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Factors influencing acceptance and prolong usage of travel blogs: The imperative role of hedonism.

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Abstract

The significance roles of travel blogs has been identified by more internet users who browse through to seek advices from travel bloggers. Yet information on how internet users accept and generate persistent in utilizing travel blogs technology are still lacking. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to establish more comprehensive factors that play significant role in influencing internet users to accept travel blogs and their impact on e-satisfaction and e-loyalty, paying attention on the inclusion of hedonism as one of the recommended factors that generate prolong travel blog usage. This information is regarded as valuable resource that could be used by travel bloggers as well as hoteliers in acknowledging the prominent role of hedonism which concept and features can be used as a tool to generate genuine e-satisfaction and e-loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays internet users not only focus on price when making online hotel booking but also the reviews from previous guests. According to Cayzer (2004), reviews not only obtained from hotel websites but also from travel bloggers. Travel bloggers are considered as the “push-button publishing for people” where they share experience, story, positive as well as negative perspective about hotel service and accommodations. The internet has been the new platform for travel bloggers to share information about products and services they previously visited and experienced. Study by Deloitte (2015) claimed that approximately fifty-nine percent (59%) of global hotel customers actually made hotel booking after previously been influenced by travel blogs and websites. This development has made many travel businesses to become more proactive and able response to market demand (Kamal et al., 2016). One advantage of travel blogs is that internet users can actually communicate with travel bloggers, the number of users who participate in this communication will get bigger and they eventually will form an internet community. The internet communities more often helped users to gain information and travel advice needed which in the end foster them to travel.

The importance of travel blogs is being recognized as more users seek advice from travel bloggers. The intriguing fact is that travel blogs itself can be classified as the kind of information technology that many travel info feeding and advices can be done through the computer and internet. The interactivity of information technology like blogs more often enhance users’ perceived value and this often led to users’ revisit intention of the blog website (Abdullah et al., 2016). This reveals the core issue of how travel blogs can make themselves the users’ most trusted and frequently visited websites. Nevertheless, previous literature does not provide strong

information on how users actually adapt (and accept) to travel blogs and becoming persist in the utilization of travel blogs technology. According to Hong et al. (2006) and Hsieh et al. (2008) people acceptance on internet services technology such as blogs will more often abbreviated and people will eventually withdrawn from the usage of such technology. To fill this gap, this study recommends the inclusion of hedonism within the study of internet services technology acceptance, including the acceptance of travel blogs. Hedonism is strongly connected to leisure activities with a focus on the fun-based aspects of using the information system, encouraging satisfaction and prolonged usage rather than the productive use (Van der Heijden, 2004). According to Loiacono (2002) the study on consumers' "full fun experience" is necessity as these are the true contribution of satisfaction and loyalty. Many consumers prefer to make their selves entertained and enjoy "strolling down the aisles". As they browse through blogs, they start to imagine their vacation at the hotel by viewing the pictures and videos of the place, or by reading travel reviews posted by other travelers. These type of blog users pursue sensory gratification and fun rather than efficiency (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). All these benefits of having hedonism among blog users can actually influence their decision to make hotel booking, encouraging prolong utilization of travel blogs as the medium in helping them to make decisions.

The overall objective of this conceptual paper is to determine factors that can influence users to accept travel blogs and its impact on e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. Poyry et al. (2012) suggested study on websites should be based on utilitarian and hedonic values to be considered comprehensive. Previously studies on technology acceptance model (TAM) rely solely on utilitarian values to evaluate e-satisfaction and e-loyalty (Lin and Sun, 2009; Poddar et al., 2009; Ozturk et al., 2016). Nevertheless, this study recommends the inclusion of hedonism as one of the suggested factor that influence satisfaction and the prolong usage of travel blogs. Literature review will be discussed in next section and followed by conceptual research model. Finally, conclusion and recommendation will be presented to conclude the overall statement of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology acceptance factor (TAF)

Technology acceptance model (TAM) is a hearty and capable model for the expression of machinery management (Lee et al., 2003). TAM has long been associated with utilitarian values that focus more on economical approach like value for money (Overby and Lee, 2006) and awareness of relief and time frees (Jarvenpaa et al., 2013). People with utilitarian values browse websites to achieve particular economic goals including comparing prices, information, as well and suggestions. The famous factors contributing towards TAM are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU), that proven to have positive relation with e-satisfaction and e-loyalty (Poddar et al., 2009; Ozturk et al., 2016). Shin (2004) indicated that acceptance is strongly and positively correlated with internet users' attitude towards online technology. His empirical research results revealed that perceived PEOU considerably influence satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, user acceptance was found significantly affected by user satisfaction with the internet and perceptions of the information systems and service. Following the preceding discussion, the study proposes that;

P1: Travel blogs technology acceptance has a positive effect on users' e-satisfaction when using travel blogs.

P2: Travel blogs technology acceptance has a positive effect on users' e-loyalty when using travel blogs.

Website service quality (WSQ)

In electronic commerce, service quality measures refer to the quality of search engines and factors associated with website success. Yang et al. (2008) identified four dimensions of SERVQUAL that can be used to measure the users' cognition of SERVQUAL online – the four dimensions are reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Within this study, the website service quality refers to the e-service experience provided by travel blogger (e.g. secure security system, maximized information, and maximized ease of use) during users-travel bloggers interactions. Lai et al. (2007) suggested that when users perceive better website service quality, they will tend to develop more e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. In addition, users that perceive better travel blog website service quality, such as special treatment benefits, will have a higher tendency to be satisfied and loyal (Lin & Sun, 2009). Following the preceding discussion, the study proposes that;

P3: Website service quality has a positive effect on users' e-satisfaction when using travel blogs.

P4: Website service quality has a positive effect on users' e-loyalty when using travel blogs.

Hedonism (HE)

Hedonic value is defined as the overall assessment (i.e., judgment) of experiential benefits and sacrifices, such as entertainment and escapism (Bilgihan & Okumus, 2014). A study of Cai and Xu (2011) indicated that websites with hedonic concept and appearances tend to contribute towards users' satisfaction. When consumer have intention to return back to the website, satisfaction will overtake as they treasure trove the fun of the blog

site (Koufaris, 2002). Moreover, enhancing the experience and gaining users loyalty have been considered outstanding marketing goals (Verhoef et al., 2009). According (Babin, 2005), affective commitment had been influenced by hedonic features which are induce fun and fantasy. Therefore, Kim (2008) said it is important in developing long-term relationships in an online context as value and affective emotions play the important role. Moreover, hedonic value also generate long-lasting relationships in services (Carpenter, 2008, Chiu, 2005). In addition, Butz and Goodstein (1996) found that hedonic value important for loyal consumer and help targeted consumer shape close emotional links.

According to Loiacono (2002) the study on consumers' "full fun experience" is necessity as these are the true contribution of satisfaction and loyalty.

Therefore, it was proposed:

P5: Hedonic values have a positive effect on users' e-satisfaction when using travel blogs.

P6: Hedonic values have a positive effect on users' e-loyalty when using travel blogs.

E-Satisfaction (ES)

In summarize, customer satisfaction is psychological state resulting when the reaction surrounding disconfirmed assumptions is coupled with a user's prior feeling about the user experience said (Oliver, 1997) in (Wonglorsaichon, n.d.). According to Szymanski and Hise (2000) in (Sun, Lin, & Sun, 2009) stressed that consumer perception of online facilities, stuff, website design and financial security is an important role in the evaluation of e-satisfaction. Satisfaction have positive relation toward customer loyalty and satisfaction also is one anterior of e-loyalty (Tokay & Argan, 2013). According to Chang and Chen (2008), internet users are considered satisfied when they are able access and getting information about the things that they are interested and make prompt decisions based on their intuitive. According to Crosby (1990) in (Ferns & Walls, 2012), satisfaction can be contemplation in term of service, it is the users' judgment based on the service, and users are able to use it to measure forthcoming experience. Following the preceding discussion, the study proposes that;

P7: E-satisfaction has a positive effect on users' e-loyalty when using travel blogs.

E-Loyalty (EL)

The term e-loyalty is generally referred to as the "intention to revisit a websites" (Corstjens and Lal, 2000). This study defines e-loyalty as the perceived loyalty and prolongs usage towards a travel blogs website where the intent is to revisit the site and join the community within the website to gain information and assistance. Customers that have e-loyalty towards blog site that they trust will have a higher tendency to prevent switching or even visiting other blog sites (Zhang and Mao, 2012). E-loyalty is derived from the ease of access and surfing, updated and reliable information, prompt response, user confidence, and website quality (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 2003). Luarn and Lin (2003) pointed out that comprehension on how and why an impression of loyalty develops among internet users is significantly important and remain one of the crucial issues to be solved by website developers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

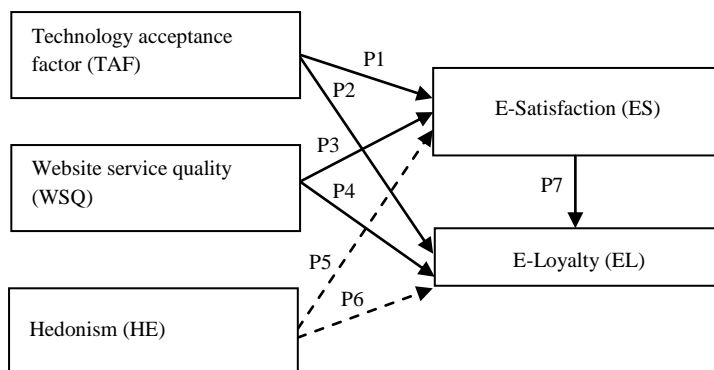


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

The framework utilized is based on previous TAM study by Lin and Sun (2009). Davis (1989) suggested the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to describe and forecast user acceptance of information system (IS) or information technology (IT). Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) are considered as the major factors contributing towards technology acceptance (Lee et al., 2003). PU is the degree to which an individual trusts that using a certain system would increase his or her job presentation and PEOU is explained as “the extent to which a person believes that using a particular system would be an easier effort (Davis, 1989).

Applying the TAM standpoint to the model, technology acceptance factor (TAF) of travel blog users has a significant potential to produce e-satisfaction and e-loyalty based on PEOU and PU that the users experienced from browsing selected travel blogs (Shin, 2004). Quality e-service experience (WSQ) experienced by blog users also has a significant potential to generate e-satisfaction and produce prolong usage or e-loyalty (Lai et al., 2007). Hedonic values (HE) experienced by blog users also have a significant potential to generate e-satisfaction and produce prolong usage of blogs (Koufaris, 2002). Satisfied blog users will eventually produce intention to revisit the blog site and prevent switching and visiting other blog sites (Zhang and Mao, 2012). This ultimately will produce prolong usage of the blogs where the intent is to continuously revisit and join the community within the blog website to gain future information and assistance. This study makes a new contribution to the study of TAM as it highlights the imperative role of hedonism as one of the factor that contributes towards e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. Fun and excitement gained through browsing travel blogs can initiate satisfaction and intention to continuously revisit the selected travel blogs. Previously studies on TAM tend to evaluate utterly on utilitarian values (Lin and Sun, 2009; Poddar et al., 2009; Ozturk et al., 2016). And disregard hedonic values as an important source to generate ES and EL. This study opt to go beyond the standard TAM practice by incorporating hedonic values as we believe the true factor that contribute towards satisfaction and loyalty is through the feeling of fun and excitement when browsing travel blogs.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design will be performed through self-administered questionnaires. The qualified sample for this study will be people who have previously decided to book a hotel based of information gained from travel blogs. Data collection will be done through hand delivered questionnaire to qualified samples. A data of between 250 – 350 potential respondents will be contacted by researchers. Respondents will be identified through selected travel blogs and will be contacted via email or telephone before any meeting appointment be made. Subsequently, the respondents will be given a questionnaire and be guided by researchers throughout the answering session.

CONCLUSION

This paper proposes conceptual framework to enhance the existing body of knowledge by introducing hedonism as the factor in the Technology Acceptance Model in order to influence consumer use travel blog as medium to book the hotel. Proportionately, hedonism is defined as the ethical theory that pleasure (in the sense of the satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life. Contributions of this study are based on theoretical and practical perspectives. From theoretical point of view, hedonic values can influence internet users to book hotel based on the fun and excitement that he experienced previously while browsing travel blogs. Travel blogs with hedonic concepts can influence users’ decision making through exquisite illustrative and attractive visualization. Hedonic concept is different from utilitarian where in the latter; users tend to browse through travel blogs with the intention to gain economic benefit. Internet user may generate e-satisfaction and e-loyalty through both hedonic and utilitarian values. Nevertheless, the utilization of hedonic values within the study of TAM is lacking and we believe the values play an imperative role in generating satisfaction and loyalty. The other two factors (TAF and WSQ) are considered proven factors contributing towards ES and EL and will also be included within the study. From practical perspectives, travel bloggers need to acknowledge the existence of internet users with dominant hedonic values and attempt to influence such users through the hedonic features that are available within their travel blogs. This will generate satisfaction and prolong usage of selected travel blogs that will definitely benefit travel bloggers in the long run. At the same time, hoteliers should also acknowledge the importance of hedonism and encourage travel bloggers to promote their hotel by allowing travel bloggers to publish review with hedonic features and concepts for users’ reference.

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