



THE INTERRELATION OF GUEST BELIEF ON TRAVEL SITE AND TENDENCY TO EMBRACE THE 3-STAR HOTEL SELECTION IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

In hotel industry, a travel site provides information to customers and it can be used to share experiences and communicate with other people. Potential customers might be influenced with the comments and reviews that they see on the travel site. The effectiveness of communication is measured by the reliability of information that is spread by others. In order to have more understanding on the effectiveness of the travel site, the objective of this study is to investigate and examine the effectiveness of travel site to hotel guest's tendency in embracing the hotel selection. This study chose a survey design with questionnaires distributed to 300 respondents and 156 respondents answered the survey. Respondents were guests of 3-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur. The results of this study contribute to the current body of knowledge that travel site is useful and serve as effective tool to assist customers in decision making. The finding demonstrates that the hotel guest tendency to embrace is influenced by the effectiveness of travel site and reliability mediates the relationship between travel site and tendency to embrace.

KEYWORDS: *travel site, trust, on line review, hotel*

INTRODUCTION

At present, vacationers are being supplied with the information of online hotel reviews and feedbacks which make them less complicated to get the right entry to lodge associated information. The rapid growth of online communication through social media, websites and blogs assisted vacationers to receive and gain data from other users as well. Consequently, this can help them in selecting the best decision by using electronic word of mouth platform which grows extremely nowadays. According to Zha (2015), the rising of travel sites such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com and Yelp give the next users and customers an opportunity to go through the feedbacks and comments from other customers that shared their past experiences. The purpose of this travel site itself is to exchange the information in the social network sites or other platforms on the internet that mostly known as customer reviews in the context of feedback and comments between the consumers (Guo, 2017).

Since the number of internet users are constantly increased, the potential of false information is anticipated. Cao (2015) reported that there is a lot of problems regarding the spamming or fake information in internet. This relates to the false information that potential customers possibly gained in the travel sites. As a result, it could affect customer's trust towards the hotel travel site without knowing the real situation. In a similar line, Xie (2016) mentioned that trust is important because the potential customers may believe other customer's review as this is seen unbiased. Due to the increasing number of irresponsible internet users, some people can make fake profiles or become the fake users in order to tarnish the hotel's reputation. The information credibility on online review sites has always been criticized because the information sites do not go through editorial process for accurate verification. On the other hand, the reliability of the travel site is important because all of the reviews and feedbacks from other customers can help potential customers in hotel selection.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the viability of the information obtained from online, particularly hotel travel sites which will impact the potential user's intention on the tendency to embrace the hotel selection and to test reliability as mediator that could possibly affect the relationship.

The relationship of travel site for tendency to embrace and the hotel guest selection

Nowadays, the ubiquitous Internet serves as dominant channel for information diffusion. Popular social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as online commerce company like Amazon, enable users to express their opinions toward a variety of products and services. This form of word-of-mouth (WOM) communication introduces a new and important source of information for business intelligence and marketing (Zhang, Li, & Chen, 2012). Ultimately, not only online user-generated contents (UGCs), such as hotel reviews, essential to other potential customers, retailers, and product manufacturers, but also to

business owners as they reveal customers' opinions towards their products and services. Such information may have a significant impact on product sales such as online hotel bookings.

Customers' views and ratings provide great business values to hotels and positively influence hotel bookings (Torres, Singh, & Robertson-Ring, 2015). The hotel reviews include quantitative values, for example, numerical or rating values and qualitative evaluations. TripAdvisor include overall ratings, reviews, and aspect ratings and traveler's experience at an accommodation that is measured by ratings on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 5 (excellent).

By this, customer can readily shape their own ideas and views on the services that they receive and the product that they purchase because they can go through all the customer's feedback and perceptions although the perceptions that posted in the internet are wrong.

Thus this study proposes that:

H1: The better the information from the online travel site, the greater will the tendency be for the guest to embrace the information in choosing a hotel to stay.

Relationship between travel site and its reliability towards the hotel's guest

The Internet is now an important distribution channel for travel. Web 2.0 media, for example, online photograph collections, personal blogs, pro sightseeing and SNS have changed the travel industry into one that is to a great extent in the open space. Online travel community gives an extraordinary open door for movement searchers to discover what does actually the people talk about the destination that they will go for a visit such as the restaurant, accommodation and attraction places. As a result, these communities will effect on the critical changes in customer attitude in the travel industry. This is because as people who like to go travel they will depend more on other traveler's opinions and recommendations to make their decisions.

Information technology has had specifically profound impacts on how consumers select online services. Potentially, every product or service can be reviewed and evaluated online by its consumers, and these reviews are an increasingly important source of information for consumers and service providers. However, online travel reviews have not only attracted the attention of tourism marketing researchers but also of discourse analysts (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2015). TripAdvisor includes rich WOM information which may affect other consumers' behaviors (Herrero, San Martín, & Hernández, 2015). This shows that travel site is reliable towards guests.

Under these circumstances, it can be proposed that:

H2: The greater the level of reliability of a travel site, the better the information from the online travel site will be.

The relationship between reliability and tendency to embrace

Online consumer reviews have been extensively studied as the new sources of data to understand a range of research problems in hospitality and tourism. However, there has been little discussion and evaluation on the quality of review data, especially how these data truthfully and reliably reflect the products and consumer experiences, which could limit the validity and generalizability of social media research in hospitality and tourism. Thus, to ensure consumer’s trust, the service providers must be reliable and truthful.

Reliability is very important in an online environment. It maintains the connection with the client, diminishes dangers and go about as one of the factor of purchasing conduct. Reliability is additionally critical in data sharing of e-business.

Level of certainty on a site will absolutely make the client to reuse a similar site again and again and subsequently inspires the fulfillment level. Higher fulfillment picks up an individual's certainty and tells to others shoppers with positive word of mouth. Example, TripAdvisor currently provides six aspects for users to review: sleep quality, location, room, service, value, and cleanliness. This type of online review can be used by marketing researchers for gathering the public perception of this location through sentiment analysis and topic categorization. More accurate and reliable information can be known from there.

Thus:

H3: The greater the level of reliability of a travel site is, the greater will the tendency be for the guest to embrace the information choosing a hotel to stay.

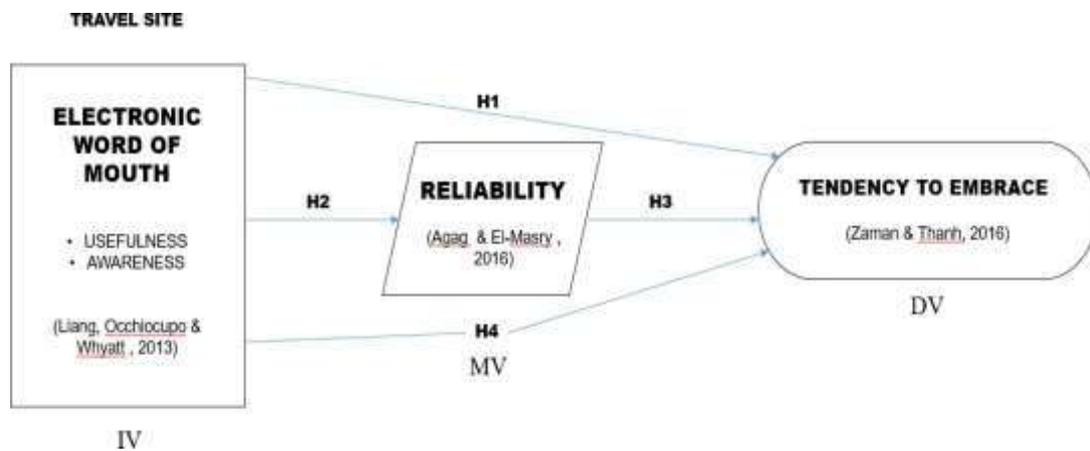


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

This research is conducted to give an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of online information on travel site towards hotel guest tendency to embrace and the role of reliability as mediator of hotel selection. Quantitative method is used to explain the nature of relationship and it used questionnaire that suit with the nature of study. Raw data were collected and analyzed and the variables and its relationship were measured by using statistical value. Next, in order to collect the quantitative data, self-administered questionnaires were distributed.

SAMPLE SIZE AND POPULATION

The purpose of this study was to examine the behavior of the hotel guest tendency to embrace the hotel selection which is based on reliability on the online travel site information. For respondent sample, the guests from 3 star-hotels in Kuala Lumpur were selected as they are the potential guests who used travel site. Online travel site

information is obtained from the travel site and generation Y usually will be the frequent or common users of the online information. The average duration of daily use of the Internet by age group are mostly users range between 18 to 30 years’ old which supported the above information and generation Y is more price sensitive.

The most suitable setting for this study is Kuala Lumpur as it is the main capital of the country and offers a wide number of hotels and 3 star-hotels around Kuala Lumpur have been chosen. To find for the sample size, data obtained from Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) 2018 revealed that there are 38, 3-star rating hotels in Kuala Lumpur. The sum for numbers of rooms for all the hotels are 8490 rooms meanwhile the occupancy rate is 63.3% (Tourism Malaysia, 2018) which makes the result estimated for number of rooms occupied daily for 3-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur is 5,347 guest and multiply with 365 days, the population for this study is 1,961,572 guests.

Population of the study = 8,490 rooms x 63.3% occupancy x 365 days = 1,961,572 guests
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Figure 2: Calculation of sample size

According Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, if the sample size for a population is more than a million (1,000,000), it will be stabilized at the sample of 384. Hence the sample size for this study is 384 hotel guests. The data collection period was 3 weeks starting from April 2019 to early May 2019. The researchers distributed the questionnaires and assisted respondents when necessary. It is important for the researchers to inform the participated respondents that all the data acquired will be strictly used only for the purpose of the study.

DATA INSTRUMENTATION

To obtain the information from the respondents, this study used a self- administered questionnaire which can be defined as a set of questions where the researcher assistance is not necessary when the respondents are answering the questionnaires (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). A close-ended and structured questions were designed and respondent took less than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaires with the researcher.

TRAVEL SITE

A travel site is a website on the world wide web that is dedicated to travel. The site may be focused on travel reviews, trip fares, or a combination of both.		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree
1.	Reviews from travel site are easily accessible	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Information that found in travel site are relevant	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Information in travel site would convince me to stay at the hotel	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I use travel site reviews for my hotel preferences	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Review from travel site are informative	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Travel site information creates favourable image for travelling.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I know what is electronic travel word of mouth	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I prefer to browse information from travel site for my accommodation selections.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Travel site helps to increase the product awareness	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The use of travel site as tools to advertise hotel is really useful.	1	2	3	4	5

RELIABILITY

Reliability is the degree to which the result of a measurement, calculation, or specification can be depended on to be accurate.		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am aware with the risk that obtain from travel site.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I trust more in online source compared to others.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I definitely believe that review from travel site makes a claims or promise about its product.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I refer to travel site reviews in terms of sharing the information.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I refer to travel site reviews in terms of seeking the information.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I believe that some of the information in travel site are fully trusted	1	2	3	4	5

TENDENCY TO EMBRACE

Tendency to embrace means the probability factors that will affect the guest selection for the accommodation.		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	I choose this hotel based on information in online travel site.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I knew about the hotel based on online travel site.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Experienced guest’s opinion encouraged me to stay at this hotel.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Electronic word of mouth convinced me to choose this hotel.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I used review at TripAdvisor to plan for my travel.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I used TripAdvisor reviews to share and compare my experienced staying in any hotels.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Using online travel site information increased my confidence in purchasing decision	1	2	3	4	5

Table 1: Questions for each variable

RESPONDENTS PROFILE

A descriptive analysis on the demographic is done to understand the characteristic of the respondents. Information such as gender, age, level of education, average access to the internet usage and preferability using online review was among the questions asked in the demographic section. From

the demographic section, it is observed that majority of the respondents were female, aged between 18 to 35 years old and most of them connected to internet about six to nine hours daily. Majority of the respondents used travel site to get information prior hotel booking which assisted them in the decision making.

RESULTS

Variables	Travel site	Reliability	Tendency to embrace
Travel site	1.0	0.688**	0.730**
Reliability	0.688**	1.0	0.770**
Tendency to embrace	0.730**	0.770**	1.0

Table 2: The Pearson Correlation to test the relationship

From table above, it shows that the travel site and tendency to embrace have high positive relationships where $r = 0.730$ ($p < 0.01$). Next, the travel site and the reliability show high positive relationship as well with $r = 0.688$ ($p < 0.01$). Lastly, the reliability and the tendency to embrace show excessively high positive relationship with $r = 0.770$ ($p < 0.01$).

reliability as mediator.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The Mediating Effect of Reliability Towards the Relationship Between Travel Site and Hotel’s Guest Tendency to Embrace.

To reach the fourth hypothesis the Multiple Regression Model is used. This analysis is divided into three steps which consists of steps 1, 2, and 3 (Frazier, Tix and Barron, 2004).

To fulfill the research objectives and hypotheses, regression analysis was used in this to test the

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	Significant Value (P-value)
	B	SE B	B	
Step 1 Dependent Variable: Tendency to Embrace Predictor Variable: Travel site	0.908	0.068	0.730	0.000
Step 2 Dependent Variable: Reliability Predictor Variable: Travel site	0.916	0.078	0.688	0.000
Step 3 Dependent variable Tendency to embrace Predictor variable Travel site reliability	0.474	0.80	0.381	0.000
	0.475	0.60	0.508	0.000

Table 3: The regression analysis to test the mediator

Table 3 is the three-step regression analysis presented to test whether the reliability is the mediator variable. If the significant value (p-value) is less than 0.05 in each of the step from table 4.10, it can be determined that the predictor variable is significantly correlated to predictor variable. Therefore, step 1 indicated that the travel site significantly correlated (B = 0.908, p-value < 0.05) with hotel’s guest tendency to embrace.

While step 2 indicates that the travel site (B = 0.916, p-value < 0.05) is also significantly correlated with reliability. Next is step 3, the reliability, in which is the mediating variable is significantly correlated (B = 0.475, p-value < 0.05) with the hotel’s guest tendency to embrace. While controlling for reliability which is the mediating variables, travel site also has significant impact on hotel’s guest tendency to embrace (B = 0.474, p-value < 0.05). Since the step 1 until step 3 is are satisfied, it is can be concluded that the reliability mediates the relationship between travel site and hotel’s guest tendency to embrace. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis (H4) is supported.

H4: Reliability mediates the relationship between travel site and hotel’s guest tendency to embrace.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, it shows that travel site has relationship with the hotel guest tendency to embrace. Travel site which is in the form of electronic word-of-mouth has positive effect towards guest decision making process to select hotel based on the reviews and comments from real customers

who experienced the hotel itself. As seen in the result above, it shows that the travel site has a relationship with the reliability. Reliability is important during the exchange of the information among the receiver and the sender through the travel site. Information exchange means the procedure on sharing the knowledge regarding the certain thing between the people that have the same interest.

There seems to be relationships between travel site reliability and hotel’s guest tendency to embrace as according to analysis. Hotel guest will decide whether they want to choose or not the hotel based on the reviews that they found on the travel site. Reliability is positively and directly linked with evaluations of satisfaction and perceived usefulness. Based on the result, reliability has a high positive relationship with the tendency to embrace the hotel guest decision to stay at the hotel. It can be concluded that people are willing to take the risk based on the review and comments that they gain from the travel site.

It is also found that reliability mediates the relationship between travel site and hotel guest tendency to embrace. This can be seen by looking at the result from the three-step analysis for mediating effect in linear and multiple regression test. Reliability is the main aspect/component in accepting the information on the travel site and potential customers will rely on what have been promised by the hotel.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Firstly, it is based on population. For this study, the population is the guests who stayed in lower star rating hotels such as 3-star hotel. The reason of choosing lower star rating hotel is because the outcome of the results may not be appropriate for other category of hotel such as luxury hotels. This is because of the different perspective of guest toward hotel star category. The review of cheaper hotel as compared to more luxury hotel will probably give different insight. In future, more studies are needed to cater all kinds of hotel category in Malaysia.

This study was conducted in Kuala Lumpur area only which is the next limitation for this study. The result of the study could be much more promising if this study includes all locations in Malaysia so that the findings can be generalized.

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