

Evaluating the Quality Factors in Hotel Websites Using Multi-Criteria Decision Making Approach: The Customers' Viewpoint

Sarminah Samad^a, Mehrbakhsh Nilashi^{b,*}, Othman Ibrahim^c

^a CBA Research Centre, Department of Business Administration, Collage of Business and Administration, Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University, Saudi Arabia

^b School of Computing, Faculty of Engineering, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310, UTM, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia

^c Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Skudai, Johor 81310, Malaysia

* Corresponding authors email addresses: nilashidotnet@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to provide a multi-criteria decision making approach to evaluate the hotel website through a set of important quality factors. We use Loiacono's WebQual™ scale to examine the quality of hotel websites. The data is collected from the users of the world's largest travel site, TripAdvisor. We adopt a multi-criteria decision making approach, Technique for Order of Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS), to perform data analysis on the collected data. Results revealed that trust, response time, transaction capability and informational fit-to-task are the most important factors from the customers' perspectives. These findings offer useful implications for hotel website managers to consider the identified factors in the design of websites to attract and retain the consumers for long term.

Keywords: Tourism, Multi-Criteria Decision Making, Online Booking, Assessment

1. Introduction

The assessment of websites has been the focus of attention for academics from the emergence of hotel internet websites in the late 90s (Law, 2018). During this period, consumers were able to reserve hotel rooms via conventional media (e.g., travel agents, telephone and fax). Since the mid-90s, academic researchers and industry practitioners have emphasized the significance of reserving travel relevant services via online platforms, namely hotel booking website, to improve the quality of their services and revenue (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1998; Law, 2018; Walle, 1996). Consequently, hotels started to incept websites to provide worldwide customers with information via the internet. Several hotel websites have been available since the mid-90s through to the late 2000s. Hotel managers focused on website improvement instead of creating a mere website by updating the web technologies utilized to create their websites. Such improvements were to present personalized consumer services and to streamline the process of reservation (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006). From 2010 onwards, hotel managers have dedicated to enhance their websites via the adoption of modern business models and the development of various website versions (Fong, Lam, & Law, 2017).

Websites provide businesses with streams of revenue as well as a platform for products and services promotion by acquiring more customers. However, not every website is successful in achieving such purpose. Thus, an effective website assessment is a prominent issue for researchers and practitioners (Chiou, Lin, & Perng, 2010). To summarize, website assessment is the focus of industrial practitioners and academic researchers (Law, Qi, & Buhalis, 2010).

Today, the majority of tourists plan their holidays, reserve requested services and share their experiences on the internet (Lu, Deng, & Wang, 2007). Official websites are an integral tool in numerous aspects (Díaz-Luque, 2009; Fernández-Cavia & Huertas-Roig, 2010): a) to provide information for possible of current travelers that are seeking destinations of interest, destination information, travel routes, opening hours and prices of museums, tourist attractions and trails, accommodation etc. b) destination branding, i.e. communicating the basic traits and values of a brand for particular destinations, known as brand equity in marketing and advertisement terms (Sartori, Mottironi, & Corigliano, 2012); c) a means of convincing possible tourists; d) a channel for products and services relevant to marketing; and e) a platform to share experiences and information between destination managers and travelers, or among travelers themselves. It is common knowledge that the internet may serve as an influential marketing tool in