The digital traveller: implications for data ethics and data governance in tourism and hospitality

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Abstract

Purpose – Big data and analytics are being increasingly used by tourism and hospitality organisations (THOs) to provide insights and to inform critical business decisions. Particularly in times of crisis and uncertainty data analytics supports THOs to acquire the knowledge needed to ensure business continuity and the rebuild of tourism and hospitality sectors. Despite being recognised as an important source of value creation, big data and digital technologies raise ethical, privacy and security concerns. This paper aims to suggest a framework for ethical data management in tourism and hospitality designed to facilitate and promote effective data governance practices.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper adopts an organisational and stakeholder perspective through a scoping review of the literature to provide an overview of an under-researched topic and to guide further research in data ethics and data governance.

Findings – The proposed framework integrates an ethical-based approach which expands beyond mere compliance with privacy and protection laws, to include other critical facets regarding privacy and ethics, an equitable exchange of travellers' data and THOs ability to demonstrate a social license to operate by building trusting relationships with stakeholders.

Originality/value – This study represents one of the first studies to consider the development of an ethical data framework for THOs, as a platform for further refinements in future conceptual and empirical research of such data governance frameworks. It contributes to the advancement of the body of knowledge in data ethics and data governance in tourism and hospitality and other industries and it is also beneficial to practitioners, as organisations may use it as a guide in data governance practices.

Keywords Hospitality, Tourism, Data governance, Data ethics, COVID-19, Digital privacy

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The rapid development and adoption of technology represents a key megatrend and driving force in business (Kraus *et al.*, 2019), as new technologies enhance customer service performance and enable organisations to conduct better research on customers, competitors and the broader market environment (Foroudi *et al.*, 2017). This tremendous impact of technology on business is ever more prominent in the tourism and hospitality industry (Yeoman, 2012, 2018; Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2018), which provides the highest number of products and services sold online in most countries (Navío-Marco *et al.*, 2018). Technological developments not only create changes in consumer behaviour but they also generate changes in the way tourism and hospitality organisations (THOs) interact with their customers, i.e. travellers (Yallop and Séraphin, 2020; Urquhart, 2019). Nowadays, business disruption is further fuelled by technological advances, as organisations in the tourism and hospitality sectors can use new ways afforded by technology to reach their customers and as a result, reshaping ways of engagement with customers to aid service and convenience (Boumphrey, 2019; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020).

Moreover, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has generated a prevalent and severe disruption of THOs globally (Jamal and Budke, 2020). Hirt *et al.* (2020) suggest that the next wave of disruption will occur, with a significant change in customer behaviours and business models (Kraus *et al.*, 2019). Without a doubt, the sudden changes in the way THOs need to rethink the way they do business to survive in times of crisis is hastening the existing wave of disruption. Indeed, a recent report advised that COVID-19 will create lasting changes in consumers' attitudes and behaviour which organisations will have to cater to (Stalenis *et al.* 2020). Even more so, due to the severe impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and

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hospitality industry worldwide, these consumer behaviour changes will be felt more acutely, with organisations having to quickly adapt to these changes to survive and maintain competitive advantage (Yallop and Aliasghar, 2020). More than being just a disruptive event, the outbreak of COVID-19 is also perceived as an opportunity to rethink, adapt and alter practices in the industry (Gossling *et al.*, 2020; Lapointe, 2020; Séraphin, 2020).

Likewise, a series of key technological developments significantly impact tourism and hospitality and related sectors (Getz, 2012) and may also have an important role in ensuring business continuity and the rebuild of tourism and hospitality sectors post-COVID-19, through the adoption of technology innovation intended to support survival and recovery strategies in the sector (Nanni and Ulqinaku, 2020).

Indeed, recent travel and tourism industry reports suggest that in the next five years technological advances will have a significant impact, with big data and analytics being the most important technology to impact the industry (Bremmer, 2019; The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2020a, 2020b). Certainly, in the tourism and hospitality industry, traveller data and information are crucial to organisations; data and data analytics are being increasingly used by organisations to provide insights and to inform critical business decisions (Yang *et al.*, 2019). More so, recent reports suggest that, due to the unprecedented challenge posed by the pandemic, the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors will witness two main transformation areas in which digital technologies will shape the future of the sectors, namely, touchless travel and digital health passports, henceforth the rise of the "digital traveller" where more personal data and information, cryptographic data and even medical/health data may be required from travellers (Leong, 2020). These emerging digital technologies are being supported by digital systems such as the World Economic Forum's "Known Traveller Digital Identity" initiative (WEF, 2020).

However, despite its many benefits, technology can also have negative impacts on consumers because it can jeopardise people's autonomy and can breach their rights (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019; Martin *et al.*, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2020; Laczniak and Murphy, 2006). The pledge of better services and improved quality brought by data-driven technologies comes with concerns regarding ethical practices of the entities to which consumers provide their data freely every day (Digital Future Society, 2019). Thus, technology has significant consequences for privacy and security (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019; Conger *et al.*, 2013; Culnan and Bies, 2003; Sarathy and Robertson, 2003) and, consequently, it has significant implications for any data governance frameworks developed and implemented by organisations in ensuring ethical practices. Moreover, technology experts are of the opinion that, because of the fast move towards more insightful, automated and data-driven organisations, the importance of data ethics and governance will grow further in the future (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2019).

Although privacy and security issues are relevant to a range of industries, they are particularly salient in the tourism and hospitality sectors, especially because in recent years tourism and hospitality products and services have become the largest category of products and services sold over the internet in most countries (Navío-Marco *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, if compared to other sectors, the amount of consumer personal data involved in business operations is significantly larger in tourism and hospitality, a highly information-intensive industry (Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2019). Thus, not only do travellers need to process a significant amount of information (pre-trip planning, in-destination experiences, post-trip evaluation and data sharing) but also, they are often required to give up personal information in exchange for services to enable and enhance their travel experiences (e.g. booking processes, visa applications, access to discounts, etc.). The specific significance of consumer privacy research in tourism and hospitality has been recently stressed by Bahar *et al.* (2021), who emphasise the need for more research in this sector due to the sector's prominent particularities as a data-driven industry, with strong links with the digital environment (Bahar *et al.*, 2021). In addition, although many service industries have been disrupted by digitalisation particularly during the pandemic, tourism and hospitality consumers have been most strongly disrupted (Bahar *et al.*, 2021), with Bart *et al.* (2005) also indicating the high information risks attached to travel sectors, for which data privacy is of utmost importance compared to most other industries and sectors (Bart *et al.*, 2005).

Against this backdrop, this study focusses on the issues pertaining to data ethics and data governance in the tourism and hospitality sector, an under-researched area and the subsequent implications for consumer/traveller data. The paper's main objective is to develop a conceptual framework for ethical data management and data governance in tourism and hospitality so that ethical and security considerations are carefully thought of in the collection, storage and analysis of tourism and hospitality data and information, in the best interests of travellers/customers and all other stakeholders involved (i.e. THOs and their employees, government, authorities, industry associations, complementary industries and sectors, the general public, etc.). This is important, as data governance and tourists' privacy has somewhat slight coverage in the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, with the code pointing towards the fact that international tourists are not to be discriminated by any means compared to domestic tourists in terms of collected personal data and information, especially when stored electronically. In this context, the proposed framework can become a useful tool for the various actors of the tourism and hospitality industry, who, nowadays practically depend on operating with big data.

This research responds to recent calls for more conceptual studies in consumer data ethics and data governance in business (Yang *et al.*, 2019), tourism and hospitality (Bahar *et al.*, 2021; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020; Yallop and Aliasghar, 2020) and further conceptual research in generating a deeper understanding of business stakeholders' convergence in safeguarding consumer data (Martin *et al.*, 2020). This study contributes to the advancement of the body of knowledge in consumer data ethics and data governance by developing a holistic ethical data management and data governance framework that expands beyond a mere compliance-based approach to an all-inclusive ethical and socially responsible approach to data governance. Moreover, the paper's contributions are aligned with the Marketing Science Institute's research priorities for 2022–2024 concerning the

increasing importance of preserving consumers' privacy (MSI, 2020).

The framework developed in this paper seeks to guide THOs on ways to manage their data assets responsibly and maximise the value of big data, therefore, to facilitate and promote good practice regarding data. The development of a framework for ethical data management and data governance in tourism and hospitality is important, as the lack of a framework for good practice may limit the scope, quantity and quality of research in a specific area, may lead to researchers' and practitioners' disengagement from the area (Canosa, *et al.*, 2018a, 2018b), which, in turn, may also hinder the reliability and validity of research carried in the specific area (Khoo-Lattimore, 2015). Likewise, the development and application of sound frameworks and good practice in the industry may inform responsible education management, and therefore, may ensure the nurturing of responsible managers and practitioners (Séraphin and Yallop, 2020; Séraphin and Vo-Than, 2020; Visser, 2015). Beyond the tourism and hospitality realm, the original stakeholder's framework developed in this paper has the aim to provide a platform for different organisations and policymakers to shape and refine privacy norms and policies to address digital privacy concerns in online services.

The framework does not provide an exhaustive account of all possible ethical considerations, but a scoping review of literature, which has the purpose to identify the scope and extent of existing research on a topic and to provide an exploratory overview of the topic, in this case, data ethics and data governance (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2020). Scoping reviews are increasingly used in the social sciences (Moher *et al.*, 2015), including tourism studies, to provide an overview of an under-researched topic and to guide further research in the area (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, from a methodological point of view, this study used a problem-focussed approach (Gilson and Goldberg, 2015) based on a scoping and topic-centre review (Hammond and Wellington, 2013) of academic literature, as well as business/industry literature and reports as means of guiding the development of a conceptual framework. Consequently, the conceptual model developed is based on existing knowledge and theory reviewed in this paper, by bridging existing theories and broadening the scope of our thinking (Gilson and Goldberg, 2015) around data ethics and data governance. To conduct a scoping and topic-centre literature review, studies on data ethics and data governance were identified through a comprehensive web-search of relevant terms (e.g. data privacy, data ethics, data security, data breaches, data governance, data compliance, big data, data sharing) using several electronic databases (e.g. Business Source Complete (EBSCO), Passport, Emerald Fulltext, Web of Science, Google Scholar), other relevant industry and practice-orientated business and governmental reports (e.g. IBM, Gartner, Information Commissioner's Office [ICO], Price waterhouse Coopers (PwC), European Commission, Privacy Commissioner) and a review of reference lists from the academic and industry articles identified. Predominantly, the search covered literature published in the past two decades (2000–2020) which reflects the growing interest in privacy issues due to the continued growth in the use of mobile internet devices (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019) and the subsequent implications to customer privacy (Akhter, 2014) and it focussed on the contexts of digital consumers, marketing and tourism and hospitality more specifically.

To our knowledge, this study represents one of the first studies to consider the development of an ethical data framework for THOs, as a platform for further refinements in future conceptual and empirical research of such data governance frameworks.

To achieve the study's objective the paper begins with a brief review of key theoretical concepts related to big data, digital privacy and security, personal data sharing, data ethics and data governance as the underpinnings of this study. It continues with the introduction and discussion of the proposed conceptual framework of data governance to then draw conclusions and direct towards further research avenues in data ethics and governance in tourism and hospitality.

2. Big data in tourism and hospitality

Since the 1990s, data and data analysis have been extensively used in business decision-making (Al-Ruithe *et al.*, 2019). An increased amount of structured and unstructured data are gathered and used by organisations to maintain and gain a competitive advantage (Nunan and Di Domenico, 2013). This affluence of digital data (Barocas and Nissenbaum, 2014; Wang, 2013) is being created by consumers online by means of mobile devices use (Shilton, 2009), a wealth of data shared on social networking platforms which is available online (Nov, Naaman and Chen, 2010) and data deliberately gathered by THOs booking systems or systems of customer relations management (Yallop and Séraphin, 2020).

In volatile and uncertain business environments and, more specifically, in the current context of COVID-19, big data are increasingly required to acquire knowledge in the tourism and hospitality industry to reduce the risks associated with uncertainty and to support policy decisions in mitigating the effects of crises in tourism destinations (Williams and Baláz, 2015; Gallego and Font, 2020).

The concept of Big Data has been established because of the wealth of data and data processing on a large scale (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019). Big Data is defined by Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013) as data collection done on a large scale to obtain new insights and create value for markets and organisations. Big data refers to data obtained from several internal and external data sources and displays four key dimensions as follows: "volume" (the large volume of data that has been generated and stored), "variety" (data can be sourced from a large number of structured, semi-structured and unstructured data sources), "velocity" (the speed at which data are generated and need to be processed to meet the demands) and "veracity" (Laney, 2001; IBM, 2014a). "Veracity" is the fourth dimension, which was added to the other three dimensions to address issues relating to trust and uncertainty in the analysis of data (Ward and Baker, 2013).

Another significant characteristic of big data is "value", represented by the validity and usefulness of data. When data offers insights, it becomes a value differentiator and an important source of competitive advantage (Gupta and Gupta, 2016; Addo-Tenkorang and Helo, 2016). Big data is valuable to THOs, as they assist in improving business decisions and in deriving research and analytics insight (IBM, 2014b;

Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2016). In particular, the use of big data allows THOs to enable service personalisation, convenience and generally, achieve competitive advantage (Evans, 2020; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020). At the same time, effective employment of big data analytics drives cost and process efficiencies, business strategy and change (MicroStrategy, 2018). Yallop and Séraphin (2020, p. 2) provided representative examples of how big data and analytics are being used in tourism and hospitality, from revenue management, marketing purposes, to customer experience and reputation management. More recently, due to the challenges posed by COVID-19, big data and analytics play a major part in forecasting in tourism and hospitality, for the purposes of early detection of reactivation of tourism markets and monitoring of markets in real time to enable appropriate actions by adjusting THOs' strategies and policy decisions (Gallego and Font, 2020) and for timely decision-making to ensure health and safety (Sigala, 2020).

However, although big data is seen as valuable, in the academic literature there are also wider privacy and ethical issues about it (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019; Barocas and Nissenbaum, 2014; Richards and King, 2014; Román, 2007; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020; Petrescu *et al.*, 2020; Frik and Gaudeul, 2020), along with issues about security (Nunan and Di Domenico, 2013) and data breaches (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier, 2013), which have significantly increased in recent years in tourism and hospitality. These ethical concerns around personal data sharing, data privacy and security will be addressed next.

3. Digital privacy and data security in tourism and hospitality

Since the proliferation of the internet, data privacy has been an important research topic in marketing. According to Martin and Murphy's (2017) comprehensive examination of privacy-related scholarly research in marketing, privacy has been commonly examined from two main perspectives as follows: assessing consumer privacy concerns and depicting the factors that drive consumers' willingness to disclose information. Marketing research has also emphasised the influence of perceived data privacy on consumer outcomes (Eastlick *et al.*, 2006; Fortes and Rita, 2016; Phelps *et al.*, 2001), with main findings revealing that privacy issues significantly impact consumers attitudes and intentions towards organisations and brands.

Personal data are data that relate to a person who can be identified from those data or those data and other information (ICO, 2015). Privacy is a subjective term because it is context-dependent, i.e. dependent on "the characteristics of the environment in which an individual happens to be at a given time" (Masur, 2018, p. 312) and has been defined in various ways across different disciplines (Ioannou *et al.*, 2020), therefore lacking a common definition. Digital privacy definitions are also vague, scholars often having to resort to different theories to support its definition (Ashworth and Free, 2006). What remains certain though is that digital privacy has become a rising concern due to the growth of social media, e-commerce and online surveillance termed as "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2015) or "data capitalism" (West, 2019), which is seen as a system of information accumulation by which organisations aim to anticipate and change consumer behaviours as a means to create revenue and market control (Zuboff, 2015; Blakesley and Yallop, 2019; Hall and Ram, 2019). Nevertheless, a clear and relevant definition of digital privacy is that provided by Clarke (1999), who describes digital privacy as people's interest in maintaining personal space, without interference from other people or organisations. However, with the increase in online consumer activity and with organisations using the internet of things and data analytics to gain competitive advantage through product and service personalisation, recent consumer marketing research highlights important subsequent problems such as data privacy, security and significant issues of personally identifiable data during the analytic procedures (Petrescu *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, as Aguirre *et al.* (2016) suggested, organisations must use consumer data and information in a strategic manner to balance the personalisation-privacy paradox.

In tourism and hospitality service personalisation is essential (Volchek *et al.*, 2020; Morosan and DeFranco, 2015) – digital technologies and digital connectivity are the mechanisms driving these industries forward (Tanti and Buhalis, 2017; Volchek *et al.*, 2020) and so, to facilitate and ensure a high degree of service personalisation and convenience that allows THOs to gain competitive advantage, the collection of personal data is key. The collection of personal data that provide a good understanding of consumer attributes and lifestyles supports THOs in ensuring the provision of appropriate and desirable service products to their consumers. For this purpose, a wealth of personal data and information are being gathered by THOs and many organisations have already evolved in their digital endeavours (WEF, 2020). However, as Volchek *et al.* (2020) pointed out, travellers' awareness of personalisation through the use of their personal data to recognise their context and to filter out information that is not relevant to this context, motivates travellers to pay more attention to privacy and security issues.

Data and information collected may include, for example, particulars of travellers' interests, identity attributes or personally identifiable information (PII) such as date and place of birth and physical characteristics, dependant family information, as well as additional data that THOs can use for marketing purposes, sales and customer analysis (Yallop and Séraphin, 2020). In an increasing online and digital world, such additional data also comprise lifestyle information (e.g. hobbies, travel history and preferences), location data and browsing habits. Further, technological advances have created more opportunities for THOs to collect travellers' data, such as automated check-in kiosks collecting biometric data at airports, real-time surveillance systems for safety and security purposes and recent innovations in artificial intelligence (AI) have led to the use of automated systems such as intelligent personal assistants (robots) able to learn the interests and behaviour of travellers and respond appropriately (Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2020; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020).

Also, in Europe, tourism platforms such as Airbnb, Booking.com, Expedia and TripAdvisor have recently signed a data-sharing deal with the European Commission, which claims to enable public authorities to better understand the development of the "sharing economy" (or else called the "collaborative economy" covering industries such as tourism, hospitality and

transport, which represents a significant part of the European economy – 21% of European Union (EU) citizens used a website or app to book accommodation in 2019) and use these data as evidence-based support for policy decisions and regulations (Hellard, 2020).

In addition, due to the risks posed nowadays by COVID-19, there is increased support for the effective sharing and managing of traveller's health information and other data, with digital identity solutions meant to assist organisations, health and government authorities in the implementation of tracing processes intended to help monitor people movement. However, although such data initiatives are claiming to respect individual's anonymity and privacy laws (Pollina and Busvine, 2020; Hellard, 2020), data privacy experts point out that there are major risks to privacy and that sharing such sensitive data is problematic and any new surveillance and contact tracing software solutions used by organisations must be secure and must protect personal privacy (Brough and Martin, 2020; Macdonald, 2020; Pollina and Busvine, 2020).

Moreover, in a coronavirus-stricken world, undoubtedly, vaccination passports seem like a desirable solution needed to revive the tourism industry, which is estimating more than US $1tn in losses due to COVID-19 (UNWTO, 2020a, 2020b). A vaccination passport is likely to include the name and date of birth of the traveller, date and type of vaccinations or details about a recent test or recovery, allowing consumers to travel, enter business establishments such as gyms, hotels and restaurants and attend events (Dare, 2021; Weissinger, 2021). It should provide a secure system that protects consumers' privacy. However, vaccination passports, as with any digital system, creates several challenges, including how best to ensure security and privacy and to get consumers to trust the verification systems (Parry, 2021; Weissinger, 2021). In addition, like with other COVID-19 tracing apps, people are concerned about government and private-sector data surveillance, as vaccine passports apps may link identity to personal health information and may be used to establish detailed personal profiles, including movement patterns (Weissinger, 2021).

Commonly, the governance of individuals' personal data is the responsibility of national independent authorities. For example, in the UK, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) affords data protection to consumers online through the Data Protection Act (UK Government, 2018a, 2018b) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GDPR has a significant impact on international data flows far beyond the EU and provides for different tools and guidelines to transfer personal data between countries only if an adequate level of data protection is guaranteed. In EU countries data protection authorities oversee the enforcement of data protection laws, provide expert advice on data protection issues and handle complaints regarding violations of the GDPR and the relevant national laws (European Commission, 2020). Similarly, in New Zealand, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner works to protect personal data through the recently revised Privacy Act 2020, which has the purpose to promote people's confidence that their personal data and information are secure and will be treated properly by organisations (Privacy Commissioner, 2020).

When sharing personal data and information online, travellers may have to overcome their data disclosure risks' perceptions. Organisations can reduce consumer concerns by encouraging trust (Frik and Gaudeul, 2020) and studies investigating considerations that influence consumers' willingness to share data online suggest that key factors are trust [e.g. trusting the organisation (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019), hence, the online service provided such as, for example, the online hotel app used; trusting the digital technologies used (Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2020)]; consumers' perceived data sensitivity (Weydert *et al.*, 2020); consumers' preference for privacy (Hunter and Taylor, 2020) and the overall value of information disclosure (Morosan and DeFranco, 2015; Blakesley and Yallop, 2019). National independent authorities' efforts (such as the ICO) focus on generating trust in the manner personal data are collected, used and shared online and increasing accountability and transparency in the processing of data (McQuater, 2018; Blakesley and Yallop, 2019).

As noted, privacy in tourism and hospitality has been the main data issue and concern for both scholars (Ioannou *et al.*, 2020; Hall and Ram, 2019; Pizam, 2013) and organisations for the past few years. The number of data breaches is rising and affecting the security of customers' data (Ameen *et al.*, 2021). This concern has been exacerbated because of recent high-profile data breaches (Armerding, 2018; PwC, 2016, 2017). A key example is the Marriott International data breach, a significant data breach that has impacted the organisation and its customers. This data breach affected approximately 500 million customers worldwide – PII was compromised and credit card data of over 100 million customers were stolen (Armerding, 2018; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020).

Recent industry surveys and reports have revealed that, worldwide, 49% of organisations expressed the view that the key concerns held by organisations are about data privacy and security (MicroStrategy, 2018). These concerns have become more evident at present due to the additional challenges posed by the global pandemic. Indeed, more recent research has identified that in the past two weeks of March 2020 alone the number of COVID-19-related cyber-attacks has increased significantly from a few hundred to as high as over 5,000. On average, more than 2,600 COVID-19-related cyber-attacks on internet users (including phishing emails, malicious website domains, misleading "health and safety" emails, disinformation spreading viruses that can produce a range of damages to a system as follows: ransomware, keyloggers or other types of personal information gathering and online scams) took place each day (Continuity Central, 2020). Similarly, 70% of business decision makers found data security to be a difficult task, which is not surprising considering that a significant amount of data that organisations collect, generate and store is often sensitive or private client data (Masergy, 2020).

As cyber-attacks have become a significant concern in tourism and hospitality, studies that addressed issues concerning data security and data breaches have focussed on evaluating the impacts of data and information security issues on THOs and their customers (Chen and Jai, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2013) and less on ways to avoid and pro-actively counteract such data security issues. For this reason, this study focusses on the development of an ethical data management framework and data governance for THOs. This is important because,

from previous studies, it becomes evident that if travellers perceive that the THO involved in the data breach has had a high level of responsibility in protecting their data and information, travellers' trust and their intention to re-visit the destination will decline substantially (Chen and Jai, 2019).

4. Data ethics and data governance

Data ethics defines the value judgements organisations make when gathering, analysing and distributing data and involves a comprehensive knowledge of data protection laws and the appropriate use of new technologies (UK Government, 2018b). These parameters entail a thorough understanding by organisations of compliance requirements in relation to data use and management. Data ethics, security and privacy represent a prime concern when collecting, sharing, storing and using big data by organisations (Yang *et al.*, 2019). Key ethical challenges in the use of big data for organisational purposes are related to the boundary between public good and private good (data), privacy and confidentiality, transparency, equity of access; and informed use of information (Tam and Kim, 2018). With the increased trends in the use of big data, analytics and personalisation, a key concern is the challenges big data present to maintaining the privacy of personal data and information (Bennett, 2019). The answer is a strong data governance framework which is developed to increase the accuracy, integration, access, security and management of data across the organisation and to manage its digital assets (Yang *et al.*, 2019).

Data governance represents a set of policies and procedures implemented by organisations to manage data (Yallop and Séraphin, 2020) and it refers to the "exercise of authority and control over the management of data" (Abraham *et al.*, 2019, p. 424). Data governance frameworks are frameworks developed to manage data as an important strategic asset (Abraham *et al.*, 2019), which offer the right sets of data and actionable insight for business decision-making (Riggins and Klamm, 2017). The key goal of data governance frameworks is to produce a competitive advantage through a holistic approach to crucial organisational data (Abraham *et al.*, 2019).

Although the topic of data governance is rising in importance, with several studies and previous literature aiming to develop data governance frameworks in various disciplines and sectors, the topic is fragmented (Abraham *et al.*, 2019). Earlier scientific and practice-based studies and reports on data governance suggest that research and publications on traditional data governance approaches concentrate on specific aspects of data governance, with a strong focus on issues relating to the quality of data, data lifecycle, security and compliance (Yang *et al.*, 2019; Abraham *et al.*, 2019; Ballard *et al.*, 2014; Otto, 2011; Tallon *et al.*, 2014) and less on privacy and ethical aspects of big data (Yang *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, such previous research consists of literature reviews related to data governance (Abraham *et al.*, 2019; Brous *et al.*, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2017; Rasouli *et al.*, 2016), albeit these reviews focus on limited areas of data governance, such as cloud data governance (Al-Ruithe *et al.*, 2019) or agile capabilities of data governance (Lillie and Eybers, 2019), with limited focus on and/or consideration of other conceptual areas (Abraham *et al.*, 2019).

And so, whilst traditional frameworks for data governance have been studied before (i.e. frameworks that mainly focus on data quality, compliance and the management of traditional structured data sets rather than unstructured, high-volume, high-variety and high-velocity data), Yang *et al.* (2019) contend that there is a dearth of big data governance frameworks in the literature and the existing ones are limited as they fail to consider big data environments that attract major challenges in terms of ethical considerations around big data privacy, transparency and other ethical aspects of data processing by organisations. Therefore, the development of a holistic ethical data management and data governance framework that, in addition to compliance-based concerns also consider ethical and social responsibility issues more thoroughly, becomes important. In addition, studies in tourism and hospitality are yet to examine ethical ways of managing data and effective data governance frameworks that may be used by THOs to ensure ethical data management practices. Although many service industries have been disrupted by online technology, the tourism and hospitality industry has been one of the earliest to be introduced to digital platforms and one of the most strongly disrupted by digitalisation (Bahar *et al.*, 2021). Researchers contend that data privacy is noticeably more important in tourism and travel than in other sectors, as the frequent practice of providing personal information required for travel reservations and other customer management procedures exacerbate information risk for customers (Bart *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, as online integration and data privacy issues are highly prevalent in this industry, tourism and hospitality provides a rich context for research into the phenomena of data governance and data privacy.

This paper aims to examine ethical ways of managing data and effective data governance frameworks, with the intent to generate more debates and discussions around the best ways to manage and govern data in THOs. This aspect becomes important, particularly in times of crisis and uncertainty due to COVID-19, when both organisations and travellers become that much more vulnerable and risk adverse and at a time when digital privacy and ethics are top strategic technology trends (Panetta, 2018). As Janeway (2012) argued, under uncertainty, it is crucial to do the right things instead of doing things right. Indeed, as Yallop and Aliasghar (2020) note, particularly during challenging times of crisis such as the pandemic, organisations must focus on the increasing data privacy and security concerns and develop data governance frameworks that effectively safeguard stakeholders data and information.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Panetta (2018) and Yallop and Séraphin (2020), discourses regarding privacy must be based on trust and ethics and should move from compliance-based questions to questions with a more ethical connotation, demonstrating a stronger concern about whether the organisation is indeed doing the right thing or not, even more so during the pandemic. Hence, addressing the increasing concerns about privacy and security of travellers' data becomes important for THOs – they must further their focus on the development of effective frameworks for data governance that expand past simple compliance with current data privacy laws to guarantee data security and protection for travellers and all other stakeholders.

Therefore, an effective data governance framework in tourism and hospitality would need to entail a holistic approach integrating good practice, not only in regard to data computing techniques and information assurance that drives efficient and competent business decisions (i.e. practices that comply in their entirety with data privacy and protection laws and policies) but also in relation to ethics (i.e. ethical practices). The next section of this paper proposes a framework for ethical data management and data governance in tourism and hospitality, a framework that, different from previous frameworks, incorporates an ethical-based approach, and therefore, expands beyond solely compliance-based approaches to data governance.

5. Proposed framework for ethical data management and data governance in tourism and hospitality

As noted earlier in this study, compliance with data privacy and protection laws is an imperative requirement for all THOs involved in the process of collection, storage, analysis and use of travellers' personal data. Good data governance enables THOs to meet their regulatory obligations in respect of compliance, ensuring travellers' online safety and security. However, an effective ethical-based approach in line with THOs strategic objectives is also essential to ensure that the processing and use of travellers' data and information in big data analytics that assist the THOs in maintaining and gaining competitive advantage, is carried out in a fair, transparent, responsible and ethical manner (Bennett, 2019; Abraham *et al.*, 2019). Overall, the proposed conceptual framework for ethical-based data management and data governance in THOs is captured in Figure 1 below.

This proposed data governance toolkit seeks to expand a compliance-based approach to a broader (in scope and content) ethical-based approach that, in addition to compliance issues, takes into consideration prevalent ethical considerations around privacy, an equitable exchange of travellers' data and information and, equally important, THOs ability to build trust amongst their stakeholders in their procedures and business practices (i.e. social license). Our data governance framework is different from existing frameworks presented in previous literature as it is developed within a conceptual philosophy formulated around ethics and trust (not just quality and compliance) as key concepts and constructs of ethical organisational data strategies that lead into more ethical approaches to data management by organisations.

5.1 Compliance

Firstly, from a legal/compliance perspective, THOs must implement suitable procedures to comply with international and national legislations on data collection, storage, use and disclosure of data. For example, the electronic/online collection and disclosure of personal data and information may be an offence under cybercrime legislation. Likewise, internationally, the GDPR provides the legal standards for personal data privacy and data protection as the current basis of the privacy and data protection legal system in the EU (Ameen *et al.*, 2021), with extended repercussions globally, due to increasing international flows of data and information (Witzleb, 2020).

As highlighted by Masseno and Santos (2018), in line with GDPR regulations and principles around *lawfulness*, *fairness and transparency*, THOs must be clear as to why data are being collected and how data will be used (in compliance with Art. 5, Clause 1a of the GDPR). They must comply with the principle of *purpose limitation* (Art. 5, Clause 1b) which prevents arbitrary reuse of personal data, therefore limiting organisations' ability to process data for other purposes than those originally intended. Also, due to the considerable amounts of consumer data collected, aggregated and analysed by organisations, the principle of *data minimisation* (in compliance with (Art. 5, Clause 1c) requires THOs to establish what data are deemed necessary and relevant for processing and not excessive. Furthermore, as specified by Art. 5, Clause 1d of the GDPR, THOs must engage in *accurate* and *up-to-date processing* as errors in data processing may affect the quality of data and may attract legal responsibilities for harm/damage (Hoeren, 2018). THOs must also dispose of data that are no longer useful for commercial or legal purposes (Art. 5, Clause 1e) and they must demonstrate compliance with all the GDPR principles and must keep records of their data processing activities (Art. 5, Clause 2). Finally, THOs should adopt *privacy by design* approaches (Art. 25) which require them to programme pre-emptive technological measures and systems aimed to address data protection and privacy concerns (Masseno and Santos, 2018; ICO, 2018).

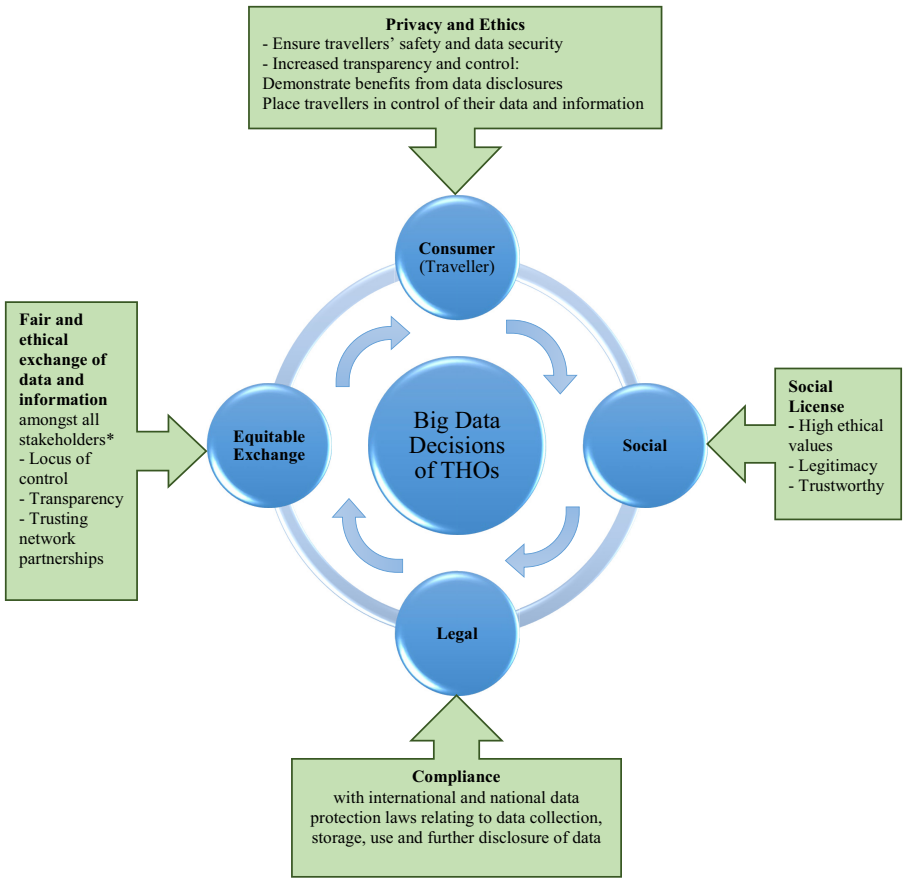
5.2 Privacy and ethics

Secondly, more so, from an ethical perspective, it may not be sufficient for THOs to simply comply with data and privacy laws to guard them from unsatisfied travellers, which, in recent times, have become much more aware and sensitive about how organisations use their data and information (Panetta, 2018). Hence, alongside the protections given by the GDPR (ICO, 2018) and other international and national data protection laws, potential frameworks for ethical data management should identify the methods used in data collection, what data is used for, who has access to data and why they have access to it (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019).

Privacy and ethics must be at the forefront of any design of data governance frameworks (Panetta, 2018). In tourism and hospitality such frameworks must ensure that widespread ethical concerns around travellers' digital data and information that are collected in various structured and unstructured ways by THOs are dealt with to ensure travellers' safety and data security.

THOs should also be able to express to travellers the particular advantages they may anticipate from disclosing their data when they use THOs services and/or provide feedback about their services online (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020). Even more so, the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to accelerate the shift in consumer beliefs and attitudes, with consumers now having to balance expectations for privacy and autonomy with government and organisations, pushes for increased transparency and control. Hence, heightened levels of consumer questioning what data are being held on them and how these data are used should be expected (Manton, 2020). For this reason, THOs will need to make data decisions and create data strategies that will give travellers command over the information they choose to share, whilst

Figure 1 Proposed framework for ethical data management and data governance in THOs



Notes: *Stakeholders: travellers/tourists; government/local authorities; industry associations; complementary industries
Source: The authors

explaining in which way this information can be used to the benefit of others (Manton, 2020). Likewise, these issues are directly linked to travellers' expectations for a fair and equitable exchange of their personal data and information.

Certainly, the use of consumers' personal data by THOs is indeed increasingly needed to drive performance in the sector and for competitive advantage as it provides greater insight into travellers' behaviour. However, these insights must not be obtained whilst violating travellers' privacy, instead THOs should aim to achieve both objectives – valuable data insights, as well as privacy and data protection/security – by adopting ethical and fair data decision processes (Smith *et al.*, 1996; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020).

5.3 Equitable exchange of data and information

As noted, today, consumers are much more aware that their data and information is increasingly valuable to organisations (Panetta, 2018). In a growing digital space and business environment, most consumers recognise and accept that internet browsing, digital services and technologies are heavily monitored (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019). On the other hand, previous research surrounding equity in exchange and online service transactions suggests that consumers tend to evaluate the type and volume of personal data required of them to provide in exchange for services in general and that they perceive the exchange fair if the *locus* of control of data and information shared resided with them (Milne and Culnan, 2004; Ashworth and Free, 2006; Min and Kim, 2015). Also, previous studies indicate that often, in service transactions, the motivations of customers and organisations providing the service are often conflicting and recommend "goal congruence" measures to aim to achieve parity in exchange, which seeks to remove, albeit not entirely, opportunism (Jap and Anderson, 2003).

Several studies have highlighted the fact that transparency about the use and protection of consumers' data reinforces trust (Morey *et al.*, 2015; Bennett, 2019). This is particularly important in tourism and hospitality as travellers' trust in the respective THO that offers them the service may significantly decline if they perceive that the THO does not take appropriate measures to protect their personal data and information (Chen and Jai, 2019).

Moreover, due to the nature of the tourism and hospitality industry, THOs may be required to exchange travellers' data and information with other key stakeholders, such as government and local authorities, industry associations and other industry participants (such as access providers, e.g. aviation and cruises) and other complementary industries (such as businesses and representative organisations involved in

industries that facilitate tourism, e.g. tertiary education and event organisers) (Tourism Australia, 2015). It is vital that a fair and ethical exchange of travellers' data and information amongst all these stakeholders is ensured by THOs as key element of their data governance systems designed to protect their travellers' privacy and data security. As such, network partnerships in data sharing, digital technologies used and ethical responsibilities between THOs and their stakeholders need to be based on trusting relationships (Tussyadiah *et al.*, 2020; Blakesley and Yallop, 2019; McQuater, 2018).

Specifically, in challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic, if THOs or any other third party requests any other information that does not sit within boundaries of current data privacy laws (for instance sensitive medical data and information, travel history and other personal details), then there should be suitable legal and ethical reasons for such requests. At the same time, THOs would need to put in place appropriate measures to manage the added ethical risks encountered by travellers and the possible security and reputational risks that THOs are confronted with, especially when collecting, sharing and storing sensitive traveller data and information.

5.4 Social license

The shift to a more digitised society over the past years (which has been felt more acutely in recent times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts that have seen a rapid reduction in social contact) has meant that organisations in the tourism and hospitality sectors need to question more generally their license to know, discover and use travellers' data and information for strategic purposes. In other words, the need to build trust between THOs, travellers and other stakeholders becomes increasingly important, i.e. trusting relationships which, in turn, lead to the THOs' ability to demonstrate a social license to operate (SLO).

The concept of *social license* is not a new concept *per se*. Over the past few years, however, the term "SLO" has grown in popularity (Gehman *et al.*, 2017), becoming an imperative aspect in industries and sectors that require support from local communities (Gupta and Kumar, 2018), such as tourism and hospitality, as THOs have the opportunity to make a real impact and positive difference to these communities. Commonly, organisations refer to "SLO" to suggest that their activities are considered legitimate in the eyes of society. SLO is defined as an ongoing acceptance and approval of the organisation's business practices by its stakeholders and the larger public and community, as contractual grounds for the legitimacy of its business activities (Demuijnck and Fasterling, 2016). This approach delivers an extended outlook on social considerations and responsibilities of THOs solely related to accepted societal norms and standards and ingrained cultural considerations. It entails a wider and more comprehensive approach to the use of big data and analytics, specifically the collection, storage, use and sharing of travellers' data and information. In their quest for success and competitive advantage, THOs must secure and preserve trust in their relationships with travellers and they must display highly ethical organisational values to ensure that customers regard them as trustworthy (Gupta and Kumar, 2018; Yallop and Séraphin, 2020; Panetta, 2018).

Particularly with the wider acceptance and use of vaccination passports in the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic, gaining consumers' approval and trust in THOs business practices becomes paramount. These organisations should consider travellers' concerns regarding privacy violations, government/private surveillance, the potential abuse of data collected and consumers' distrust in vaccination passport apps (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). To increase consumers' trust THOs should implement strong internal controls and safeguards to prevent staff from accessing any personal data without ethical process (e.g. third-party approval, the four-eyes principle – i.e. two individuals being required to complete the process, documentation and alerts to affected individuals (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). In addition, THOs need to consider ethical societal concerns around pandemic inequities, in that the benefits of vaccination passports will not be distributed equitably, therefore, to ensure that some consumers' groups will not be disadvantaged in accessing THOs products and services (Asi, 2021; Kofler and Baylis, 2020). Whilst vaccination passports are a premise of returning to normality and may become inevitable, they should include welfare and health exceptions (Hassoun and Herlitz, 2021) which THOs should consider and develop business practices that do not exacerbate consumer inequities.

Finally, it is important that THOs recognise the value of other key elements that are comprised in a comprehensive approach to data governance (as seen in Figure 1), namely, an extension of legal/compliance matters to a wider assessment of other ethical aspects, such as individual ethical issues relating to travellers' digital privacy and ethics (confidentiality, transparency, equity of access and informed use of information) and fair and equitable exchanges of data and information amongst all stakeholders, as this may negatively impact travellers/consumers' privacy and security. In the era of digital transformation, organisations need a framework for data governance that ensures consumer data is used for value creation, not only in accordance with legal requirements but also meeting consumers' expectations. THOs must create a culture that recognises consumer data as an asset and must establish mechanisms that prevent the abuse or misuse of sensitive consumer data (e.g. gender, race, address, health status, personal identification data, etc.) that they collect for business decisions, marketing or service creation and provision (Janssen *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, the elements within the proposed data governance framework must be viewed by THOs as inter-connected elements that guide ethical data management practices and behaviour.

5.5 Framework implementation induced consumer benefits

The implementation of the proposed holistic framework of data governance creates significant benefits to THOs and, most importantly, to their key stakeholder, the consumers, as it enables trusting relationships between the two parties. Undoubtedly, the extended approach (from a mere compliance-based approach to more ethical and socially responsible data governance) will enhance THOs ability to respond in a more ethical manner to consumers' concerns about personal data and information.

From a data compliance point of view, consumers will be confident that the THOs they share data with are aware and adhere to national and international data laws which ensure fairness and transparency. Firstly, consumers' main benefits will consist of choice and control. More specifically, they will be able to choose what data they share with THOs whilst at the same time, will be in control of their shared data. Secondly, consumers will have access to their stored data, they will be able to require their personal information from THOs and they will also be entitled to ask for their data to be deleted. Thirdly, according to the latest data compliance laws, consumers will need to be informed in case of data breaches. Any such occurrence will need to be rapidly notified to consumers, who will have to be able to decide on certain operations to be carried out by affected THOs regarding their consumers' data.

Just as important, from an ethical point of view, the proposed framework ensures that travellers/consumers' privacy rights will be respected and THOs adopt a truly ethical business stance, seeking ongoing measures to protect their customers' interests regarding privacy through fair and ethical exchanges of consumer data and demonstrating a social and ethics license to operate, through increased trust that they are doing the right thing by their consumers.

Clearly, an ethical data management and data governance framework which allows THOs to have access to consumers' data and enable them to provide a more personalised and efficient service based on the information consumers choose to provide, would ultimately be a great benefit to consumers/travellers.

6. Conclusion

In an increasingly digital world, big data and analytics have a vital role in business decision-making in tourism and hospitality. Over the past years, tourists have become increasingly aware about service personalisation practices used by THOs through the use of their personal data, hence, more aware and sensitive about data privacy and security issues (Panetta, 2018; Chen and Jai, 2019). THOs must put in place appropriate data governance frameworks that ensure consumers' data protection. Such frameworks, as the one proposed in this study, need to expand further than mere compliance with current data privacy and protection legislation, entailing a more ethical and responsible approach to secure data and to offer protection for travellers and all other stakeholders. In the current climate of the COVID-19 pandemic, this issue becomes critical as an increased number of data breaches and cyber-attacks have been reported globally (Armerding, 2018; Continuity Central, 2020).

Thus, this study suggested a framework for ethical data management and data governance in THOs that, alongside legal and compliance issues, involves ethical considerations in building trusting relationships with customers and stakeholders. Consequently, THOs need to ensure travellers' privacy and data security and to place travellers in control of the data and information they choose to disclose. Furthermore, because the nature of tourism activities may require THOs to share travellers' data with other stakeholders, it is vital for them to ensure an equitable and ethical exchange of data and information that places tourists' rights to privacy and data security at the forefront of big data decisions. Equally important, THOs need to have high ethical organisational standards and values in their pursuit of building strong, long-term relationships based on trust, with travellers and other stakeholders.

The suggested strategy for a more ethical approach of data management in THOs is in line with the conceptual philosophy of this study which is articulated around the topic of ethics and may be expressed through Motivation, Opportunity and Ability (MOA), terms which are also at the basis of an eponymous model. Indeed, the MOA model highlights factors that either support or inhibit the engagement and participation of individuals or organisations with something or someone (Jepson *et al.*, 2013) as follows: *Motivation* is what pushes an organisation to do something and it is typically based on expected benefits. *Opportunity* is about the engineering put in place to facilitate the involvement with or implementation of a process and requires the support of leaders and/or good governance. Finally, *ability* includes awareness, experience, knowledge, skills and accessibility to implement a strategy (Jepson *et al.*, 2013). Ability is central as without *ability*, the other two factors are not feasible (Jepson *et al.*, 2013). The framework developed in this study confirms that each of these factors is equally important. The motivation to protect travellers' autonomy, rights, personal privacy and security is evident (Blakesley and Yallop, 2019; Culnan and Bies, 2003; Laczniak and Murphy, 2006; Martin *et al.*, 2020; Sarathy and Robertson, 2003; Wu *et al.*, 2020). However, Gallego and Font (2020) question the ability of THOs to achieve their objectives, especially in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which, subsequently, impacts opportunities. Therefore, it is imperative to address these latter points, i.e. opportunities (the work carried out by THOs to facilitate the implementation of ethical data management and data governance) and ability (increased awareness and "know-how" in designing and implementing ethical frameworks for data management). Particularly under the current challenging circumstances due to COVID-19, the successful application of the framework developed in this study would lead to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry innovation and infrastructure); and Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnership for the goals) (UNDP, 2020).

Also, it is important to acknowledge that the implementation of this framework by THOs might involve, for some, a change in their set of values and this change can only be achieved with the support of the leadership team and good (corporate and data) governance. At the same time, building customer trust is vital. Several measures will support THOs in building trusting relationships with customers and their stakeholders such as awareness about regulations (from the GDPR to other international and national data protection laws, particularly when operating internationally); training of employees in data governance and using data experts to design data governance frameworks that ensure data security and protection effectively; demonstrating full transparency in data decisions; empowering travellers by developing data strategies that will give travellers control of the information they choose to share, whilst explaining in which way this information may be used to benefit others; and adopting "privacy by design" approaches, with decisions relating to frameworks' design situated in the

applicable local and global contexts. Certainly, the current context of the pandemic will have substantial repercussions on data decisions and THOs decisions in general.

Paradoxically, the COVID-19 pandemic provides a favourable context for changing the currently accepted development model-based solely on growth. The ethical behaviour of THOs in relation to tourists in terms of ensuring personal data privacy and security will lead to an increased level of trust, which, in turn, will lead to satisfied and loyal tourists. Thus, ethical data management and sound data governance frameworks will become a source of competitive advantage.

Future research directions should consider extended research into the governance of data in tourism and hospitality particularly relating to studies that describe the actual practice and identify a set of effective operational tools for data governance, privacy and security issues. Equally important, the perspective of travellers' and THOs' representatives should be studied, with the objective to further refine the proposed framework, as they are involved directly in the application of such framework and/or are its main beneficiaries. Finally, the proposed framework and resulting knowledge may be transferable and applicable to other online services and related business contexts. Further conceptual and empirical studies could be conducted in other service industries to identify and examine potential similarities and differences in organisations' practices of dealing with consumer privacy in a lawful and ethical manner.

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