Yet, most of the interviewed individuals have a positive perception of digitalization in the hotel industry.

3-3-7 Frequent use of digital tools in hotels to avert physical contact in the Covid-19 pandemic

Figure N° 15 : Digital tools in hotels and the Covid-19 pandemic

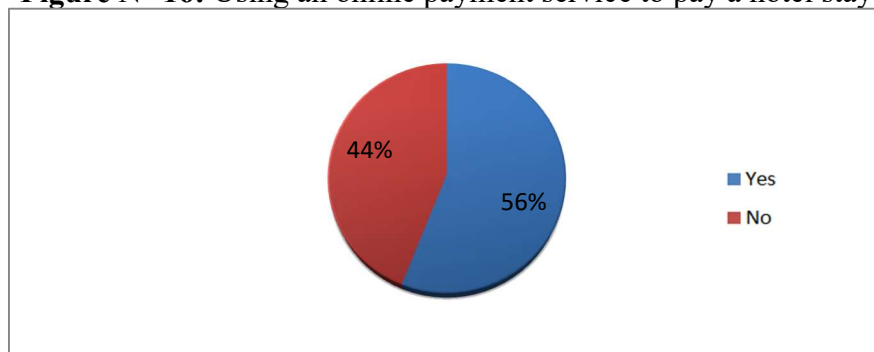


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: Our statistics demonstrate differences in our sample's preference in using digital tools in hotels to avoid physical contact after the Covid-19 pandemic. About 31% of our respondents have a higher adoption rate of these technologies; however, 23% have lesser adoption rate. About 29% suppose that the effect on their use of technology in hotels will not be important. Meanwhile, 14% show less intention to adopt it. Further, the findings emphasize the importance for hotels to consider different customer expectations when integrating digital tools into their post-Covid-19 services.

3-3-8 Using an online payment service to pay the stay at a hotel.

Figure N° 16: Using an online payment service to pay a hotel stay

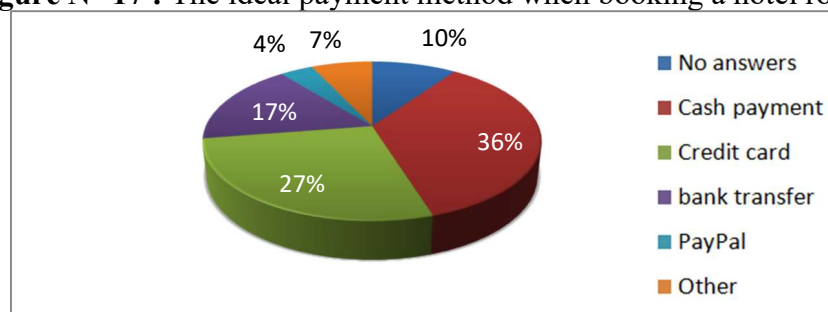


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: According to our sample, 44% of customers make use of the online payment service at the hotel. Meanwhile, 56% of them prefer using other payment methods. Actually, we emphasize the diversity of customer payment options. Eventually, it is crucial for hotels to offer a variety of payment options to meet clients' requirements. Additionally, we highlight the increase in the use of online payments. For this, it is indispensable to find secure and convenient solutions to afford an exceptional customer experience.

3-3-9 The ideal payment method for hotel room reservation:

Figure N° 17 : The ideal payment method when booking a hotel room.

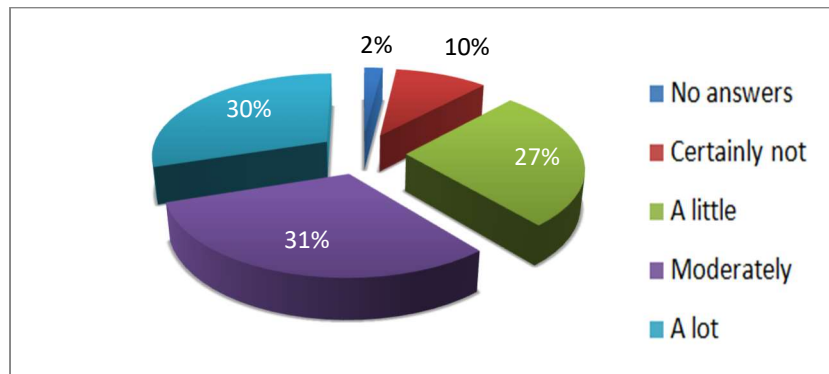


Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: When booking a hotel room, the favored payment method may vary based on customer's preferences. Nevertheless, many clients choose to use a credit or debit card when booking online to secure their reservation and facilitate payment by their arrival to the hotel. Actually, hotels must offer a range of payment methods to meet customer preferences. The present study denotes that most customers prefer payment by cash or credit card respectively with 36% and 27%. Indeed, flexible payment options can afford a more personalized booking experience. Payment methods may comprise cash, credit cards, bank transfers, online services -like Edahabia card- and other options.

3-3-10 The digital relationship between customer and the hotel:

Figure N° 18 : The perception of the relationship between customers and the hotel establishment



Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: Within the sample under study, most customers (71%) claimed a positive attitude about their relationship with the hotel. They eagerly claimed pleasing experiences and quality service (31% have a moderately satisfactory relationship); likewise, a third of them feel good and have a positive relationship. Yet, 27% of customers claimed a generally positive experience with some reservations possibly because of a usual experience without significant events. Only 10% responded negatively; this implies difficulties or dissatisfaction encountered during their stay. Actually, it is necessary to maintain customer loyalty that leads to increasing profitability. Concerning customer loyalty, Philip Kotler⁴ -a specialist in marketing and particularly relationship marketing- puts great importance on long-term relationships with customers in order to maintain and optimize customer value.

3-4 Cross sorting of results

Our quantitative study used different analyses, including bi-variant analyses, to study the impact of digitalization in hotel management and on the reputation of the Atlantis Hotel. In this respect, we conducted an analysis using cross-sorting in order to process the collected data. Due to this analysis, we will be able to confirm or disprove our hypotheses and answer our questions.

3-4-1 Approach to hotel booking and anticipating the reservation.

Tableau N° 01: Hotel reservation and anticipation of the following

Appointment	No response	Less than 24 hours before arrival date	from 2 to 30 days before arrival date	from 1 to 3 months before arrival date	More than 3 months before arrival date
No response	20	0	0	0	0
By phone	0	10	12	15	2
Online	0	16	15	14	8
On-site	0	13	8	9	2

Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment:

According to Table 1, the online reservation system is the most largely used with a total of 53 reservations. Telephone and on-site reservations were also approved –respectively- with 39 and

⁴ Philip Kotler is an American professor of marketing. He is considered the father of modern marketi

32 reservations. Besides, we note that most reservations- regardless of the method- were made between 1 and 3 months before the arrival date; this indicates that a certain preparation was made. These results allow us to attain valuable insight about hotel clients' booking habits. This is extremely beneficial for improving available services. According to table n° 1, hypothesis n° 2 is confirmed.

3-4-2 Analysis of the influence of digitalization on the hotel room booking experience among customers who have already made a reservation.

Tableau N° 02: Analysis of the influence of digitalization on the hotel room booking experience among customers who have already made a reservation

	Have you ever booked online	
	Yes	No
Appointment		
no response	4	16
very satisfactory	25	0
satisfactory	32	2
Average	18	3
unsatisfactory	0	0
very unsatisfactory	0	0

Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: According to the data provided in Table 3, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with their telephone hotel reservation experience. Actually, digitalization has played a very important role in improving the quality of hotel services by delicately meeting customers' growing needs and security expectations. Accordingly, the positive results show that digitalization has afforded tangible benefits and met customer expectations. On the other hand, we should note that the table does not include any negative comments; this limits our overall understanding of customers' views. In brief, the results denote that digitalization has been beneficial for hospitality establishments in fulfilling customer requirements. Henceforth, according to Table N° 2, hypothesis N° 3 is validated.

3-4-3 Online payment preferences and practices in online booking

Tableau N° 03 : Online payment preference in online booking

Appointment	no response	Cash	Credit card	Bank payment	PayPal	Other
Yes	0	31	35	26	7	7
No	18	35	16	5	0	6

Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment:

The results demonstrate the different preferences and online payment practices when booking hotels. The majority of participants prefer online payment methods like credit cards and bank transfers. Yet, few still prefer traditional methods like cash payments. Further, the results highlight the importance of offering different payment methods in hotel establishments. The purpose is to meet different customer preferences and adjust diverse payment habits. This leads us to confirm hypothesis N°1.

3-4-4 The influence of marketing activity through social media and customer relations

Tableau N° 04 : Customer relations and the impact of marketing activity on social networks

Appointment	no response	bad	acceptable	average	good	excellent
presence on social networks	10	3	5	27	20	35
Customer relations	10	2	9	19	28	32

Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: The results reveal that marketing practices, related to visibility on social networks and customer relationship management, have a positive impact on customer perceptions. Likewise, they afford an overall satisfactory experience. This requires hotels to develop effective marketing strategies to attract clients and maintain the relations with them. Hence, this leads us to confirm hypothesis N° 1.

3-5-5 Different booking methods and hotel booking sites

Tableau N° 05 : Different booking methods and hotel booking sites

Appointment	no response	by phone	online	On-site
no response	20	0	0	3
booking.com	0	24	35	20
Expedia	0	17	20	11
TripAdvisor	0	18	24	14
Namatic	0	16	23	11
Nothing	2	10	8	7

Source: Realized based on the results of the field survey, 2023

Comment: The results highlight the importance of providing online reservations for hotels. They also emphasize the importance of varying reservation methods to meet customer preferences too. Practically, hotels' presence on booking platforms (like Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor and Namatic) is essential. This offers options such as booking by phone and on-site. Accordingly, this confirms our second assumption.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the importance of digitalization in the hotel industry. The latter plays an essential role in the contemporary hospitality industry, which leads to a deep transformation of operational processes. From online reservations to check-in and check-out management, most hotels rely on digital solutions to improve efficiency and afford an enhanced customer experience. In fact, clients prefer paperless procedures and online exchanges. Besides, digitalization has an important influence on the relations between hotel establishments and their customers. In this sense, it affords direct and immediate communication, real-time information, customized recommendations and a highly responsive customer service. The present investigation confirmed our assumptions and answered our research problematic. We hope to have contributed to the study of the impact of digitalization on hotel management. Likewise, we eagerly encourage future studies to deeply explore this subject.

Moreover, digitalization plays a very important role in the hospitality field through changing traditional procedures and improving the customer experience. Consequently, hotels can provide more efficient and customized services, simplify online reservations, check-in and check-out, and enhance communication with their clients. Furthermore, digitalization enables hospitality establishments to collect and analyze information for a better understanding of their customers' requirements and preferences. Thus, this helps them to adjust their services. Besides, digitalization has become a key element to maintain competitiveness in the contemporary hospitality field.

To sum up, this study concludes that digital technologies in the hospitality sector are essential. They lead to a higher level of customer understanding and service customization too.

Digital marketing enhances customer service; it costs less and effectively reaches the market and consumers. This ultimately influences customer satisfaction and service quality in hotels.

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