RESEARCH ISSUE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Like many other industries the tourism industry integrates robotics in almost every step of the holiday distribution chain (Papathanassis, 2017). As the tourism industry is very service intensive, the question of whether or not tourists are willing to interact with robots while being on holiday, is relevant for key players, such as cruise companies. Knowing the attitudes of passengers towards robots and the factors affecting their attitude expands the knowledge of cruise companies about the willingness of their target group to interact with such technologies. The use of robots on cruise ships for example would also have implications on job assignments and skills needed by employees. Due to the continuing growth of the cruise sector and the novelty of installing robots on cruise ships, research lacks understanding on how to make use of robots in cruise tourism (CLIA, 2017 & Papathanassis).

RESEARCH QUESTION

Which variables influence the passengers' acceptance of service robots on cruise ships?

CURRENT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH STATUS

So far, to be best of my knowledge, robotics as a topic has not been issued tourism journals. Therefore, the current scientific research status of literature refers to research studying the acceptance factors of service and social robots in general. According to De Graaf et al (2015) the use of a robot depends on a person's personal innovativeness as well as the perceived enjoyment while interacting. Moreover, human like embodiment and human like behaviour are influencing factors (De Graaf et al., 2015). Papathanassis (2017) further underlines the importance of entertainment. The verbal and non-verbal communication of a robot influences the attitude towards using a robot (Tampus et al, 2018). Klamer (2010) emphazises the importance of a natural, fluid and familiar communication style. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1985) suggests variables such as design features, perceived usefulness and ease of use.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question, the following steps could be undertaken: Firstly, a systematic literature review should be performed in order to identify influencing variables in relation to the acceptance of service and social robots. Secondly, the TAM should be modified with the influencing variables found in the literature review. The modified model is the basis for the hypothesis development. To test the influence of the identified variables and thus the hypothesis, a quantitative survey method within the cruise tourism sector should be conducted.

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