

The Metaverse in the Hotel Industry in Bangkok, Thailand :A review and future study directions

เมตาเวิร์สในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรมในกรุงเทพมหานคร ประเทศไทย: การทบทวนและทิศทางการศึกษาในอนาคต

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to review the recent trends and guidelines the future studying direction by integrating the concept of metaverse to the hotel industry, especially in the area of Bangkok, Thailand. The concept of creating metaverse experiences is consider as a starting point to generate a new direction to study and to generate a theoretical and practical contribution in the future that align with the global trend continuously.

Keywords : Metaverse; Hotel; Bangkok; Thailand

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของบทความนี้เพื่อทบทวนแนวโน้มและชีวะแนวทางในการศึกษาในอนาคตโดยการบูรณาการแนวคิดเมตาเวิร์สเข้าไปในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรม โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในบริบทของกรุงเทพมหานคร ในประเทศไทย โดยแนวคิดหลักที่นำมาใช้ในการทบทวนแนวโน้มและชีวะแนวทางในการศึกษา คือ การสร้างประสบการณ์เมตาเวิร์สอันเป็นแนวคิดที่จุดประกายในการสร้างทิศทางใหม่ในการศึกษาเพื่อนำไปสู่การสร้างประโยชน์ในเชิงทฤษฎีและเชิงปฏิบัติในอนาคตที่สอดรับกับแนวโน้มของโลกที่เกิดขึ้นในปัจจุบันอย่างต่อเนื่อง

คำสำคัญ : เมตาเวิร์ส; โรงแรม; กรุงเทพมหานคร; ประเทศไทย

Introduction

The world's hotel industry confronted a significant challenge not only as a consequence of COVID-19 but also the disruptive technologies between physical and digital world. The terms of metaverse were enabled via the Internet 3.0 to explain the virtual space focused on social connectivity to creates a sense of existence and thereby attracts attention as well as the consumer were increasingly choosing the metaverse hospitality and travel experiences for goods and services (Gursoy, Malodia, & Dhir, 2022; Hsu, Ting, Lui, Chen, & Cheah, 2022). Hence, the challenge implies that all of the business unit in hotel industry need to be aware and prepare the disruptive technologies expeditiously. Especially, the country or province was awarded as the best destination in the world before COVID-19 might not guarantee the future result during difficulty and complexity era.

Thailand has been recognized as one of the most developed tourism markets in the Asian region because the country has presented strong growth rates in terms of challenging and investing in high-end hotels among Thai and international hotel chains, for instance, Dusit

International, Centara, Accor hotels or Starwood (Krungsri Research, 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Furthermore, in 2019, Forbes reported that Bangkok has been acknowledged as ranking first out of ten attractive destination cities for international tourists, with a total of 20.05 million visitors who stay for an average 5- night visit and who spend USD173 per day approximately (Hamel, 2019; Talty, 2019). Kelly (2021) also mentions the reasons why people around the world selected Thailand as the best destination in the world such as Thai food is a good taste, the cheap cost of transportation, the people were friendly, the weather of three seasons in Thailand were appropriate for traveler, and the temples over 40,000 temples established around Thailand.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) also reported the six factors why international tourists around the world visited Bangkok includes 1. Temples (i.e., Wat Arun Ratchawararam) 2. Chinatown (i.e., Yaowarat) 3. Local shopping (i.e., Khlong San Market) 4. Museums (The Bangkok National Museum) 5. Trip boat journey (i.e., Chao Phraya River), and 6. Shopping malls (i.e., Siam Paragon) (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2019). Although, Bangkok, Thailand had ranked as a number one of the best destinations in the world in 2019 but the circumstances of the epidemic of the Covid-19 virus, which started in December 2019, greatly affecting Thai tourism and world tourism as a cause of disruption to international travel including affecting the number of foreign tourists entering in Bangkok, Thailand.

According to the latest data from the Department of Tourism and Sports Economy Ministry of Tourism and Sports The cumulative number of foreign tourists arriving in Thailand between January and December 2020 was 6.7 million, a decrease from the same period of 2019 which was approximately 39.9 million or a contraction of approximately 83.2%. This epidemic of COVID-19 (See Figure 1) (Thailand Development Research Institute, 2021).

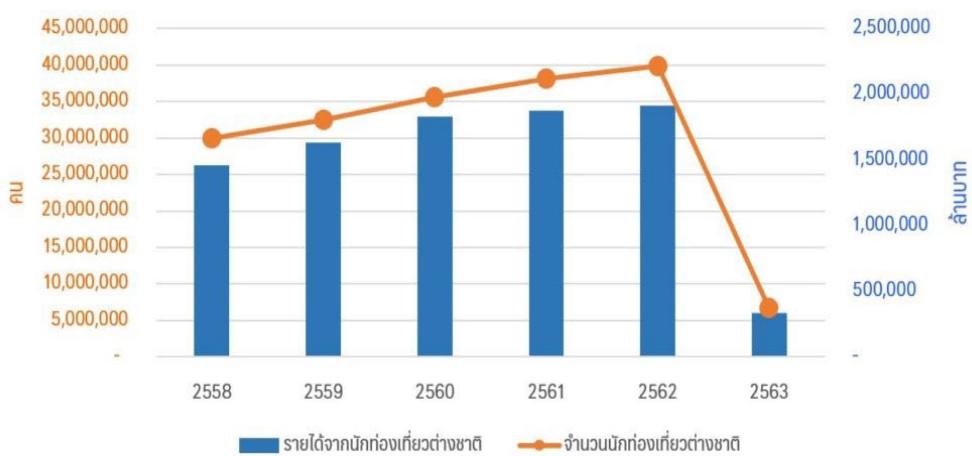


Figure 1 Number of Tourists and Revenue
(Thailand Development Research Institute, 2021)

Furthermore, the world ahead of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) was volatile and uncertain as well as a result of this Covid-19 crisis, the future of world and Thai tourism will not be the same anymore, Thailand must have health and safety standards in both the system and the safety management system clean in tourism. Including the trend of self-travel more to avoid congestion and a Thai tourism strategy that will shift from a broad customer market to a quality, creative, responsible and high-value destination (Chanthaphong & Ekamapaisan, 2021). All of which resulted in the business having to make major adjustments as follows: (1) Developing effective communication skills within the organization to reduce the anxiety of employees who have to work under pressure from uncertain situations (2) Risk management and problem-solving skills which requires many skills such as creativity anxiety control and (3) the adoption of technology, such as hotels and restaurants, to use technology to help reduce contact with customers, such as the use of QR codes for payment including reaching more customers (Chanthaphong & Ekamapaisan, 2021; Gursoy et al., 2022).

Consequently, the hotel industry in Bangkok needs to adjust the firms to confront the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity through utilizing the advantage of disruptive technologies, particularly, the integration between the concept of metaverse and business industry in the context of Bangkok, Thailand to guideline the hotel industry to

performs the business under chaoticity and complexity and to generate the return on investment to this sector as well.

Metaverse and Hotel Industry

Metaverse as a term of science fiction author “Neal Stephenson” invented the term in his 1992 novel Snow Crash that implied as the creation of the environment of the real world and technology to create a virtual world community that combined objects around and the environment to be connected as one by using virtual reality (VR) technology to connect effortlessly to become the same world space (Sparkes, 2021). Furthermore, several scholars also proposed the integrating between metaverse and hospitality context such as hospitality and tourism industry (Gursoy et al., 2022), food and retail industry (Cha, 2022), and tourism platform (Wei, 2022). Therefore, the concept of metaverse was applied to hospitality and tourism industry, food and retail industry, and tourism platform create the challenge of hospitality and tourism fields was not just competition and strengthening in offline channels but also was necessary to create an advantage by adapting to meet the new normal lifestyle and break the limitations that exist in the real world by applying technology. Especially, the creating metaverse experiences into the context of hotel industry.

Gursoy, et al. (2022) proposed the model of creating metaverse experiences (Figure 2) through four quadrants (lifestyle, promotions, designing amusements, and designing adventures) and two dimensional (motives and interactivity) following:

- (1) *Low degree of interactivity with hedonic motives* represents the designing amusements that customers do not seek information or demand to interact without reflexively towards activities such as virtual flights and concerts.
- (2) *High degree of interactivity with hedonic motives* represents the designing adventures that customers required a lot of information and interaction involuntarily towards activities such as metaverse casinos, kayaking iceberg, virtual skydiving.
- (3) *Low degree of interactivity with functional motives* refers to the lifestyle of customers that related to delight their utilitarian desires in the virtual world with

low degree of interaction such as virtual retailing of NFTs (Non-Fungible Token), travel booking, and educating users.

(4) *High degree of interactivity with functional motives* refers to the promotion that required a lot of information and interaction from customers aspect towards activities such as digital twining of destinations, hotels, and resorts as well as experiences augmenting physical experiences.

	Lifestyle - Virtual retailing of NFTs - Travel booking - Educating users	Promotions - Digital twining of destinations, hotels, and resorts - Augmenting physical experiences
Functional	Designing amusements - Virtual flights - Virtual concerts	Designing adventures - Metaverse casinos - Kayaking icebergs - Virtual skydiving
Hedonic	Low	High

Interactivity

Figure 2 Creating metaverse experiences
(Gursoy et al., 2022)

Accordingly, the model of creating experiences implied the disruption of technology and innovation had become a key tool towards expanding the reach of people's travel experiences to create a new direction and experience towards tourism sector on augmented reality technology to generate a unique travel experience for customers around the world.

Future Research Directions

Gursoy, et al. (2022) suggested the direction of future research in the perspectives of hospitality and tourism experiences (e.g., “What changes can the metaverse bring to the hospitality and tourism industry?” marketing aspect e.g., “Metaverse Experience Journey”), and hotel aspects (e.g., “How effective are virtual hotels, restaurants, and event venues in

promoting property, generating leads, increasing conversion rates, etc.?”). Furthermore, Marriott International, one of the world's largest hotel chains from the United States had collaborated with digital artists to create to launch of NFTs marks the beginning of the journey into the world of Metaverse in 2022 to create a clearer identity in the Metaverse world and build relationships between users of Marriott International with changing customers behavior currently (Bardwell, 2021). Nevertheless, a few researchers and previous literatures mentions the impact of metaverse towards employees or organization behavior perspectives rather than hospitality and tourism industry, marketing, and revenue aspects, particularly, in the context of Bangkok, Thailand.

The hotels industry as a service business that heavily rely on human resources rather than machine resources to directly serve and participate with guests or tourists throughout the world. Hotels need to equip their employees with several skill sets, knowledge, and a working attitude that fits with service standards to meet guests or tourists' expectations, as well as to differentiate themselves from their competitors, especially in metaverse era. For instance, the organizational climate and job satisfaction among the hotel employees had a positive influenced towards employee engagement (Srisakun, 2018), burnout issue always occurred in the hotel industry (Srisakun, 2022), and utilizing the passion for service to minimize the degree of job demands – resources towards among the frontline employees in Bangkok, Thailand (Srisakun & Oentoro, 2022).

Thus, the future study should utilize the model of creating experiences (Gursoy et al., 2022) to empirically generate the practical and academic contributions in the hotel industry based on the context of Bangkok, Thailand by educating the impact of metaverse towards employees or organization behavior perspectives through qualitative, quantitative or mix methods approaches and discuss the similarity and difference between Thai and other context.

Conclusion

The disruptive technologies and innovation enforced the hotel industry has changed to metaverse dramatically and automatically. The previous researchers recognized the importance of study the metaverse in hospitality and tourism industry in the perspective of customers and marketing in several context, a few researchers study the model of creating experiences (Gursoy et al., 2022) and indicates an empirical result to

spread the scope of research on the metaverse and hotel industry in the future. Nevertheless, the research methodology required to appropriately design in terms of qualitative and quantitative to generate the theoretical contribution and practical contribution, the model of creating experiences (Gursoy et al., 2022) might or might not support the empirical result in the context of Bangkok, Thailand also required to further investigation.

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