

An Empirical Study on the Influence of Hotel Website on Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract

The Internet is an increasingly important area in an online business. Hotels business can create lots of opportunities through the Internet, for example, they can allow customers to use the website to search for more information, shop for products, and make an online payment. The aim of this study was to investigate the characteristics of different hotels' websites and how it affected overall customer satisfaction. This study recognized seven characteristics of the hotel website: 1) website playfulness, 2) quality of information, 3) website confidence, 4) website navigability, 5) online responsiveness, 6) personalization of product and service, and 7) opportunities for e-transactions. Regression analysis was used to predict the overall customer satisfaction. The results indicate that website playfulness, quality of information, website confidence, online responsiveness, and opportunities for e-transactions have a positive impact on overall

customer satisfaction. Managerial implications to improve overall satisfaction will be discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Hotel, website, satisfaction, tourist, Thailand

1. Introduction

In the new global economy, the Internet has become a central issue for online shopping and has changed the way how information is distributed (Chung & Koo, 2015; Viren, Vogt, Kline, Rummel, & Tsao, 2015). Internet has been essential for reorganizing hotel industry as a potential communication and distribution channel for customers (Amaro & Duarte, 2015). More recently, customers have been able to profit from a new and convenient way to gather data directly (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013; Ponte, Carvajal-Trujillo, & Escobar-Rodríguez, 2015). Previous studies have reported that online business is important and continues to grow, the numbers of consumers using online platforms have also increased amazingly (Lim, Heng, Ng, & Cheah, 2016). Moreover, the online hotel reservation platform also offers more benefits to customers comparing to traditional hotel booking through travel agents, for example, online platform offers a full description of the hotel property, more photos and videos, better pricing, and no extra booking fees (Lien, Wen, Huang, & Wu, 2015).

Hotel industry has shown a rapid growth in incorporating the Internet into the business, and the concept of the website has become a significant role in increasing customer's intention in online purchasing (Viren et al., 2015). Hotel website is also viewed as a tool that connects corporate activities with business partners, colleagues, and customers (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015). Therefore, a hotel should create an effective website for customers since the high quality website can help increase customers' trust (Viren et al., 2015).

There has been little quantitative analysis of website characteristics. In order to understand customers' expectations, the hotel industry should consider the effects of website towards customers' purchase intention (Cobanoglu, Berezina, Kasavana, & Erdem, 2011). Additionally, this study also found that lots of information was presented on many hotel websites such as background information, facility and location, and reservation process etc. Such information can have a huge influence on customers' decision. The aim of this study is to investigate the hotels' website characteristics, specifically, how the website characteristics affect overall customer satisfaction. This paper is structured as follows: first, it addresses the hotel website characteristics. Then it explores and classifies previous research focusing on website attributes and, finally, the factors that affect overall customer satisfaction are discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1 Characteristics of a hotel website

Technology used by the hotel industry has been quickly developed and adopted. (Cobanoglu et al., 2011). Especially, hotel websites have been identified as a major contributing factor in the hotel business. Hotel website should provide correct information and should be beautifully designed to support customers' decision. (H Crnojevac, Gugić, & Karlovčan, 2010). To efficiently meet the needs of the customers, hotel website should assist the customers to solve their problems and offer an approachable method for a convenient reservation (Peng, Xu, & Chen, 2013).

Analysis of the hotel website involved in dimension was carried out by Perdue (2002), who reported that the conceptual model for website characteristics should contain information content, visual attractiveness, and the function of site navigation. Flavián, Guinaliú, and Gurrea (2006) claimed that the majority of hotel websites should include service, facilities, exterior, interior, and locations. In another major study, Park

and Gretzel (2007) found nine website successful factors: responsiveness, visual appearance, interactivity, fulfillment, security/privacy, trust, personalization, information quality, and ease of use. Furthermore, Hashim, Murphy, and Law (2007) attempted to study five dimensions of website quality: valued added, trust, information and process, relationships, and design and usability. In an investigation into website characteristics, Vladimirov (2012) examine eight dimensions: a variety of online proposed products and services, website playfulness, information quality, website confidence, navigability, responsiveness, personalization, and opportunities for e-transactions. Data from Peng et al.'s research (2013) indicated that testimonials and guest reviews, as well as hotel blog sections have an impact on customers' booking through an online channel.

There are different evaluations of website dimension (Chiou, Lin, & Perng, 2010). A customer's behavior for online booking can be influenced by individual characteristics such as technological competency, self-efficiency, levels of innovation, previous internet experience, and expected levels of performance (Sanchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluña, 2010).

2.2 Overall satisfaction

A large and growing body of literature has investigated overall satisfaction that might be defined as an overall evaluation of customers' judgments about products or service fulfillment (Oliver, 1999). Customers are most likely to be satisfied when they received what they had expected from the hotel (Bowen & Ford, 2004), and from their purchase through the website. High website quality and increasing customer satisfaction are broadly accepted as significant factors leading to the achievement of the hotel (Bilgihan, Okumus, & Cobanoglu, 2013; Choi & Chu, 2001; Cobanoglu et al., 2011). Previous studies have reported that website quality has a positive impact on purchase

and re-purchase intention (Kim & Stoel, 2004; Law & Bai, 2008; Yen, Hu, & Wang, 2007). Therefore, it can be assumed that overall satisfaction is positively influenced by seven website characteristics: website playfulness, information quality, website confidence, navigability, responsiveness, personalization, and opportunities for e-transactions

3. Research design and methodology

Quantitative methods offer an effective way to investigate the hypotheses of interest. The design of the questionnaires was extracted from the previous research. A total of website characteristic item was developed from Vladimirov (2012). Overall satisfaction was measured with three items on a review of the literature for this research such as “The website was as good as I had hoped”, “I feel I benefited from this website” and “Overall, I was satisfied with the visit this website” (Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Rasoolimanesh, Dahalan, & Jaafar, 2016). Both constructs were evaluated by a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). In the last section of the questionnaire, respondents’ demographic was also measured by categorical scale including gender, age, marital status, education, and income. A constructed questionnaire was prepared in English and later translated into Thai. The translation equivalence was verified by back-translation of the Thai version into English. Then minor inconsistencies were corrected by the author. A pilot test was revised among 30 tourists and feedback from three academics in the hospitality field and the results were used to develop the questionnaire and its clarity and depth.

Data were collected among domestic tourists with an experience of browsing the hotels’ websites in the Phuket area. A convenience sampling technique was employed. The surveys were administered to the participating customers through an online channel. A total of 424 questionnaires were returned and 406 useable questionnaires were

obtained, accounted for a 95.75% response rate.

Over half of the sample (53.2%) was female, 46.8% was male. About 46.5% were between the age 26 and 33, 37.7% were 34 to 41, 11.8% were above 42, and 4.0% were 18 – 25. By marital status, 69.0% of the respondents were single, 30.0% were married, and 1.0% was others. About 75.1% completed bachelor degrees, 17.2% completed primary/secondary, and 7.6% completed postgraduate. In terms of monthly income, 69.5% of the respondents were Thai Baht 15,000 to 30,000, 18.7% were under Thai Baht 15,000, and 11.8% were above Thai Baht 30,000. (See Table 1)

The data were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis (principle components) with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotation to examine the dimensionalities of hotels' website characteristics. Variables with a factor loading equal to or greater than 0.4 were considered statistically significant. The relationships between hotels' website characteristics and overall satisfaction were tested using multiple linear regression analysis at a 0.05 significance level.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	190	46.8
Female	216	53.2
Age (years)		
18 - 25	16	4.0
26 – 33	189	46.5
34 - 41	153	37.7
Above 42	48	11.8
Marital status		
Single	280	69.0
Married	122	30.0
Others	4	1.0
Education		
Primary/Secondary	70	17.2
Bachelor	305	75.1
Postgraduate	31	7.6
Income (Thai Baht)		
Under 15,000	76	18.7
15,000 – 30,000	282	69.5
Above 30,000	48	11.8

4. Findings

Table 2 presents the summary statistics of dimensions underlying the hotels' website characteristics. Using the principal components factor analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotation, seven factors with a cut-off factor loading of 0.4 and an

eigenvalue greater than one explained 55.567% of the variance of website characteristics scale. The KMO-MSA of 0.873 and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 3244.105$, significance at $p = 0.00$) confirmed suitability of the data for factorization. Table 3 presents the eight factors: 1) website playfulness (5 items, $\alpha = 0.773$, eigenvalue = 7.077, variance explained = 25.276%), 2) quality of information (6 items, $\alpha = 0.795$, eigenvalue = 2.118, variance explained = 7.564%), 3) website confidence (5 items, $\alpha = 0.726$, eigenvalue = 1.505, variance explained = 5.374%), 4) website navigability (4 items, $\alpha = 0.793$, eigenvalue = 1.419, variance explained = 5.066%), 5) online responsiveness (2 items, $\alpha = 0.738$, eigenvalue = 1.254, variance explained = 4.478%), 6) personalization of product and service (3 items, $\alpha = 0.793$, eigenvalue = 1.159, variance explained = 4.139%), and 7) opportunities for e-transactions (2 items, $\alpha = 0.722$, eigenvalue = 1.028, variance explained = 3.670%). Cronbach's coefficient for each factor was calculated for reliability assessment. The factors were moderately reliable with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.722 to 0.795. In summary, these seven attributes assessing website characteristics were acceptable in the approximation of the measurement models.

Table 2: EFA results of website characteristics

Item	Loading	Eigen values	Variance explained	Cronbach's coefficient
1. Website playfulness		7.077	25.276	.773
Graphic style, shrift, and shrift size	.630			
Attractive colors	.675			
Use of flash animation, music, zoom function	.600			
Interactive products' catalogue	.735			
Photo gallery, video presentation, and 3D rotation	.728			
2. Quality of information		2.118	7.564	.795
Number of languages	.775			
Accessibility	.670			
Intelligibility	.555			
Actuality	.426			
Accuracy	.656			
Completeness	.604			
3. Website confidence		1.505	5.374	.726
Company information	.473			
Membership in the national and international organizations	.674			
Presentation of partners of tourism service	.563			
Conditions for using service and resolving dispute,	.530			

Item	Loading	Eigen values	Variance explained	Cronbach's coefficient
particularly, in a case of refusing to use the service				
Reliability of personal and credit cards data security	.583			
4. Website navigability		1.419	5.066	.793
Easiness and speed of navigation	.522			
Clear and convenient website card	.693			
Efficient search engine	.557			
Sufficient number of working links on each page	.515			
5. Online responsiveness		1.254	4.478	.738
Number of channels for communication	.620			
Easiness of asking questions online	.644			
6. Personalization of product and service		1.159	4.139	.793
Opportunities to register with user's ID in the website	.426			
Recommendations from the company to registered users	.604			
Program for creating online communities of user	.671			

Item	Loading	Eigen values	Variance explained	Cronbach's coefficient
7. Opportunities for e- transactions		1.028	3.670	.722
E-form for reservation	.803			
Module for online payment	.476			

Note: KMO-MSA: .873, Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 3244.105$, significance at $p < .001$)

Table 3: Mean, Standard deviation, and correlation matrix

	\bar{X}	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1.Website playfulness	3.75	.618							
2.Quality of information	3.84	.574	.449**						
3 .Website confidence	3.81	.527	.281**	.460**					
4 .Website navigability	3.68	.561	.425**	.560**	.475**				
5 .Online responsiveness	3.68	.648	.305**	.428**	.315**	.374**			
6.Personalization of product and service	3.65	.569	.280**	.486**	.407**	.520**	.371**		
7.Opportunities for e-transactions	3.92	.660	.487**	.304**	.217**	.259**	.285**	.232**	

		\bar{X}	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
8	.Customer satisfaction	3.76	.623	.621**	.326**	.361**	.372**	.403**	.274**	.438**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results of the mean, standard deviation, and correlation analysis are presented in Table 3. The measurement items for website characteristics and overall satisfaction were moderately correlated. The construct correlations ranged from 0.217 to 0.621, the values were below the problematic level of 0.70, showing no presence of a multicollinearity problem.

The results obtained from the preliminary analysis of website characteristics are summarized in Table 4. Seven multiple linear regression analyses were influenced by overall satisfaction as dependent variables, and website characteristics dimensions as independent variables. The multiple correlation coefficient was 0.691, predicted a 69.1% association between website characteristics and overall satisfaction. The R2 was 0.477 which could be converted to an adjusted R2 value of 0.468. This value indicated that 46.8% of “customer overall satisfaction” can be described by “website playfulness”, “quality of information”, “website confidence”, “online responsiveness”, and “opportunities for e-transactions”. Following the addition of website characteristics dimensions, a significant increase ($p < .05$) in the overall satisfaction was recorded. “Website playfulness” was the most important predictor of overall satisfaction ($\beta = 0.486$), followed by “website confidence” ($\beta = 0.197$), “online responsiveness” ($\beta = 0.192$), “quality of information” ($\beta = 0.129$), and “opportunities for e-transactions” ($\beta = 0.127$), whereas “website navigability” and “personalization of product and service” was not significantly related to overall satisfaction. The multiple regressions can be seen in the following model:

$$y = 0.486 (X1) + 0.129 (X2) + 0.197 (X3) + 0.192 (X5) + 0.127 (X7)$$

From the formula above, ‘y’ is a dependent variable for “overall satisfaction”, and

‘x’ is an independent variable for “website characteristics”.

Table 4: Regression analysis

Dependent variable	Overall satisfaction
Independent variables	Website characteristics
Multiple R	.691
R ²	.477
Adjusted R ²	.468
Standard error	.454
f	51.884
Sig	.000

Independent variable	b	β	Std. error	Sig.
(Constant)	.296		1.368	.172
Website playfulness (X ₁)	.486*	.482	10.578	.000
Quality of information (X ₂)	.129*	.119	2.415	.016
Website confidence (X ₃)	.197*	.166	3.832	.000
Website navigability (X ₄)	.051	.046	.928	.354
Online responsiveness (X ₅)	.192*	.200	4.761	.000
Personalization of product and service (X ₆)	.000	.000	.001	.999
Opportunities for e-transactions (X ₇)	.127*	.134	3.180	.002

5. Discussion

The present study was designed to determine the relationship between website characteristics and the overall satisfaction among domestic tourists in Thailand. The present finding supports Moghavvemi et. al.’s study (2017) which indicated that website characteristics had a significant impact on online customers. Previous studies also

considered information and facilities factors, which include contact information, photo or video featuring the hotel facilities and technology, and on-site language interpretation service. Moreover, admission and service fee, for example, billing information, payment information, and currency exchange, etc. affected online tourists' behavior. The most interesting finding was that website playfulness was attractive to customers. Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan (2008) claimed that websites should be highlighted with positive product review and customer comments. Furthermore, Rodriguez-Molina, Frias-Jamilena, & Castaneda-Garcia (2015) confirmed that the emotive messages used on a website can influence customers' positive impression. Managers are recommended to use photographs or videos that convey the positive experience of the hotel. However, it was later shown by Kimlee, Shin, & Yang (2017) that hotel websites should focus on providing important information to customers. A website, on the other hand, is greatly more multifaceted; tourists could upload pictures and videos, with other information and allow for the public access (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013).

In this study, the quality of the information was found to cause tourists' satisfaction. As stated in Alcantara-Pilar, Armenski, Blanco-Encomienda, & Barrio-Garcia's research (2018), the factors that influenced online customers' satisfaction were convenience, time-saving, and security. Previous studies agreed that information search was not complicated since tourists could easily find the necessary information through the website (Chung & Koo, 2015). In addition, a website can update new information that is of interest to the customers, so it is an important tool to maintain the customers within a business. (Kang & Schuett, 2013; Parra-Lopez, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutierrez-Tano, & Diaz-Armas, 2011). Another important finding was that building confidence in the hotel websites could have an impact on online customers. This finding is in line with Chung & Koo's research (2015) showing that information reliability was trustworthy, and information reliability positively affected tourist perceived value. Tourists can learn more about the hotel through various online platforms. Moreover,

information regarding company sponsors should be presented on hotel websites. The sponsors will be encouraged to take on the role of opinion leader by expressing their own views and be a part of customer regarding the information (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

In the current study, comparing website characteristic with overall satisfaction showed that the mean degree of online responsiveness, as part of website characteristic, had an impact on customers. Similarly, Mauri & Minazzi (2013) found that hotel should monitor customers' comments on the website not only to understand their critical perspectives indicated by negative reviews but also to understand the service expected by guests. Hotel managers should provide the space on the website where customers could write a review after using the service (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). Some authors have speculated that there were various methods of communication through online channels. Hotel could put social media links on the website, for example, Twitter and Facebook page, to link to their official sites so that customers can easily visit the social media pages (Leung & Bai, 2013). The results were also consistent with Ponte, Carvajal-Trujillo, and Escobar-Rodriguez's research (2015) regarding the relationship between opportunities for e-transactions and overall customers' satisfaction; they stated that guests' perceived security of websites based on the following factors: 1) the provider's reputation, 2) the display of third-party assurance seals on the websites, 3) the privacy and security policies available, and 4) the levels of general concerns about internet privacy. Therefore, a hotel should be aware of the privacy and security of the hotel website (Ponte, Carvajal-Trujillo, & Escobar-Rodriguez, 2015).

6. Conclusion and recommendation

The present study was designed to determine the effect of hotels' website characteristics on overall customers' satisfaction. The results of this investigation

confirmed that website playfulness, quality of information, website confidence, online responsiveness, and opportunities for e-transactions, were significant in terms of providing websites dimensions that increase overall customers' satisfaction for domestic tourists in Thailand. However, this study showed that website navigability and personalization of product and service cannot be generalized in other contexts since these two factors can be interpreted differently in other cultures.

Regarding the implications, the first thing to consider is that a hotel business should develop a website that brings more customer involvement. Website with attractive colors, photo gallery, video presentation, 3D rotation, and animation can increase customers' attention and navigation. Therefore, to increase a hotel's profit, a manager should offer more resources to turn a hotel website into a multifunctional platform that concerns correct information, website design, and customer relationship. Moreover, a hotel business should make certain that the website contains high website confidence in order to create trust among customers and increase online transaction. A manager should also evaluate and assess current company information and related offers. If consumers are more familiar with the hotel website, they will be more willing to participate in an online consumption. A limitation of this study is that only domestic tourists were investigated and it only presented the opinions of Thais. Future research should attempt to cover different consumer segments from oversea tourists.

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