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PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS ON RELATIONSHIP OF CRM FUNCTIONS IMPLEMENTATION TOWARDS FIRM'S BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this preliminary study is to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument used and feasible for full-scale analysis of the aforementioned studied phenomenon. PLS-SEM is employed in this preliminary study that utilised SmartPLS 3.0.

Methodology: Drawing on RBV (resource-based view) the implementation of customer relationship management (CRM) functions in hotel industry had become a central strategy in determining competitive advantage. Empirical studies had documented that small and medium hotels had also embraced on customer-centric business practice that endures CRM functions as their strategy in sustaining competitive advantage. Indeed, they inclines to implement elementary CRM functions that leverage the IBT's (internet-based technologies) of hotel website. CRM functions is regarded as firms' resource that effectively deployed may lead to competitive advantage that portray in positive business performance. A total of seventy-five respondents (managers and owners) of small and medium hotels managers and owners from Greater Kuala Lumpur participated in the survey realised through convenient sampling method.

Main Findings: The result of PLS-SEM analysis on measurement model had showed a robust analysis of internal reliability and validity. Assessment of items and constructs included in the study exhibits a good internal consistency and valid, thus, reflects an acceptable research model that are feasible and ready a full-scale analysis.

Keywords: *Internet-Based CRM Functions, PLS-SEM, Reliability and Validity Analysis, Business Performance, Small and Medium Hotels, Malaysia.*

INTRODUCTION

It is vital for firms to developed marketing capabilities in order to sustain its competitive advantage against current dynamic business backdrop (Kaleka and Morgan, 2017). One of the most pronounced marketing strategy was to shift from conventional transactional-based to a relational-based of customer centric. By leveraging firm's resources such as CRM (customer relationship marketing) seems ideal to remedy the relational-marketing initiative(Rodriguez et al., 2018) and subsequently may induced a desirable firm's performance outcome (Wu and Lu, 2012; Kamaruddin and Samsudin, 2014; Kamyab, 2014; Adewale, 2016; Ametorwo, 2016; Okafor and Shaibu, 2016; Bugu and Yucheng, 2018; Fróis et al., 2019). Hence, developing capabilities by deploying resources especially in customer relationship may lead to unique strengths and competitiveness in the market (Kaleka and Morgan, 2017; Bachev, 2018; Gunawardana et al., 2018). Adoption of technological enabled CRM (e-CRM) driven by internet-based technologies (IBTs) may enhance firm capabilities in marketing (Chen and Ching, 2007; Iyiola, 2014; Wye and Lim, 2014; Agbim and Eluka, 2018; Maldonado-Guzman et al., 2018; Udanoh and Zouria, 2018) that reflects better target segment, improves customer service that leads to customer retention, consequently increase in business performance as a whole (Josiassen et al., 2014; Essayyad et al., 2018; Obi and Okekeokosisi, 2018). The main concern was, either small and medium hotels utilizing IBTs directly or indirectly that improves CRM activities? Nevertheless, many SMEs indirectly utilize IBTs in their marketing activities that exhibit the features of CRM (Street and Cameron, 2007). Arisen the importance to consider the latter, focal industry of small and medium hotels is to be highlighted since service sector is considered as an important thrust to the national economy as officially published facts and figures had documented a substantial contribution to the overall GDP of 21.8% as at 2016 that filled the largest portion of SMEs establishment of 87% . Moreover, the growing number of tourist arrivals to Malaysia influenced the development of hotel industry, over five years from 2012 – 2016 it has shown an incremental figures of 7.1% of 26.8 million of tourist arrival in 2016 that generate overall income of MYR 82.1 billon. Indeed, considerable attention on empirical studies is needed relative to CRM in tourism and hospitality industry (Sigala, 2003; Maggon and Chaudhry, 2015; Diffley et al., 2018).

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Business Performance

Previous studies had documented different performance perspectives of financial and non-financial been as an observed variable. Financial performance constructs that are widely adopted were the return on asset (ROA), return on equity (ROE), market shares, sales growth, earning per shares and profitability (Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986; Ha et al., 2016). However, as business environment had changed its shape, depending on unidimensional of multi-dimensional constructs of business performance seems inadequate in determining firm's business performance as a whole (Kaplan and Norton, 2001; Ha et al., 2016). Therefore, a broader business performance conceptualization that encompassed of non-financial measurement such as operational performance that consist of measures like market-share; products proliferation in terms of innovation and invention; product quality; value added in manufacturing processes; technology adoption and efficiency; marketing effectiveness and customer perspectives; manufacturing value-added; internal resources and capabilities; and firm learning and growth that are considerably intrinsic within the business performance domain are crucially needed to be emphasized eventually (Kaplan and Norton, 1992).Considering CRM that are cross-functional in nature, relying on single business performance scale (financial measurement) seems insufficient as it reflects single performance dimension on multi-dimensional concept of CRM (Wu and Chen, 2012).

IBT's CRM Functions

Top 100 retail websites had identified 41 website functions that resemble CRM features. Among all, the most significant functions present were the e-mail, call function, privacy policy, postal address, membership, product information online, preview of the product (photo and videos), online purchasing, store locator and location, product highlights and promotion, customer service area, and company profile on site (Feinberg et al., 2002). Ming et al. (2002) in their studies on e-CRM functions had analyzed 11 major CRM software package had proposed a categorization of CRM function into three main constructs of (1) web-based service, (2) customer support service and (3) sales/marketing support. Similarly, studies by Wu and Lu (2012) operationalized e-CRM functions constructs of internet service, customer support and marketing support as the independent variables. IBTs CRM functions implementation will enhance CRM actions at customer interactions touch points as it will positively enhance business performance.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature review this study primarily focused on an observed composite variable of business performance that are influenced by the exogenous variables (Wu and Lu, 2012; Al-Refaie et al., 2014). Conversely, studies also posits that firm's business performance reflects the effectiveness of CRM adoption outcome (Wu and Lu, 2012; Norshidah et al., 2013; Mohamad et al., 2014). Hence, Business performance implies an assessment of any strategies that underlined the performance implications that are directly or indirectly associates with the strategy that been implemented (Schendel and Patton, 1978; Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986). The exogenous variables for this study are the IBTs CRM functions namely the internet service (IS) and customer support service (CSS).Drawing on RBV (resource-based view) figure 1.0 depicts the proposed theoretical framework that indicate the relationship of implementation of IBT's CRM functions leads to a positive firm's performance.

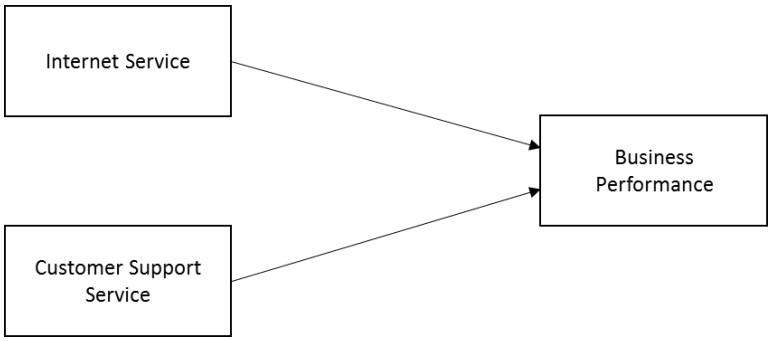

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework derived from previous studies by Wu and Chen (2012); Wu and Lu (2012).
Accordingly considering the reviewed literatures and theory underpinned this study hypothesized that:
H1a: CRM function of internet service (IS) will have a positive impact on firm's business performance."
"H1b:CRM function of customer support service (CSS) will have a positive impact on firm's business performance."

SURVEY INSTRUMENT AND MEASUREMENT

Business Performance

The measurement items of business performance were mainly adapted from the studies of Wu and Lu (2012) Mohammed and Bin Rashid (2012) and Al-Refaie et al. (2014) that are based on balance scorecard (BSC) perspectives by Kaplan and Norton (1992). Therefore, measurement items that based on BSC perspectives is to be measured the business performance dimensions that reflects the financial and non-financial performance (Kaplan and Norton, 1992).

CRM Functions

IBTs CRM Functions were divided into three distinctive independents variable as to examine the level of influential path it contributes for each function towards business performance outcome. Internet service (IS) construct was measured using measurements items that been adapted from the previous study by Jang et al. (2006) on e-Relationship Marketing in hotel industry;Wu and Lu (2012) and Wu and Chen (2012) on CRM performance link in hotel industry; as well as by study by Feinberg et al. (2002) and Ming et al. (2002) on e-CRM. Marketing support service (CSS) construct as independent variable were to be measured as single dimension by adopting instrument items that been developed by Wu and Lu (2012) and Wu and Chen (2012). Customer support service (CSS) construct were to be measured using measurement items that been adapted from Wu and Lu (2012) and Wu and Chen (2012). Five-point Likert scale is applied to all the measurement scales in order to examine the influence of CRM functions that been implemented towards overall firm's business performance. All measurements utilised 5-points Likert-scale.

METHODOLOGY

This preliminary study was organized to include seventy-five managers or owners from small and medium hotels as respondents. Seven-five self-administered 5-points Likert scale survey questionnaires were distributed by using non-probability convenient sampling technique to small and medium hotels in Greater Kuala Lumpur. Non-probability sampling method deemed appropriated as for this study to confirm on theory and reliability of the scales rather to generalize on the population (Hulland et al., 2017; Memon et al., 2017). This study employed variance-based structural equation modelling analysis technique in assessing the outer model (Hair et al., 2017). Utilizing the SmartPLS 3.0 software package in carrying-out the analysis to measure the internal reliability by examining the indicator and composite reliability and also on the validity assessment of convergent and discriminant validity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Referring to the PLS-SEM, the most popular approach was the two-stage approach that analyses the structural model and the measurement model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The first stage is concern with the outer model and for the second stage focuses on the structural or inner model. The former relates the latent variables (LVs) with other latent variables, while the latter relates manifest variables (MVs) to latent variables (LVs). However in this preliminary analysis the focus are given to the outer model or also known as measurement model in determining the reliability and validity of the scales used in the research model (Ghozali and Latan, 2015; Hair et al., 2017).

Outer Model: Instrument Reliability

As for the measurement model analysis the constructs reliability is to be examined by assessing indicator reliability and composite reliability. The outer loading value is to be assessed as for indicator reliability by looking at loading range between 0-1 and the cut-off point is 0.7 and above to be considered as reliable (Latan and Ramli, 2013; Hair et al., 2017). On the other hand, composite reliability is determined by the coefficient alpha value or internal consistency reliability number. The cut-off value for composite reliability is 0.7 that indicates the scale are having an acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, if the research is exploratory in nature the acceptable cut-off values of measurement model is compromised and considered to be reliable when the values of indicator reliability is 0.4 or higher and 0.6 or higher for composite reliability (Hulland, 1999; Ghozali and Latan, 2015).

Table 1 below exhibit the result of indicator reliability by referring to the outer loading values. The result showed that all values of outer loadings of all constructs are higher than 0.70 except for few items labelled BP6 to BP12 that intended to measure the business performance ranges between 0.538 to 0.682. As for this stage of preliminary study and considering small sample size and recommendation by Garson (2016) & Ghozali and Latan (2015) to remove items that are having low loading values of less than 0.5. Hence, this study deemed appropriate to retained the items BP6 – BP12 and found constructs included in the model are reliable.

Table 1: Outer Loadings (Indicator Reliability)

	BP	CSS	IS
"BP1"	0.851		
"BP2'	0.821		
"BP3"	0.772		
"BP4"	0.851		
"BP5"	0.778		
"BP6"	0.538		
"BP7"	0.581		
"BP8"	0.574		
"BP9"	0.609		
"BP10"	0.657		
"BP11"	0.682		
"BP12"	0.612		
CSS1		0.867	
CSS2		0.779	
CSS3		0.819	
CSS4		0.814	
CSS5		0.872	
IS1			0.822
IS2			0.858
IS3			0.817
IS4			0.787
IS5			0.875

Table 2. above shows the result of internal consistency analysis of the construct and indicates the value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are considerably high that explicate the constructs employed are having a good consistency and reliable. The values for Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.886 to 0.903 and composite reliability are between 0.917 to 0.919.

Table 2: Internal Consistency Reliability and Cronbach alpha (Composite Reliability)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
"BP (Business Performance)"	"0.903	0.919
"CSS (Customer support Service)"	"0.886	0.917
"IS (Internet Service)"	"0.886	0.917

Outer Model: Instrument Validity

It is important to considers the instrument validity as result conceived on internal reliability does not confirm its validity. Indeed, a valid instrument reflects its reliability (Proctor, 2005). Hence, it is imperative to examine the other elements of convergent validity by considering the value of AVE (average variance extracted) that refers to the level in which measuring a particular concept converges with a set of variables (Hair et al., 2010). The AVE sheds an explanation of the average variance extracted among a set of items in conjunction to the shared variance with the measurement errors. The cut-off value of AVE is 0.50 for a set of items to converge in construct measurement . In addition to the AVE, SmartPLS allow an additional examination on validity by having generating discriminant validity of Fornell Larker's table. Discriminant validity elucidates the level differentiation among the constructs items as to confirms no overlapping of items describing the constructs. Conversely, discriminant validity ensures that unrelated items truly have no relation in determining unidimensional (Compeau et al., 1999). For the confirmation of discriminant validity, table is referred, where the outer model's validity is considered to be confirmed if the diagonal elements are greater compared to the element of the same column and the role within which the item lies in. Moreover, discriminant validity also can be assessed by looking at the cross-loading values of all items. Through this assessment of discriminant validity, all items should have a strong load to their intended construct and having acceptable loading, in which, it conform having discriminant validity (Gefen and Straub, 2005). Table 3. below depict the AVE values matching for each construct. The values for each constructs namely BP, CSS,IS and MSS are above 0.5, ranging from 0.512 to 0.688 respectively. This result had further validated the convergence validity of the construct as the values of AVE are all above the cut-off point of 0.5 suggested by Hair et al. (2012).

Table 3: Average Variance Extracted (Convergent Validity)

Construct	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
BP (Business Performance)	0.512
CSS (Customer support Service)	0.688
IS (Internet Service)	0.688

Table 4 below documented the result of all items and its loading. The values show all loading is above 0.7 excepts for items BP6 to BP12 that having marginally low loading ranges 0.538 to 0.682. However, all items are strong loader to their intended construct and showing no major cross-loading issues. Further validation on discriminant validity by examining the Fornell Larker's table.

Table 4: Cross Loading

	BP	CSS	IS
BP1	0.851	0.393	0.507
BP2	0.821	0.394	0.54
BP3	0.772	0.403	0.583
BP4	0.851	0.388	0.537
BP5	0.778	0.327	0.423
BP6	0.538	0.311	0.362
BP7	0.581	0.445	0.411
BP8	0.574	0.327	0.412
BP9	0.609	0.405	0.427
BP10	0.658	0.243	0.313
BP11	0.682	0.348	0.407
BP12	0.612	0.324	0.386
CSS1	0.384	0.868	0.636
CSS2	0.433	0.779	0.677
CSS3	0.475	0.819	0.565
CSS4	0.409	0.814	0.611
CSS5	0.438	0.872	0.637
IS1	0.504	0.568	0.822
IS2	0.579	0.648	0.858
IS3	0.505	0.667	0.817
IS4	0.536	0.547	0.787
IS5	0.548	0.478	0.875

Referring to the Fornell Larcker's criterion, table 5. below is to be interpreted. This validity assessment measures shared variance within the construct that should be higher compared to the variance shared among the other constructs (Compeau et al., 1999). The square root of AVE values for each construct is positioned diagonal and it should be higher that its correlation with any other construct below it since a construct shared less variance with other than its own (Hair et al., 2012). Hence the result confirmed on discriminant validity and also explicate unidimensionality for each scales included in the research.

Table 5: Fornell Larker (Discriminant Validity)

	BP	CSS	IS
BP	0.701		
CSS	0.519	0.829	
IS	0.646	0.752	0.83

CONCLUSION

The ultimate aim of this preliminary study is to analyze on internal consistency and validity of scales to be used in a full-scale study is feasible. The above result had showed the multiple examinations of reliability and validity that explicate the robustness of PLS-SEM as 2nd generation analysis techniques (Hair et al., 2011; Jabarullah and Hussain, 2019) that able to overcome the criticism of missed conceptualize of Cronbach's Alpha in determining internal consistency of measurement and validity of scales (Raykov, 2008; Cho and Kim, 2015). Review of literature had contends on mostly adopted Cronbach's Alpha as internal consistency analysis and some mistakenly assume it demonstrate unidimensionality in determining the reliability of instruments (Schmitt, 1995; Panayides, 2013). As been presented by tables above of the result of study it had indicated that the levels of reliability and validity of the instrument are

acceptable and it also confirmed on unidimensional of the scales. Thus, this preliminary analysis had confirmed the feasibility to employed these scales for a full-scale analysis with actual data.

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