Green Information Technology Audit and Digitalization in Small Medium Enterprise (SME):
Factors That Influence Intentions to Use Hotel Websites

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ABSTRACT

According to Chung and law (2003); Jeong et al (2003); Jeong and Lambert (2001) and Kim et al. (2003), information satisfaction is the most important requirement of online customers' purchases decision making. This need remains largely unmet despite the growing importance of e-commerce within the hospitality industry. According to Kim et al. (2005), the changing trend in the business activities is largely attributable to the fast and improved developments in information and telecommunications. As a result, Chung and Law, (2003) noted that the Internet is also helping to drive down overhead costs for the hospitality industry and cost of information for the customers, as the traditional method of communication is slowly being phased out. Similarly Kim et al (2005) argue that the Internet gives the customers more advantages by allowing them to obtain valuable information such as prices and hotel facilities without the need of getting into contact with any sales agents. In addition, the Internet provides the customers with numerous supplies allowing customers to access a pool of products and services information from which they can make choices and compare prices.

Keywords: Internet, Online, Online Customers, Prices, Products

INTRODUCTION

In response to these demands, the hotel industry is fast adopting e-commerce so as to benefit from the global opportunities, distinguish themselves from their competitors and lower the costs of reservation processes. Kim et al. (2003) point out that the Internet offers optimum flexibility to enable hotels operators to react more swiftly to the changes in the business environment. However, before the hotels can reap these benefits, Jeong and Lambert (2001), posit that these benefits will not come on a silver platter. They assert that it is no longer adequate simply

to market products and services online, but it is vital for hoteliers to fully understand the factors that determine online customers' courses of actions (i.e. to buy or not to buy). This is one of the main concerns on the effectiveness of hotel web sites, which include the values of the information content for online customers' purchase decisions.

The Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of this study is to:

- Investigate and identify UK online customers' perceived key elements of hotel websites information contents for purchases decision.
- Use the key elements identified as 'measurement indicators'.
- Evaluate the performance of UK two and three –star hotel websites.

The Research Questions

According to a survey conducted by American Express in 2004 (cited by British Hospitality Association, current topics), e-commerce presents the UK hotel managers with one of the five biggest challenges facing the industry today. When Jeong and Lambert, (2001) tested a framework for evaluating information quality of hotel web sites, they found that the 'usefulness' of web site 'information' about hotel products and services has important implications on the customers' purchase decision behaviours. Although more research has been done since Jeong and Lambert, (2001), latter studies suggest not much has changed in terms meeting customers' information needs through the websites. This prompts the main question of interests: What information do online customers expect to find on the hotel web sites?

The Relevance of the Study:

There are a growing number of researches on e-commerce for the hospitality industry, however many of these studies are being carried outside the UK and/or in general terms of hotel website overall performance. For example, Kim et al (2005) investigated the factors that influence the Chinese online reservation intentions and their satisfactions with online reservation in Beijing, China. Jeong et al. (2003) conducted a similar study in New York, USA. And Chung and Law' (2003) who moved a step further to address specific aspects of the hotel web site quality- (i.e. information content), conceptualised their framework and tested the model in Hong Kong, on Hong Kong hotel web sites.

These examples demonstrate that, although some work has been done to address the information needs of online customers, it is equally important that the perceptions of UK online customers and hotel operators are incorporated in such evaluation frameworks if such frameworks are to be universally acceptable. The findings of this study should therefore be of interests to other researchers as well as hotel practitioners and web site developers.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework:

This study will be based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Davis (1989) which is the major framework that has been used to explain information technology usage and user acceptance behaviours (Malhotra and Galletta 1999). Anchored on the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1972) the TAM posits that IT usage and acceptance depends on two constructs, namely perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU), which in turn predict the attitude that an individual will develop towards the system and eventually his /her intentions of using or not using the IT. A major shortcoming of the TAM with its original emphasis on system characteristics (Malhotra and Galletta 1999), was that it ignored the role of social influence in adoption of the technology (Davis et al 1988), hence in this study the TAM will be incorporated into the TPB (Ajzen 1985), in order to account for social influence. The TPB holds that for an individual to perform a given behaviour he /she must have an

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