Research Article

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Impact of web and digital experience on the stickiness of third party hotel website

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Abstract

The rapid development and use of mobile technologies has changed the way of our everyday lives, especially individual that feel a sense of experience as a tool for enhancing task performance. In addition, mobile technologies also have changed the way marketers and consumers communicate. However, digital experience is still a largely unexplored concept in both hospitality research and practice. Drawing from the literature on human computer interaction in information system and flow theory in consumer behavior research, this study theoretically identifies and empirically explores the concept of flow through experience and its antecedents (i.e., web experience and digital experience on the outcome, and web stickiness) in the hotel context. Using eCommerce website and mobile technologies as the target, an offline and online survey will be conducted. This study contributes theoretically and empirically to the body of IS use research and has managerial implications, suggesting that web experience and digital experience is a necessary condition for stick to the websites. As a result, by improving user's experience through digital applications is critical to build strong relationships with the consumers.

Keywords:

Flow theory, perceived web experience, digital experience, web stickiness

1   Introduction

With the advances of technology, information technology is playing a significant role in transforming and developing the hospitality and tourism industry (Wang, Harris, & Patterson, 2012). Explicitly, as a powerful marketing and operational tool, internet has revolutionized the business operations by providing extraordinary opportunities for the service providers and consumers in this industry (Amaro & Duarte, 2015). Hotels have traditionally been dependent on intermediates (e.g. travel agents) to spread information and sell their products. However, emergence of social third-party hotel website can be identified first in the growth of advertising and promoting about the hotel to the consumer. The example of third party hotel website is such as Expedia, Traveloka, booking.com, tripadvisor, hotel.com and others.

Therefore, information and mobile technologies has developed a new and potentially powerful communication and distribution channel for hotels, decreasing the gap between them and consumers (Ponte et al., 2015). Despite the wide recognition of the compatibility between the internet and hotel industry, hotels need to understand not only the hotel website quality but also the importance of consumer experience with the web and digital that may shape the behavior of their consumers to visit or continuance intention (Hsu et al., 2012; Chen, Yen & Hwang, 2012).

In today's highly competitive marketplace, the minds of consumers tend to appreciate the experience more than the actual tangible value of a purchase. Therefore, business need to focus on providing positive "experiences" in order to win the hearts of consumers (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Thus, experience became a critical factor of the overall product and service being purchased (Gopalani & Shick, 2011). The significant role of experience becomes even more apparent when we consider that eCommerce become commodities in contemporary market places. In order to escape the commoditization trap, business and eCommerce business need to stage experiences deliberately. In addition, the evolution of information technology and mobile technologies has not only changed the methods of how online products and services are distributed but has also changed online consumer behaviors (Golmohamadi et al., 2012). For example, if a consumer is buying a product and has never been to the eCommerce website previously, he or she might feel anxious if the web experience is not flawless. In this case, the consumer would want to see the pictures of the product that he/she wants to buy and ask questions to a customer representative via online chat or mobile. Thus, eCommerce websites and mobile technologies need to provide a compelling web and digital experience to be successful.

Numerous scholars have proposed the positive influence of web experience on purchase intention (Constantinides, 2004; Contantinides & Geurts, 2005; Salleh et al., 2010). Hence this study focuses on further understanding of the associations among web experience and other variables that determine consumer revisit intentions. In line with this aim, this study introduces digital experience to check its effect on stickiness

intention on hotel third party websites. Taking consumer's digital experience into account is important because flow is consumer's consciousness state when they are totally involved in an activity of web browsing (Pace, 2004; Hsu et al., 2012). The concept of flow refers to the experiences where consumers are engaged in activity with concentration and develop a feeling of time distortion during their engagement (Chen et al., 1999). Meanwhile, Constantinides et al. (2005) states that through websites flow creates total impressions and inclined to continue visiting these websites. A number of scholars have discussed the flow experience, web experience, internet experience in predicting consumer behavior in online environments (Ali, 2016; Constantinides et al., 2005; Novak et al., 2003; Thatcher et al., 2008). Therefore, it is assumed that considering perceived digital experience can be useful to predict web stickiness on hotel third party websites.

Recently, much attention has been given to study on consumer satisfaction, purchase intentions in online environments. However, scarce of study has explored on web and digital experience as antecedents of web stickiness on hotel third party websites. Hence, in line with the preceding discussion, this study aims to understand the role of web and digital experience using Theory Reasoned Action (TRA) as theoretical base. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section presents the review of the literature and hypotheses. Following that, the research methodology used for sample selection and data collection is discussed.

2 Literature Review

This study draws upon the intentional model such as TRA, theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and UTAUT which investigate the relationship between intention and behaviour. Therefore, this study draws upon the consumer behaviour and human computer interaction models such as flow theory which investigate the relationship between mental states of activities and intention. Prior studies indicated that flow theory is explaining online experiences of the users (Chen, 2006; Hausman & Siekpe, 2009; Wu & Chang, 2005). The literature shows that flow theory has to be associated with various consequences in online contexts including behavioural intentions such as loyalty and intention to revisit and repurchase (Hausman & Siekpe, 2009; Siekpe, 2005; Wu & Chang, 2005). In fact, in online environment, consumers seek utilitarian benefits, meanwhile contemporary e-shoppers seek for enjoyment of the experience when shopping online (Senecal et al., 2002).

The proposed theoretical model is developed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the determinants that affect the consumer stickiness toward the third-party website. In the current study, we define stickiness is the extent to which consumers amount of stay and frequently visit the website. We examined the relationship between determinants towards intention. Based on the literature discussed above, we propose a research model as shown in Figure 1.
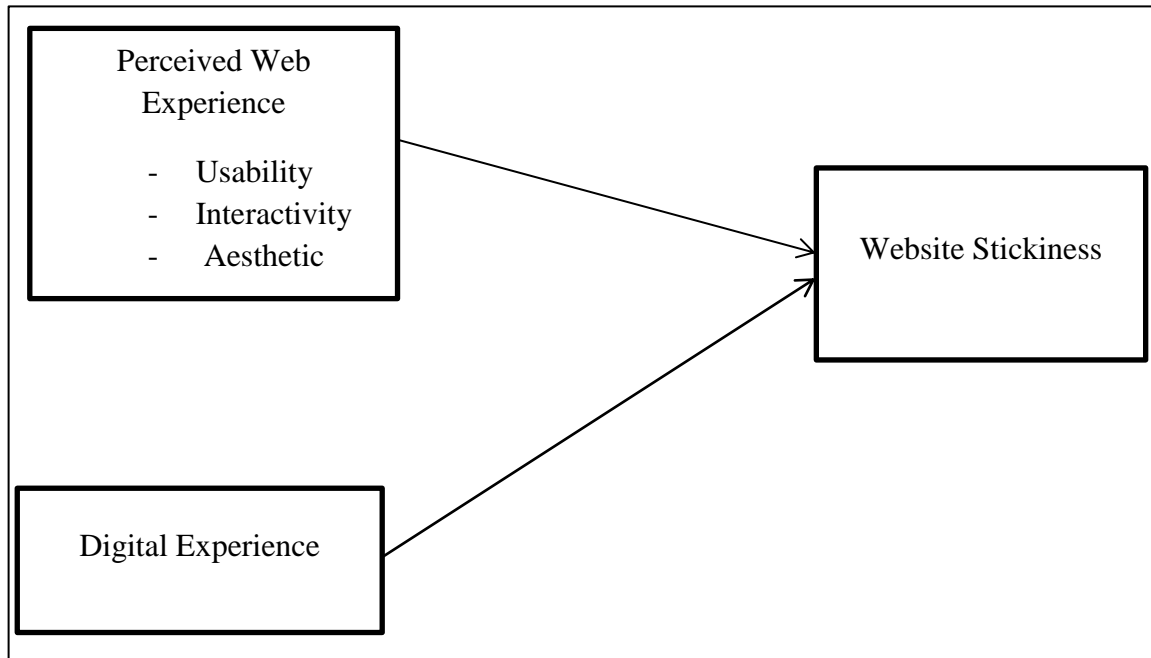
Figure 1: Research model

The literature shows that behavioural intention is a reliable antecedent to actual use. According to Constantinides and Geurts (2005) the visual appealing and attractiveness of the website shape the web experience. Therefore, in this study web experience is defined as total impression of the consumers about the website from their exposure and experience of notions, emotions, impulses by the design and other marketing elements (Constantinides, 2004). The literature shows that experience is a reliable antecedent to behavioral intention. In contrast to that, the consumer experience is divided into two which are web and digital experience. Constantinides (2005) defines web experience is a total impression of online functionality, information, emotions, cues, stimuli and products/services that going beyond the traditional marketing mix. Constantinides (2005) hypothesizes that web experience has an influence on the behavioral intention. In this study web experience is define as the extent to which of individual total impressions (i.e., usability, interactivity and aesthetic) based on their experience and exposure to the third-party website. When experience becomes stronger, individuals are more likely to perform the behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991; Venkatesh et al., 2003; Salleh et al., 2010).

Therefore, Caroll (1997) suggests the evolution of human computer interaction is because usability. Green and Pearson (2009) posited that two website usability instruments for use in eCommerce organization. The instruments that they empirical tested were the instruments from Agarwal and Venkatesh (2002) studies on website usability (i.e., ease of use, made for the medium, emotion, content and promotion).

Meanwhile other instruments are from Palmer (2002) studies on the website usability (i.e., download delay, navigability, information content, interactivity and responsiveness). Green et al. (2011) also suggest that navigation, responsiveness and download delay is influence by perceived ease of use on satisfaction that ultimately impact on intention to transact. This is similar with expectation confirmation theory (ECT) that proposed by Oliver (1980) describes repurchase or revisit is dependent on satisfaction. Researcher Ali (2016) indicates that hotel website usability has positive influence on consumer perceptions toward the website. In this study, usability is define as the degree to which the website is usable to consumer in searching, accessing and transacting at minimal effort and time based on their experience and exposure of the website (e.g: responsiveness, navigation, download delay).

Meanwhile, Green and Pearson (2011) posit that interactivity is also influence by perceived usefulness on satisfaction that ultimately intention to transact. Green et al. (2011) suggest that the interface design of a website influences the ability of the user to manipulate and fully utilize the site. This is similar with the study from Ranjit et al. (2013) and Dubelaar, Leong and Brown (2003) indicate that perceived interactivity has an impact on the stickiness of the website towards purchase intention. In contrast in this study, interactivity is defined as the degree to which the website can be used by consumer to personalize, customize the content and interact with the website based on their experience and exposure of the website. By customizing the site's look and content and provide this interaction, the logical goal seems to be making the site more useful.

However, aesthetic is another factor that apart of web experience. Choi (2013) argue that visual aesthetics is a symbolic representation of the website that influence to the consumer self-creating feelings that relevant to pleasure. Fang (2013) discovered that electronic window dressings are related to the external links, graphics (aesthetics) and technology that can generate stimuli related to the arousal of the message on purchase intention. Based on these relations, H_1 is proposed:

H_1:   Perceived Web experience has a positive influence on web stickiness

The technological advances and social changes have modified many aspects of our lives and have altered our communication landscape (Kim & Lennon, 2008). Especially in mobile communication standards the mobile connections have increase from wired network to wireless standards. In accordance to the smartphones, tablet and laptops have significantly improved the communication technology. In parallel to these changes, the role of the consumer also has been change into the multiple devices usage. Traditionally consumers were passive of information and content. But today, they play an active role as pro-sumers. Multiple devices usage has introduced a new experience and exposure to the consumer. This digital experience role has been promoted by the arrival of multiple devices. At the same time, the advancement of digital devices (i.e., mobile, tablet and laptop) has changed the way consumers communicate and learn

about product offerings on how to shop and products as well as services (Kim & Lennon, 2008; Darley & Blankson, 2010).

In this paper, digital experience could be explained as the extent to which the quality of the website that encounters by individual based on their experience and exposure through mobile apps. It is critical component of consumer experience. Therefore, both researchers agree that flow is a key concept for the explanation of consumer behaviour in online environments (Huang, Backman & Backman, 2012; Teng, Huang, Jeng, Chou & Hu, 2012). Research also indicates that a significant amount of sales in eCommerce is making less, globally due to poor web experience (Bilgihan, Nusair, Okumus & Bujisic, 2013). Consumer interactions experience in eCommerce creates opportunities to engage, attach and commit in positive web experience. Thus, web experience has become an important element of online buying decision behaviour. Based on these relations, H_2 is proposed:

H$_2$:   Perceived Digital Experience has a positive influence on web stickiness

3   Research Method

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual consumer who has experience visiting and staying with the third-party hotel website. The survey will be conducted through online and offline survey. The questionnaire will be administered in person in the first stage and by email and social media in the second stage of data collection. In Malaysia, the number of internet users was eighty per cent (80%) of the consumer in Malaysia are an active user of the internet (SKMM, 2015). The Star online also reported that the visitor who visits the website are exceeded to 1.5 million in 2014. This report indicates that consumer is actively participating and engages in using the e-commerce website. As consumers use of online content increases, the accuracy and quality of recommendations, evaluations and opinions of past and current consumers will become more important.

The questionnaire will be developed using multiple item method and each item will be measured based on 7-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". All operational definitions of the constructs and instrument items are shown in Table 1. All constructs are those that have been used and validated by other researchers and have been adopted. In this study, Smart PLS version 3.0 will be used as the main statistical analysis tool to purify the measurement items and test the hypothesis. This study will be conducted using structural equation model (SEM) technique and followed a two-step approach for assessing the measurement and structural models respectively (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Table 1. Research construct

Construct	Items	Sources
Perceived Web Experience Def: The extent to which of consumer's total impression based on their experience and exposure of the website (i.e:usability, interactivity and aesthetic).	WE1: I find the design of this website is fresh and original. WE2: I find this website is easy to use. WE3: I find this website is useful. WE4: I find this website is easy to customize the site's content. WE5: I find this website is valuable to me. WE6: I find the design of this website is fun.	Sanjit et al. (2014); Green & Pearson (2011) & Lloyd C. Harris & Mark M.H. Goode (2010
Digital experience Def: The extent to which the quality of the website that encounter by consumer based on their experience and exposure through digital interface (eg: laptop, tablet and smartphone).	DE1: The website content is still relevant. DE2: The website content is still adequate. DE3: The website content is consistent. DE4: The website content is still useful. DE5: The website design is still attractive. DE6: The website responds to my request very quickly.	Harvard Business Review (2015); Constatinides (2010); Choi & Scott (2013).
Web Stickiness Def: The willingness of consumer to revisit and transact the website frequently.	WS1: I will visit this website in the future. WS2: I will stick to this website in the future. WS3: I will continue to visit this website in the future. WS4: I plan to buy from this website again. WS5: I will choose this website as my first choice.	Dubelaar, Leong & Brown (2003).

4   Conclusion

The point of departure for the study is to investigate the antecedents of web and digital experience on revisit intention of hotel third party website. The main objective of this study is to find new factors to overcome the consumer experience and site commitment gap. Furthermore, the influence of consumer review on intention to revisit hotel third party website is investigated. This study makes several contributions to theory. First, this study attempts to mitigate the limitations arising in the relationship between web and digital experience. Most importantly, this study captures the effect of consumer review on the relationship between consumer experience and site commitment. This will provide new insight into the situational conditions faced by e-marketers and how these situations may impact consumer decisions towards the commitment of the website.

This study will provide evidence concerning the role of consumer review which encourage or inhibit individual towards commit and attach to buy from the third-party website. This study makes clear the effect of consumer experience and consumer review as the work situation on consumer to commit and attach to the website. Furthermore, from the consumer's point of view, this study will shed some light on the consumer experience and commitment of the website and clarifies the situation for consumers when they make decision to buy from the websites. Overall, the findings of this work significantly enhance our understanding of consumer behaviour and technology experience and serve to further highlight the important role of context in our theorizing.

5   About the author

Nina Farisha Isa is a lecturer in Department Hotel Management., Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang. She received her Bachelor Science (Hons) in Hotel Management from Universiti Teknologi MARA and Master in Business Administration (MBA) from Universiti Teknologi Mara. Currently she is a PhD candidate at University of Malaya, studying on consumer behavior and computer human interaction. She has published several studies in academic journals and conferences on those topics.

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Fairuz Abd Hakim serves as a lecturer at the Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA since 2002. He was a part-time tutor at College of Business, RMIT University, Melbourne in 2015-16. He received his Master of Commerce in Marketing Tourism and Hospitality Management from University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney, Australia. His areas of research interests are value co-creation and employee motivation. Currently, he is a PhD candidate at RMIT University, Melbourne, and conducting research on the effect of employee participation in value co-creation process in the hospitality industry in Australia. Fairuz's non-academic professional experience includes work in the hotel industry in Malaysia and Australia.

Irina Mohd Akhir is an academic advisor for Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang. She was awarded for achievements in invention and innovation team project such as HOT-I Housekeeping Trolley and I-Serve Pad for Food and Beverage service. She obtained her Master in Hospitality from Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam and has several years of professional working experience in hotel industry.

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