

Behavior and Preferences in Browsing the Travel and Tourism Websites

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Abstract— Understanding the web surfers' behavior and preferences allows the travel and tourism service providers to strategize their businesses effectively. Thus, the aims of this research are to explore and examine the correlations and differences in terms of web browsing preferences among the locals (the Malaysians) and international web surfers. We categorized the travel and tourism websites into two namely Hotel websites; and other travel and tourism websites. We performed an analysis using the Pearson's correlation. Then, Levine's tests followed by independent samples T-tests were conducted. Finally, we proposed some recommendations to the travel and tourism service providers, and discussed the limitations of the study and future directions of research.

Keywords- travel and tourism; hotels; websites; Malaysians; Non-Malaysians; customer relationship.

I. INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism web sites play its vital roles in providing information, enabling online transactions and enhancing customer relationships. Leveraging from the interactivity, speed, convenience yet low cost features of Internet and the web technologies compel service providers in the travel and tourism industries in strategizing their business.

Knowing how travel and tourism consumers behave is critically important in marketing the travel and tourism products effectively. The behavior of travel and tourism consumers in browsing the relevant websites is worth for an investigation. Without this understanding, it is impossible to design an appropriate marketing response to consumers' needs [1].

In the Western countries like United States of America, the trends have changed in which web surfers prefer to go directly to the websites of the travel and tourism suppliers rather than to the agencies' websites [2]. Therefore, the behavior and preferences of the web surfers worth for an investigation.

Hence, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:-

1. To discover whether there is any relationship among the web surfers in visiting the local hotels, and other travel and tourism websites as compared to overseas hotels, and other travel and tourism websites.
2. To examine whether there is any significant difference among the local (the Malaysians) web surfers and

the international (the non-Malaysians) web surfers in visiting the local hotels, and other travel and tourism websites.

3. To examine whether there is any significant difference among the local (the Malaysians) web surfers and the international web surfers (the non-Malaysians) in visiting the international hotels, and other travel and tourism websites.

II. TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES IN MALAYSIA

In Malaysia, the travel and tourism activities are mainly covering Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition (MICE) centers, museums, recreational activities (zoos, theme parks, national parks and other recreational activities such as waterfalls, caves and cable cars) and selected sports centre activities [3].

It is reported that domestic tourism has increased 54.6 per cent from 74.7 million visitors in year 2009 to 115.5 million visitors in year 2010. The total expenditure by the domestic tourists also shown an increase from MYR 25.9 billion in year 2009 to MYR 34.7 billion in year 2010 [4].

Moving to the international arrival of tourists, there were 24.6 million of tourists who have visited Malaysia which contributed MYR 56.5 billions of receipt to the country in year 2010 as compared to 23.6 million of tourists arrivals which contributed MYR 53.4 billions of receipt in year 2009 [5].

There are many players in the travel and tourism industries which include the hotels as one of largest service providers in managing the destination region. The rest of the players are shown in the Table I (adopted from [6]) below:-

TABLE I. THE PLAYERS IN THE DESTINATION REGION

| Hospitality industry | Leisure industry | Supply industries | Support Industries | Public sector |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Accommodations, Catering, Restaurants, Bars /Pubs; etc. | Attractions, Parks, Shopping, Theatres, Sport Centres, Theme Parks, Activities, | Agricultures, Foods, Clothing, Manufacturing, Souvenirs, Services, Energy, Computer | Infrastructure, Telecommunication, Hospitals, Legislation, Regulations, Security, Police, etc. | Destination Management Organizations at the National, |

| | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Entertainment, Museums, Night clubs, etc. | s, Real Estates, Retailing, etc. | Regional and Local levels. |
|--|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------|

Knowing the huge amount of revenues and great profitability, the travel and tourism providers should make use of their E-CRM website features which can be categorized as informational, transactional, and relationship [7] [8], to manage the expectations of the web surfers which will also be the potential tourists that contribute to both domestic and international tourism in this country.

III. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

The research instrument for this study was survey questionnaire using a convenience sampling. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 150 respondents from March to April 2011. These respondents were drawn from various corporate, government and educational institutions from metropolitan cities in Klang Valley, Penang, Johor Bahru, and Kuching. The questionnaire consists of 2 sections. Section A consisted of consumers' opinion about their perception on the hotels and other travel and tourism websites while Section B are made of questions related to the respondents' demographic information.

In this study, the participations by the respondents were voluntary. In the context of data collection, each respondent was cordially invited by the researchers to participate in the survey. Upon obtaining respondent's consent, he/she was asked to personally complete the questionnaire. Out of the 150 participants responded to the questionnaire, only 134 questionnaires (89%) were found usable for analysis.

The statistical programme namely IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0 was used for the data analysis. The results of descriptive analysis are summarized in Table II.

TABLE II. SUMMARY OF RESPONDENT PROFILES (SAMPLE SIZE = 134)

| Respondents Characteristics | Sub-Profile | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 56.7 |
| | Female | 43.3 |
| Age | Below 20 | 10.4 |
| | 21-30 | 76.9 |
| | 31-40 | 6.7 |
| | 41-50 | 5.2 |
| | Above 50 | 0.7 |
| Education level | SPM equivalent or below | 3.7 |
| | STPM equivalent | 18.7 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 70.1 |
| | Master's degree | 6.0 |
| | Doctorate | 0.7 |
| | Others | 0.7 |
| Position / Current Status | Fulltime Student | 78.4 |
| | Unemployed / Pensioner | 2.2 |
| | Non Executive | 2.2 |
| | Executive / Manager | 15.7 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|------|
| | Senior Management / Director / VP / President | 0.7 |
| | Others | 0.7 |
| Monthly income | less than MYR 2 000 | 69.2 |
| | MYR 2001 - 4000 | 14.3 |
| | MYR 4001 - 6000 | 7.5 |
| | MYR 6001 and above | 9.0 |
| Nationality* | Malaysian | 48.5 |
| | Non-Malaysian | 51.5 |

* The nationality of the respondents was originally categorized as Malaysian; Asian/Australian (except Malaysian); European; American; African; and others, and eventually recoded as Malaysian; and Non-Malaysian.

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the scales used for variables under study were better than 0.7, which indicate that they have met reasonable standards of internal consistency and reliability [9]. The reliability of the measurement scales are shown in Table III below:-

TABLE III. CONBRACH'S ALPHA FOR THE MEASURES USED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRES

| Measures | Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|-------|------------------|
| <i>Web surfers enjoy browsing the hotel websites and other travel and tourism websites from Malaysia.</i> | 2 | 0.718 |
| <i>Web surfers enjoy browsing the hotel websites and other travel and tourism websites from overseas.</i> | 2 | 0.736 |

IV. FINDINGS

A. Relationship among the local and international hotels websites and other travel and tourism websites within and outside Malaysia

In order to see the direction and strengths of their relationship, an analysis of Pearson's correlation is conducted and the result is shown in Table IV:-

TABLE IV. CORRELATIONS AMONG THE PROPOSITIONS

| Propositions *** | | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 |
|------------------|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| P1 | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .220* | .561** | .204* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .011 | .000 | .018 |
| P2 | Pearson Correlation | .220* | 1 | .261** | .583** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .011 | | .002 | .000 |
| P3 | Pearson Correlation | .561** | .261** | 1 | .195* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .002 | | .024 |
| P4 | Pearson Correlation | .204* | .583** | .195* | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .018 | .000 | .024 | |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Proposition 1 (P1): Web surfers enjoy browsing the hotel websites from Malaysia;

Proposition 2 (P2): Web surfers enjoy browsing the hotel websites from countries other than Malaysia;

Proposition 3(P3): Web surfers enjoy browsing other travel and tourism websites from Malaysia; and

Proposition 4 (P4): Web surfers enjoy browsing other travel and tourism websites from countries other than Malaysia.

From the above table, there are significant direct (positive) correlations among the 4 propositions. Among the strongest correlations are between P2 with P4 ($r = 0.583$) which infer that web surfers browsing others travel and tourism websites from Malaysia are likely to browse to other travel and tourism websites all over the world; followed by P1 with P3 ($r = 0.561$) which also infer that web surfers browsing the hotel websites from Malaysia are likely to browse to other hotel websites all over the world.

B. Difference among the local (the Malaysian) web surfers and the international (the non-Malaysian) web surfers in visiting the hotels, and other travel and tourism websites from Malaysia

In order to examine whether there is any difference among groups (Malaysian; and Non-Malaysian) in their web browsing preferences, an independent samples T-test is conducted. The group statistics is tabulated with the results of the Levene's test and independent samples T-Test are shown respectively in Table V and Table VI:-

TABLE V. GROUP STATISTICS FOR P1 AND P3

| | Nationality | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----|---------------|----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| P1 | Malaysian | 65 | 3.28 | .718 | .089 |
| | Non-Malaysian | 69 | 3.38 | .750 | .090 |
| P3 | Malaysian | 65 | 3.35 | .799 | .099 |
| | Non-Malaysian | 69 | 3.28 | .784 | .094 |

TABLE VI. INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TESTS FOR P1 & P3

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-----|-----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| P1 | Equal variances assumed | .235 | .628 | -.787 | 132 | .433 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| P3 | Equal variances assumed | .319 | .573 | .574 | 132 | .567 |
|----|-------------------------|------|------|------|-----|------|

The result from the Levene's test shows that the Sig. values for both propositions are larger than 0.5 which follow the assumption of equal variances. The Sig. values for both propositions from the T-test are above 0.05 which conclude that there is no significant difference between the 2 groups (the Malaysians and the Non-Malaysians).

C. Difference among the local (the Malaysian) web surfers and the international (the non-Malaysian) web surfers in visiting the hotels, and other travel and tourism websites from overseas

Similar tests were conducted to examine whether there is any difference among groups (Malaysian; and Non-Malaysians) in their browsing preferences on the travel and tourism websites from overseas. The group statistics is tabulated with the results of the Levene's test and independent samples T-Test are shown respectively in Table VII and Table VIII below:-

TABLE VII. GROUP STATISTICS FOR P2 AND P4

| | Nationality | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----|---------------|----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| P2 | Malaysian | 65 | 3.51 | .831 | .103 |
| | Non-Malaysian | 69 | 3.75 | .930 | .112 |
| P4 | Malaysian | 65 | 3.65 | .818 | .102 |
| | Non-Malaysian | 69 | 3.78 | .838 | .101 |

TABLE VIII. INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TESTS FOR P2 & P4

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-----|-----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| P2 | Equal variances assumed | .162 | .688 | -1.610 | 132 | .110 |
| P4 | Equal variances assumed | .033 | .855 | -.953 | 132 | .342 |

Again, the result from the Levene's test shows that the Sig. values for both propositions P2 and P4, are larger than 0.5 which follow the assumption of equal variances. The Sig. values for both propositions P2 and P4, from the T-test are above 0.05 which conclude there is no significant difference between the 2 groups (the Malaysians and the Non-Malaysians).

Below are the findings of this study which fulfill the research objectives as shown in Table IX:-

TABLE IX. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

| Statements | Results |
|--|---------------|
| There are relationship among the web surfers in visiting the local hotels, and other travel and tourism websites as compared to overseas hotels, and other travel and tourism websites. | Supported |
| There is significant difference among the local (the Malaysians) web surfers and the international (the non-Malaysians) web surfers in visiting the local hotels, and other travel and tourism websites. | Not Supported |
| There is significant difference among the local (the Malaysians) web surfers and the international web surfers in visiting the international (the non-Malaysians) hotels, and other travel and tourism websites. | Not supported |

V. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings above, the domestic and international travel and tourism service providers should strengthen their affiliation by interlink among themselves through cross references, web affiliation, banner exchanges, and other smart partnership programmes.

It is also a good practice if the Government and the associations among the travel and tourism operators (such as the Malaysian Association of Hotels – MAH; the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents - MATTA) could establish portals to provide a “one-stop centre” in order to manage the needs of online information, ease of performing transactions, and enhancing customer relationship with the tourists. Among those information that are consider as important in travel planning are shown in Figure 1 (adopted from [10]):-

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airfares / flight schedule • Dining / Entertainment • Discounts & promotions • Local events calendar • Maps / driving directions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places to go • Places to stay • Rent a car / local transportation • Things to do • Travel packages / ground tour packages |
|--|---|

Figure 1. Online Pleasure Trip Planning Activities

It is important to note that this study has several limitations. Firstly, due to time constraint, this study focused mainly in the metropolitan settings in Malaysia. Further studies should be carried out to gauge web surfers' behavior and preferences from various parts of Malaysia, which is from urban and rural areas.

Secondly, our study assessed consumers' opinion on browsing the hotel, and travel and tourism websites in general. This study has not covered extensively the E-CRM dimensions of the travel and tourism websites. Hence further research to understand those dimensions such as the use of social media, available of e-payment options [11], security and privacy policy, and others is worthwhile.

Nevertheless, as both consumers (the tourists) and travel and tourism service providers can benefit from using the

websites leading to prosper the country's national income and competitiveness in the long run, in depth studies to examine the dimensions of consumers' satisfaction towards meeting the tourist expectations should be emphasized. The successful implementation of the seamless matching of the web interface (front-end) with the travel and tourism services' processes (back-end) in an integrated way to create synergistic and symbiotic effects if there are properly managed, in turn would improve the web surfers which are the potential tourists' trust and confidence on the entire country's travel and tourism related industries.

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