

Computerized Reservation System (CRS) as a Feature of Business Operation of Travel Agencies

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to fully understand the use of computerized reservation system in travel agencies. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following objectives; to determine the most common e-reservations system used in travel agencies; to discuss the effects of e-reservation system in the operation of travel agencies; to determine the problems encountered by travel agencies in using reservation system and discuss the implications of the using e-reservation system in operation of travel agencies in as far as customer relations and satisfaction are concerned. The study focuses only in travel agencies that were served by CRS vendors, particularly subscribers in Metro Manila. The descriptive method of research was used in the study. Instruments like questionnaire and interview were further utilized in gathering the primary data. The data gathered were statistically treated using weighted mean. Data revealed that computerized reservation system has a positive effect in improving company's efficiency and productivity. As a whole both the positive and the negative effects of CRS contributed much to the development of travel agencies and the tourism industry. CRS is one of the most important tools of any travel agencies to generate more profit and to achieve total guest satisfaction and ensure customer retention.

Keywords: Online Reservation, Business Operation, Travel Agency

I. INTRODUCTION

Computer is an electronic system designed to manipulate data. Thus, the said computers came about as a machine for storing, moving, adding and subtracting, and evaluating data and applied nowadays in operation based on the processing of discrete quantities of information such as digits or characters, Electronic digital computers are

the culmination of a long line of computing devices, including knotted strings, tallying pebbles, the abacus, and the adding machine. In the latter part of the 20th century, computers, along with their associated technologies, changed the way people communicate, work and learn, thus transforming society worldwide.

Today, people are experiencing the Computer Revolution as they see the wonderful effects of computer in transportation, economy, education, business, and even in their own homes. There is an extensive use of computers in various applications such as the use of robots in the industry in place of manual procedures to speed up some factory works, computation of bank statement, enrolment and grading systems in schools and universities, networking, the graphical display it produces, and others. As man realizes the importance of computer to speed up communication even in remote areas and as a means of transferring data for business needs, it has become an outstanding medium through which hotels, travel agencies, airlines and other sectors of the industry can have easy access for vital travel information and travel needs of their clients.

Dimatulac, et. al. (1997) in their study entitled, "Cathay Pacific: Dragonair's Airplane Information System", it was noted that the widespread of computers had brought to mankind a new millennium of technology. It developed different aspect of life as well as communications, facilities, medicine and transportation. The unstoppable development in computer world gives people quick information. The information system saves time and effort in gathering idea. Most airline companies use computer in showing their capabilities to provide first class services of the aircraft in a minimum of time. It also provides information about the Fleet Facts, which could greatly help passengers to know the location of aircraft facilities. At present, many airlines are using computerized information.

In this world, where there is an increasingly important and complex variety of modes and choices, a documents in technology receives very essential, competitive operations of travel agencies is advantage. As their commitment to quality and efficient service, computerization on travel service and reservation were introduced to then.

A computerized reservation system, or CRS, is the most important tool of a travel agency. This is informally called a "Res system", which provides agents with access to such essential travel information as flight availability, airfares, room rates, and car rental rates. Reservation can be made over the CRS, and airline tickets can be issued on demand (Foster, 1995).

Computerized reservation system or CRS does simplify the life of travel agents. They are no longer bound on the traditional method of seeking hotel accommodations, airline tickets and other travel assistance.

SABRE (Semi-Automated Business Research Environment) is an example of

widely used computer reservation system by airlines and the travel agent community. Most of its operating functions include Reservation, Airport, Cargo, Dispatch and Crew Scheduling. It is fast; whereby, it responds within three seconds irrespective of where the question originates. It even remembers millions of details about customers' request and passes that information on to caterers, agents and flight crew. In addition, SABRE stores information on current information on current events, weather, ski condition and tours.

The success of one's business is through the quality of service. One cannot be qualified to serve if the efficiency and accurateness of work cannot be ensured. If there's an error and slow processing of transaction, business cannot offer good services. The innovation of travel agencies facilitates the trend for the coming years. The researchers deemed it appropriate to make an investigation about the use of computerized reservation system and likewise find out if this contributes to tourism management operation.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted to fully understand the use of computerized reservation system in travel agencies. Specifically, this study will identify which computerized reservation system is currently used by travel agencies as to ABACUS, AMADEUS and GALILEO, determine the possible effects of computerized reservation system in the operation of travel agencies, identify the problems encountered by travel agencies in using reservation system, discuss the solutions to be employed by travel agencies to solve the identified problems and discuss the implications on the use of computerized reservation system in the operation of travel agencies

III. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The descriptive method of research was used to know the use of computerized reservation system in travel agencies. The respondents of this study were the managers or consultants and users of computerized reservation system from twenty (20) different travel agencies in Ermita Manila. Participants of the study were forty (40), composed of twenty (20) managers or consultants and twenty (20) users of computerized reservation system. The method used to select them was simple random sampling technique.

The study made use of questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument in order to obtain the necessary information that pertains to the use of computerized reservation system in travel agencies. Interview was also employed to support and validate the data taken. To acquire the information, questionnaires were divided into three (3) parts: the first part includes the effect of CRS in the operation of travel agencies; the second part includes the problems they have encountered using CRS; and the third part includes the solutions employed by the travel agencies to solve the problems.

Upon reviewing several reading materials, the researchers came up with the topic and formulated the objective of the study. The researchers tried to make sure of the availability of their data, by visiting some establishments to gather information that would help them obtain questions and look for possible respondents. Questionnaires were constructed based on appropriate facts and contents of various information materials. After devising the questionnaire, these were submitted to the professional expert and research professor for comments. Upon finalizing, questionnaires were validated by the experts in the field of travel agency. .

Questionnaires were administered in twenty (20) different travel agencies in Metro Manila. Originally, twenty (20) were given to the managers or consultants and twenty (20) to the users of computerized reservation system in travel agencies. The respondents were chosen randomly. When the researchers were about to retrieve the questionnaires distributed to the aforementioned respondents, 100% of the questionnaires were gathered.

This study made use of the weighted mean as statistical tool. It was used to determine the effects of computerized reservation system in travel agencies, the problems encountered and solutions employed by travel agencies.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows the positive effect of using CRS in travel agencies.

Table 1
Positive Effects of using CRS in Travel Agents

Employers Rating on Abilities	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
a. Improving agency's efficiency and productivity.	3.78	SA
b. Increasing the number of customers.	3.35	A
c. Improving customer satisfaction by offering value-added services.	3.68	SA
d. Lessening operating expenses.	3.30	A
e. Reducing human errors in quotation pricing and ticketing of net fares information.	3.15	A
f. Developing and nurturing the best skills in the travel agency industry.	3.35	A
g. Making work load easier	3.72	SA
h. Providing a lot of information aside from reservations.	3.72	SA
i. Connecting guests to all forms of travel	3.52	SA
j. Replacing national airline system of limited scope and functionality.	2.98	A
Composite Mean	3.45	A

From the table, the respondents strongly agree that the positive effects of using computerized reservation system is improving the travel agency's efficiency and productivity (3.78), making work load easier, providing a lot of information aside from reservations (3.72) and improving customer satisfaction by offering value-added services and connecting guests to all forms of travel (3.68 and 3.52)

On the other hand, agreement as a positive effect is on increasing the number of customers and developing and nurturing the best skills in the travel agency industry (3.35). The composite mean value of 3.45 shows positive that computerized reservation is a way to improve the workload of travel agency and improve customer relations and satisfaction.

Table 2 shows the negative effects of using CRS in travel agencies.

Table 2
Negative Effects of using CRS in Travel Agencies

Negative Effects	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
a. Replacing manpower	2.62	A
b. Incurring cost for installation of software technology	2.60	A
c. Investing a lot on training new staff	2.62	A
d. Limiting man's capabilities due to depending more on the system	2.62	A
e. Abusing the system resulting to PNR (Passenger Name Record) problems	2.45	D
Composite Mean	2.58	A

The negative effects of computerized reservation system was agreed on replacing manpower, investing a lot on training new staff and limiting man's capabilities due to depending more on the system (2.62 respectively). However, the respondents disagree that the system will be abused which will result to to PNR (Passenger Name Record). The composite mean of 2.58 which is agreement means that the computerized reservation system still needs areas for improvement.

Table 3 shows the technical problems encountered by travel agencies in using CRS.

From the table, the composite mean of 2.16 means that travel agencies sometimes experienced technical problems in using computerized reservation system. Among the cited problems, unavailability of communication lines and difficulty on the system-network connections resulting to transactions not generated to its components got the

highest weighted mean of 2.25. While another problem sometimes encountered only are high cost of subscription fee (2.20), lack of proper linkages with other CRS (2.10) and unauthorized access to information (1.92) .

Table 3
Technical Problems Encountered by Travel Agencies in Using CRS

Technical Problems	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
a. Unavailability of communication lines	2.25	S
b. Lack of proper linkages with other CRS	2.10	S
c. Unauthorized access to information	1.92	S
d. High cost of subscription fee	2.20	S
e. Difficulty on the system-network connections resulting to transactions not generated to its components	2.25	S
Composite Mean	2.14	S

Table 4 shows the human problems encountered by travel agencies in using CRS.

Table 4
Human Problems Encountered by Travel Agencies in using CRS

Human Problems	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
a. Headache and other health problems	2.02	S
b. Unavailability of computer technician	1.88	S
c. Lack of proper training in operating the computer reservation system.	1.90	S
d. Lack of human touch due to relying more on the system's capabilities.	2.18	S
e. Unfamiliar features and commands that crop up during actual booking and ticketing.	2.18	S
Composite Mean	2.03	S

The human problems encountered by travel agencies were less experienced by its users, the same with technical problems. Lack of human touch due to relying more on the system's capabilities and unfamiliar features and commands that crop up during actual booking and ticketing, both got weighted mean of 2.18.

Headache and other health problems (2.02), lack of proper training in operating the system (1.90), and unavailability of computer technicians were also observed as occasional problem with a weighted mean of 1.88.

Table 5 shows the devices used by travel agencies to solve problems in using CRS.

Table 5
Devices Used by Travel Agencies to Solve Problems

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
a. Establishing proper linkages with communication companies.	3.18	A
b. Establishing rapport with other CRS companies.	3.12	A
c. Installation of built-in system security features.	3.15	A
d. Encouraging the government to allow other CRS vendors to participate and to operate in the country.	3.10	A
e. Availability of help-desk through communication lines.	3.35	A
Composite Mean	3.18	A

Respondents agreed on the devices used by travel agencies to solve problems regarding the use of computerized reservation system. Availability of help desk through communication lines achieved the highest weighted mean of 3.3. This is followed by proper linkages with communication companies(3.18). On line help is very important especially when one is doing something then suddenly it has to stop because the main server has shutdown. Communication companies should pay attention to this kind of situation because a minute of interruption is a big lost for its subscribers.

As a whole these devices had a total weighted mean of 3.18 wherein respondents agreed that these counter measurements are useful in dealing with such problems.

Table 6 shows the human techniques employed by travel agencies to solve the problem encountered in using CRS.

Table 6
Human Techniques Employed By Travel Agencies to Solve Problems

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
a. Provide a free-stress working environment	3.38	A
b. Availability of at least one computer technician within the premise	2.78	A
c. Regular training of staff	3.32	A
d. Concentrate on sales and customer service rather than computer transactions	3.02	A
e. Availability of a person-to-person assistance and on-the-spot solutions by a CRS company	3.18	A
Composite Mean	3.14	A

Human techniques employed by travel agencies to solve problems encountered by the user is very important to work things out and achieve the goal of the company with a composite mean of 3.14. To provide a free-stress working environment helps a lot in motivating the workers and help them to stay fit and healthy (3.38), Regular training of staff (3.32), this is true to eliminate waste and to achieve total guest satisfaction.

Availability of a person-to-person assistance and on-the-spot solution (3.18), concentrate on sales and customer service rather than computer transactions (3.02), availability of computer technician within the premise is a must (2.78) because by nature, there are problems that could only be solved by a person who has expertise in that field.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The commonly used computerized reservation system used in different travel agencies in Metro Manila are ABACUS, AMADEUS and GALILEO. The computerized reservation system has a positive effect in improving company's efficiency and productivity. Most travel agencies avail of these CRS as it enhances comfort due to technology as there are different devices and human techniques employed by the system to enhance the usefulness of computerized reservation system. Generally, the computerized reservation system is not perfect, for there are problems encountered in the use of the system like technical problem and human problem which maybe immediately addressed.

To address the problems encountered by travel agencies in the use of this system they need to continuously improve the system. Although, it somehow replaces manpower; human touch is still important in performing any kinds of tasks. As a whole, both the positive and the negative effects of CRS contributed much to the development of travel agencies and the tourism industry. CRS is one of the most important tools of any travel agencies to generate more profit and to achieve total guest satisfaction and ensure customer retention.

Travel agencies should acquire this system not to become too dependent with computer transactions but at the same time to improve their efficiency through customer service, since a travel agency is a service industry. Proper training in operating the system should be conducted since it is very important to eliminate waste and to produce more benefits for both the industry and their clientele. The CRS vendors should establish support and proper linkages with each other to have better transactions and lesser competition. The researchers would like to encourage the government to allow the participation of other CRS vendors to operate in the country to effect lesser cost of subscription fee and more business for the tourism industry.

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