AN ANALYSIS OF THE KEY FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OF A RE-LAUNCHED DESTINATION MARKETING WEBSITE IN THE UK

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Word count: 5736

Abstract

The Internet has been the major marketing channel for almost all Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO). However, with the rapid development and constant evolution of emerging Internet technologies, it is crucial for DMO to keep up with developments in new technology and make the best use of them for sustained business success and competitive advantages. This requires DMOs to continue innovating and improving their website either through improvement of the existing site (incremental improvement approach) or re-launch of a completely new site (radical change approach). This paper presents a case study of the re-launch of a DMO website in the UK. It evaluates the perceived usability of the new website and identifies the key factors affecting customers' intention to use the new website. A large-scale online survey was developed to understand a number of issues relating to usability (e.g. aesthetics, effectiveness) and psychological and behavioural indicators (e.g. perceived trustworthiness and intent to use). The survey was distributed to a database of potential customers who had previously requested a brochure and received 206 responses. Both quantitative and qualitative data was analysed to understand users' perceptions, behaviour and attitudes towards the re-launched website. A Structural Equation Model was developed to identify the factors affecting their intention to use the new website.

Keywords: website usability, tourism, DMO, DMS, SEM

1. **Introduction**

The Internet has become the essential marketing channel for DMO as the majority of tourists nowadays are searching and booking their holidays using the Internet. In the UK the Internet was used to book 78% of trips, a 47% increase over 2008 (European Travel Commission NewMedia TrendWatch, 2013). It is argued that the Internet is one of the most influential technologies that have changed travellers' behaviour (Buhalis and Law, 2008). Buhalis and Law (2008) reported that previous research has shown that tourists who searched on the Internet tended to spend more at their destinations as compared to those who consulted other information sources.

The Internet is a valuable tool for both suppliers and consumers for information dissemination, communication, and online purchasing (Law, *et al*. 2010). The rapid growth in the number of online users and the increasing rate of online transactions provide clear evidence of the popularity of the technology (Law, *et al*. 2010). Therefore, it is crucial for tourism providers to make the optimum use of the best available technologies for sustained business success and competitive advantage by constantly innovating and improving their website. Although almost all DMOs have a presence on the Internet, how they review, revamp, and re-assess their website is still not fully investigated.

This paper analyses a case of re-launching a destination website in the UK, evaluates its success, and identifies the key factors affecting the customers' intention to use the new website. A large-scale online survey was conducted with potential customers. Both quantitative and qualitative data was analysed to understand users' perceptions, behaviour and attitudes towards the re-launched website. A Structural Equation Model was developed to identify the factors affecting their intention to use the new website.

2. **Literature Review**

The relationship between Destination Marketing Systems (DMS) and DMO has been well researched in the tourism literature for over 10 years. Themes include: the factors that affect the adoption of DMS by tourism businesses (Hornby 2004); a number of papers have

addressed the role of the public sector and of public-private partnerships (Mistilis and Daniele 2001, 2004; Daniele and Frew 2008); the dependency of DMS success on the e-readiness of the destination and its suppliers (Ndou and Petti 2007); the connection between the sophistication of the DMS on the one hand and the innovation and financial commitment of the DMO on the other (Wang 2008a); Wang also identified website function design, website promotion, website-performance measurement, web-marketing impact assessment and organisation technology environment as critical factors that impact on the success of a DMS (2008b); recent research has critiqued the criteria which DMO use to measure the effectiveness of online marketing (Morgan et al., 2012). Even though many DMOs want to incorporate social media in their marketing efforts, many face difficulties in determining the best way to proceed, while facing challenges in providing quality information online (Gretzel et al., 2012).

The survey questions were based on key literature in the area and drew on some of the findings identified in a review of tourism website evaluations by Ip et al (2011), relating to usability factors. Over the past 5 years trust (or lack of it) has been highlighted as a key factor influencing the purchase of holidays online and even cited as a factor that could impede growth (Choi & Au, 2011). A number of different factors can influence a person's perception of trust, e.g. features of the website itself (e.g. security icons, currency of information) as well as individual differences of customers (e.g. gender, age). Ganguly et al (2011) studied the influence of website characteristics on trust in online travel portals by developing a causal model. This identified the relative importance of the different website characteristics, to generate trust in online travel portals. Additionally they included what they called 'customers' personal variables' (demographic variables) that could moderate the relationship between these antecedents and trust. Although their model offers insights into the relative importance of website characteristics and individual differences contributing to trust in travel portals it has not so far been tested.

Satisfaction is a key outcome or dependent variable in many studies. Choi & Au (2011) found that e-brand image and user web experience were significantly correlated with the establishment of online trust for travel products and also that user web experience and online brand trust had significant positive impacts on the satisfaction level of customers' online purchasing experience. Social media is playing an increasingly important role in all stages of the travel journey, e.g. as an initial information source, through to use during a holiday and

post-holiday evaluations (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Sanchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluna (2010) examined the influence of virtual travel communities in the acceptance of online services, and found that visual aesthetics and usability had a significant impact on satisfaction and trust. They concluded that, "design variables, satisfaction and trust lead the users to develop high customer loyalty; and, purchase involvement is an important moderator to engage in online service relationships" (page 171). The results of Bing *et al* (2011) found that a complex interface and advertising messages confused most users and called for a simpler and more intuitive interface.

Researchers have evaluated tourism websites through a variety of research methods and although website usability has generally improved some problems remain. One of the possible reasons proposed by Bing *et al* (2011) in their study of online travel agencies is that researchers often rely on just one technique to evaluate user behaviour and usability. This research collects both qualitative and quantitative data and uses a number of analytical approaches, including SEM.

3. **Background**

The case reported in our study is a DMO called VW located in a region in southwest England. This section provides the context within which VW decided to develop a new website.

The old VW destination marketing site was viewed as dated and not containing inspirational content. This emphasis was revealed in a press release issued in October 2012.

"The redesign of the site has focused on building a portal which showcases the best of the VW region to give visitors a user-experience that is inspirational, informative, engaging and welcoming. VW is forecasting that the new website will increase the number of visitors to the site by 30%."

Instead of improving the existing website, the VW board felt that "the old website is unsustainable in its current format and therefore requires a fresh approach" (DMS developer proposal to VW). Fast moving Internet technologies are providing many new opportunities for innovating the marketing website that may require significant changes. Therefore, a decision was made to adopt a radical change approach by re-launching a completely new website. After a number of consultations meetings with the DMS developer, VW business user groups and the VW online marketing group, the following objectives were articulated by VW 8 months ahead of the website build:

1—To build a new website that is dynamic, visually engaging and will generate commercial benefits.

2—To promote VW as a key leisure and tourism destination via the website.

3—To position VW website as a key tool that visitors will use to find detailed information on W as a tourist destination.

4—To engage key stakeholders and members in a shared agenda supporting VW's website objectives.

5—To help to increase and retain members.

6—To improve VW's ranking in organic search.

"The revamped www.VW.co.uk includes inspirational information in the form of newly commissioned photography, social media and video content, an increased focus on arts and culture, things to do and outdoor activities; tactical information aimed at driving bookings, with more focus on accommodation and special offers, planning advice, itineraries and member pages; media information with a revamped latest news section and enhanced social media links." (VW press release Oct 2012).

The pilot web site was tested with members of the Online Marketing Group for feedback and a large-scale user survey was conducted in November 2012 before the formal launch of the

web site. The following sections describe the methods used and data analysis on the success of the re-launched website from customers' points of view.

4. Research Method

The main objective of our research reported in this paper is to understand the DMO users' perceptions, behaviour and attitudes towards the new website. This has been achieved mainly through a large-scale customer survey.

The survey incorporates both closed and open questions. Most of the questions are attitudinal using a 7-point Likert scale to measure the level of respondent's agreement with the statements that cover a wide range of areas about the website. The open questions give the respondent the freedom to express their own positive and negative comments about relevant features of the website, such as "what do you like most about the website?", "what do you like least about the website?", "What would you do to improve the website?".

Based on the relevant literature on factors affecting web site success, the survey attempted to collect users' perceptions on the first impression of the homepage, usability, information quality, trust, entertainment and inspiration, overall satisfaction, and intention to use. Table 1 provides a summary of the areas covered in the survey.

Table 1
Information Collected in the Survey Questionnaire

Category	Details
Respondent profile	Household income, education, age group, gender, IT skills, marital status, Internet experience
Attitudes towards risk	Online booking risk perception, importance of information to reduce the risk, attitudes towards online booking without contacting the seller by phone, attitudes towards reducing risk by reading reviews, unwillingness to book online
First impression of the Homepage	Right level of information, easy to find information, engagement, inspiration, trust
Usability	Easy to navigate, effective, engaging
Information quality	Relevance, timeliness, accuracy, trusted, easy to understand, level of details.
Entertainment and inspiration	Inspirational to use, attractive virtual appeal, usefulness of "ideas and Inspiration" section.

Trust	Confident booking, trust provider, security of personal information
Benefits of Social Media	Sense of community, easier to communicate with providers, easier to communicate with other visitors, helping plan the holiday, help booking, enhance trust, compliment to the information on the site
Intention to use	Recommendation, intention to use for holiday plan, intention to book, plan to visit regularly, plan to subscribe, brochure request
Overall satisfaction	Level of overall satisfaction of the site

5. **Survey Results Analysis**

The survey invitation was sent to approximately 13,000 email contacts using the VW database. Most of the contacts were people who had requested a VW brochure in the last five years. By the deadline of two weeks, a total of 206 responses were received and after further examination of the questionnaires, a total of 183 responses were valid for data analysis.

5.1 Descriptive analysis

Respondent profile

Table 2 provides a demographic profile of the respondents. This information reveals an interesting and valuable profile of potential visitors, who are mostly over 45 (82%) and married (or in civil partnership) with more than £26,000 household income. About half of them are well educated with university degrees. Although the majority of the respondents are over 45, their computer skills are high and all of them use the Internet on a daily basis. This confirms that the Internet has become the daily source for information and transaction. About half of the respondents (45%) have not visited VW before.

Table 2
Respondents' Profile (n=183)

	Question	N	Per cent
Gender	Male	94	52
	Female	86	48
	Total	180	100
Age	26-35	6	3.3
	36-45	26	14.4
	46-55	52	28.9
	56-65	67	37.2

	66 and over	29	16.1
	Total	180	100
Income	Under £25,000	42	26.6
	£26,000 - £40,000	68	43
	£41,000 – £80,000	32	20.3
	£81,000 - £100,000	11	7
	More than £100,000	5	2.7
	Total	158	100.0
Marital Status	Married/Civil Partner	133	72.7
	Partner	11	6
	Divorced	9	4.9
	Single	20	10.9
	Widowed	5	2.7
	Total	178	100.0
Education	GCSEs (HNCs)	49	26.8
	A Levels (HNDs)	43	23
	Bachelor's Degree	51	27.9
	Master's Degree	20	10.9
	More than Master's Degree	8	4.4
	Total	170	100.0
IT skills	1 - novice	4	2.2
	2	6	3.3
	3	14	7.8
	4	41	22.8
	5	55	30.6
	6	53	28.4
	7 - expert	7	3.9
	Total	180	100.0
Use of the Internet	Every day	132	72.1
	Almost every day	40	21.9
	Every 2-3 days	9	4.9
	Once a week	1	0.5
	Total	182	100.0
Have you visited VW before?	Yes	97	53.0
	No	83	45.4
	Prefer not to answer	3	1.6
	Total	183	100.0

The descriptive results are presented according to respondents' assessment of website features, their overall satisfaction level, intention to use, and risk and trust attitudes. These results provide valuable information for research and DMO practitioners.

Overall, the respondents demonstrated their very positive attitudes towards the new website. This is evidenced by the results shown in table 3. For example, respondents have shown a very high level of agreement with statements designed to evaluate homepage impression (5.93), usability (5.86), information (6.08), entertaining and inspiring (5.7).

Table 3
Respondents Assessment on Website Features

	Descriptive Statistics			
Category	**Questions**	**N**	**Mean 1-strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree**	**Std. Dev**
Home page impression	The homepage provides the right level of information	183	5.84	1.27
	The homepage enables me to find information easily	183	5.90	1.25
	The homepage encourages me to go deeper into the site	183	6.07	1.16
	The homepage indicates a tourism information provider I can trust	183	5.86	1.20
	The homepage inspires me to visit W	183	5.97	1.33
	Average		**5.93**	**1.24**
Usability	I found the site easy to navigate	183	6.06	1.19
	I found the site effective in planning my holiday	183	5.77	1.16
	I found the site engaging to use	183	5.74	1.35
	Average		**5.86**	**1.23**
Information	The VW website provides relevant information	183	6.14	0.98
	The VW website provides timely information	183	5.96	1.10
	The VW website provides believable information	183	6.18	0.92
	The VW website provides easy to understand information	183	6.24	0.95
	The VW website provides information at the right level of detail	183	5.89	1.12
	Average		**6.08**	**1.04**
Entertaining and inspiring	The VW website is inspirational to use	183	5.27	1.42
	The VW website has attractive visual appeal	183	5.99	1.20
	The 'Ideas & Inspiration' section of the site was very useful	183	5.84	1.17
	Average		**5.7**	**1.26**

As shown in table 4, respondents demonstrated a very high level of satisfaction with the new site (6.04) and intention to use the website (5.6). These two are the most important overall indicators about a website's success.

Table 4
Overall Satisfaction and Intention to Use

	Descriptive Statistics			
Category	**Questions**	**N**	**Mean 1-strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree**	**Std. Dev**
Overall site satisfaction	Overall I was satisfied with the site	183	6.04	1.06
Intention to use	I would recommend the website to others	183	5.98	1.25
	I would use the website to plan my holiday to W	183	6.23	1.03
	I would use the website to book my holiday to W	183	5.66	1.35
	I would use the website on a regular basis	183	4.85	1.52
	I would subscribe to the newsletter	183	5.15	1.78
	I would request a brochure	183	5.70	1.43
	Average		5.6	1.39

With the increasing use of social media in the tourism industry (Gretzel *et al*, 2012), the re-launched website has provided links to all the major social media sites including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr and Pinterest. Our survey attempted to collect respondents' attitudes towards the use of social media in the VW site. As shown in Table 5, the results reveal that about 35% of the total respondents selected "don't know" option, which means that they are not able to comment on the questions. For those who addressed the questions, their attitudes towards using social media are generally positive with an average level of agreement 5.17. The standard deviation of 1.81 suggested a higher level of variation among the answers compared with the answers in other areas.

Table 5
Respondents' Attitudes Towards the Use of Social Media

	Descriptive Statistics			
Category	**Questions**	**N**	**Mean 1-strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree**	**Std. Dev**
Attitudes towards the use of the Social Media	It conveys a sense of community	60	5.3	1.48
	It makes it easier to communicate with VW	62	5.5	1.57
	It makes it easier to communicate with other visitors	54	5.2	1.63
	It helps me to plan my holidays	62	5.3	1.86
	It helps me to book my holidays	63	5.2	1.92
	It enhances my trust	62	5.0	1.95
	I would need to visit VW social media sites to complement the information on this site	85	4.7	2.27
	Average		5.17	1.81

Regarding respondents' attitudes towards risk and trust, table 6 reveals a high level of trust towards the use of the VW website and a low level of perceived risk associated with online booking. One of the key objectives of a DMO is to provide businesses in the destination with an effective online platform to promote and distribute their services and these findings suggest that VW has gone some way to achieving that objective with the re-launch of its website.

Table 6
Trust and Attitudes Towards Risk

	Descriptive Statistics			
Category	**Questions**	**N**	**Mean 1-strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree**	**Std. Dev**
Attitudes towards risk	Booking a holiday online is a risky purchase	183	2.79	1.72
	Information is important to reduce the risk and make sure I get it right	183	6.36	1.18
	In general I'm happy to book online without contacting the seller by phone	183	5.17	1.84
	Reading other holidaymakers' reviews and opinions is very important	183	5.37	1.47
	I prefer not to book holidays online	183	2.46	1.83
Trust	I would be confident booking on this site	183	6.15	0.94
	The VW website is a tourism information provider I can trust	183	6.18	0.91
	I would feel that my personal information is secure	183	5.93	1.03
	Average		6.09	0.96

5.2 Qualitative data analysis

The survey questionnaire contained a number of open-ended questions inviting respondents to provide their comments on the re-launched website. Nearly all respondents offered their opinions. Three questions requested comments on the homepage and three more on the website generally, and a final question asking for further comments. The first 6 questions were analysed using keyword analysis; this was considered most appropriate, as many responders had just entered one or two words. The final question was analysed using thematic analysis, as responders tended to include paragraphs made up of a few sentences. The findings generally supported the data above, but additionally provided extra contextual detail.

Analysis of the first three items relating to the homepage showed that users paid particular attention to images, with the terms 'Photos', 'Photographs' or 'Picture' featuring as the top

word in the most liked, least liked and suggested changes of the homepage! This confirms findings by Kim and Fesenmaier who found that "visually appealing stimuli are the most important tool for converting Web site lookers to users and/or making them stay longer on the Web site" (2008: 10). Q2 asked, 'What did you like most about the homepage?' and resulted in 'Photos Photographs, or Picture' receiving 48 responses, Colourful (33), Bright (17). Q3 asked, 'What did you like least about the homepage?' and again Pictures (20), Busy (19) and Little (15). Q4 asked 'What would you do to improve the homepage? Photographs/Pictures was the top response (26), Images (9) and Cluttered (9). In summary, it may be that, as images result in a consistently positive or negative response, biographic features could be further investigated to identify more specifically what types of images appealed to users. It may well be that the presentation of the webpage can be adaptive, e.g. a different set of pictures for males versus females, and younger versus mature.

Q11 asked, 'What did you like most about the site?' and the top two answers related to Ease of use (n=17) and Easy to navigate (n=13) – there were 129 responses. When asked 'What did you like least about the site?' (Q12), there were less responses (93 responses) and no issue attracted a large number of responses, with the three top words having 9 incidences each: Photos, Blue and Busy. Q13 asked 'What would you do to improve the site?' and again, the term 'pictures' featured as the top item with 15 incidences, followed by map with 8.

Question 30 asked if there were any further comments or observations and although this item was optional, there were 53 responses highlighting good customer engagement with the survey and task. The comments were categorised according to those relating to usability (negative and positive and suggested ideas). The majority of these replicated those included as responses to questions 2, 3, 4, 11, 12 and 13 described above. However, a noticeable addition was that we noticed many links to indicators of future intention to use the website (again supporting the quantitative items), for example:

"As a former resident of W region I thoroughly enjoyed everything the website had to offer and I will definitely use it in the future."

"At this time I am not intending to visit the area, but the website will be very useful when I do."

"one of the best sites I've visited. It made me WANT to look further."

Even further, some comments indicated that the webpage had achieved the outcome of changing holiday intention, for example:

"This makes me want to visit W again!"

"This has prompted me to consider W as a holiday destination."

5.3 SEM Analysis

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and AMOS have been used to identify the key factors affecting users' intention to use the new website. The reason for choosing this statistical method is its ability in calculating latent variables and accounting for measurement errors in the estimation process (Hair *et al*, 2010).

Before conducting the SEM analysis, data was screened carefully. Four cases were removed from the sample due to a high number of missing values. Also to meet the requirements of SEM, a normality test was conducted and variables were transformed where necessary. At the end of the data screening stage there were 183 useable responses to conduct the SEM analysis.

According to Anderson and Gerbing's (1984) and Hair *et al*. (2006), the minimum sample size required for a SEM model containing less than five constructs with more than three indicators each and high commonalities (0.6 or higher) is 100 to 150 which is below the number of respondents for this study. Therefore, there are enough cases to conduct the SEM analysis.

Our SEM analysis intends to provide a parsimonious view of the key factors affecting the intention to use. Therefore, we have focused on how "home page", "information" and "trust" affect the intention. Most importantly, we attempt to understand how the first impression of "Home Page", which is the main page of a website, affects the intention to use. In order to explore how the Home Page impacts on the intention, we intend to explore the mediating effect of overall website satisfaction. While Kim and Fesenmaier (2008) evaluated the extent to which a website homepage creates favourable first impressions, their research did not extend to include intention to use. This study attempts to investigate how the first impression of "Home Page" impacts on the overall website satisfaction and the intention to use, thus contributing to the body of knowledge in this field.

Therefore, a research model as shown in figure 1 was proposed to test the following key research hypothesis:

H1: The first impression of the homepage is positively related to intention to use.

H2: Trust is positively related to intention to use

H3: Information quality is positively related to intention to use

H4: Overall site satisfaction is positively related to intention to use

H5: Homepage is positively related to overall site satisfaction

H1
H15
H2
H3
Trust
Information
Intention to use
Overall site satisfaction

Home page
H4

Fig 1

Research Model

The first step in a SEM analysis is Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The model was constructed, based on the theoretical framework, and tested using the CFA method. Figure 2 shows the measurement model that has been used for CFA. All the factor loadings are above 0.6. The result of the CFA shows that the data fits the proposed model.

Fig. 2**.**

Measurement Model

Table 7 shows the criteria that have been used to test the model fit.

Table 7
Model Fit Criteria

Variable Name	Value	Acceptable Range (Hair et al, 2010)
CMIN/DF	1.649	<3 (good)
CFI	.970	>.95
AGFI	.855	>.80
RMSEA	.060	<.05 good; <1 moderate
Standardised RMR	0.049	<.1

The next step is establishing convergent and discriminant validity as well as reliability of the variables. Composite Reliability (CR) is used to test the reliability of the variables. The CR values for all the variables were above the threshold value (CR>0.7) (Hair et al., 2010). To test convergent validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is calculated and compared with CR measure. To meet the convergent validity criteria, all the AVE values should be above 0.5 and all the CR values should be above AVE values (AVE>0.5 and CR>AVE) (Hair et al, 2010).

For the discriminant validity test, Maximum Shared Squared Variance (MSV) and Average Shared Squared Variance (ASV) were calculated. These two measures should be less than AVE of the variables (MSV<AVE and ASV<AVE) (Hair et al., 2010). Table 8 shows the values of CR, AVE, MSV and ASV for each variable.

Table 8
Validity and Reliability of the Constructs

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Info	0.919	0.694	0.529	0.508
Home	0.903	0.651	0.496	0.392
Trust	0.916	0.784	0.579	0.475
Intention	0.820	0.609	0.579	0.481

Table 9 represents the correlation between constructs. Values on the diagonal of the table are the square root of AVE for each construct, which should be greater than any correlation value in that column/row.

Table 9
Correlation Between Variables

	Info	**Home**	**Trust**	**Intention**
Info	0.833			
Home	0.704	0.807		
Trust	0.707	0.589	0.885	
Intention	0.727	0.578	0.761	0.780

The next stage of the analysis involved testing the hypotheses. A structural model was constructed based on the theoretical model. Figure 3 shows the path model that has been used to test the hypotheses of the study. Computer skill, Education and Income are the control variables. Homepage, Trust, Satisfaction and Information are the independent variables and Satisfaction and Intention are the dependent variables.

To make the model less complicated, covariance between control variables and independent variables are set invisible. After running the specified model, model fit was tested again. Table 10 shows the values for model fit. All the values were in an acceptable range and therefore this model was accepted for hypothesis test.

Fig. 3.
SEM Model with Control Variables
(Covariance between control variables and independent variables are set invisible)

Table 10
Model Fit Criteria

Variable Name	Value	Acceptable Range (Hair et al, 2010)
CMIN/DF	1.791	<3 (good)
CFI	.950	>.95
AGFI	.824	>.80
RMSEA	.066	<.05 good; <1 moderate
Standardised RMR	0.056	<.1

Figure 4 shows the result of the SEM analysis. Hypothesis H2 (information and intention), H3 (trust and intention) and H4 (overall website satisfaction and intention), and H5 (homepage and satisfaction) are supported. The results suggest that Trust is significantly related to intention ($\beta = .512$, $P<.001$). Information is also positively and significantly related to intention ($\beta = .295$, $P<.01$). The other significant relationship in the model was the relation between satisfaction and intention ($\beta = .191$, $P<.05$). The result shows that satisfaction positively impacts on the intention.

Although the homepage does not directly affect the intention to use, the analysis reveals that homepage impression impacts significantly on the overall website satisfaction ($\beta = .717$,

P<.001) and overall website satisfaction, in turn, significantly affects the intention to use. Therefore, the homepage indirectly affects the user intention.

No other relationships are significant in the model. R square value of the model for intention is 66% and for satisfaction is 51%, which suggests that the model is effective in explaining the key factors contributing to the dependent variables. The model was also tested for indirect relationships using modification indices, however there were no indirect relationships between variables.

Fig. 4.
Hypothesis Test Results

H2
.517***
.191*
-.061
.717***
H1
H15
H3
Trust
Information
Intention to use
(R^2=0.66)
Overall site satisfaction
(R^2=0.51)

Home page
H4
.295**

6. Conclusions and Discussion

The online leisure and tourism landscape has changed significantly over recent years with new channels and markets opening up all the time. This paper examines an attempt by a regional UK DMO to improve its marketing by adopting a radical change approach and launching a new website. The DMO in this context has completely re-designed its website and added new functionality provided by its DMS supplier. It has also incorporated a range of popular social media sites. The paper presents an analysis of the survey of the re-launched website from users' perspectives.

Our attempt in understanding the journey and the success of VW's website improvement has involved a range of activities and revealed many interesting insights in terms of VW's strategy development, stakeholder involvement, innovation adoption, role of technology suppliers, etc. However, this paper only focuses on our attempt to analyse the web site from customers' perspectives.

We have attempted to establish the key factors affecting users' intention to use the website using SEM. The SEM model has identified the impact of homepage, information, trust and overall site satisfaction on the intention to use. We also used income, education and computer skills as control variables to test their influence on the users' intention. The results of the SEM analysis demonstrate that the proposed research model is effective in explaining contributory factors affecting the intention to use (R^2 66%). Hypotheses 2-5 are supported and H1 is indirectly supported. This shows that trust, information quality and overall site satisfaction are likely to trigger actions associated with intentions to use, including repeat site visitation, online search and booking and registering on the site for further information and direct contact. The study also confirmed that the homepage plays a role in intention to use, mediated by overall site satisfaction. This is a reassuring finding for VW as substantial effort was put into the design of the homepage including in-depth consultation with the Online Marketing Group, which VW has established to help guide its online marketing strategy. The study revealed that users are generally very satisfied with the new website and have high levels of intention to use the website. This finding is supported by the qualitative data gathered during the survey, for example: *"... I thoroughly enjoyed everything the website had*

to offer and I will definitely use it in the future." ""One of the best sites I've visited. It made me WANT to look further."

While these are encouraging findings for VW, the DMO will need to continue monitoring the website usage, especially to develop tangible indicators to make sure the website is sustainable and remains competitive. One area that this study has demonstrated requires specific monitoring is the use of images. Analysis of the first three items relating to the homepage showed that users had strong views on images, with the terms 'Photos', 'Photographs' or 'Picture' featuring as the top word in the most liked, least liked and suggested changes of the homepage. The influence of website imagery on user behaviour and intention to use is an area that warrants further research.

A further line of inquiry is the use and influence of social media, which is now fully recognised as an effective marketing channel (Gretzel et al 2012). The questions relating to social media in this study were answered by only one third of respondents, rendering it too small a sample for a SEM analysis. However for those who did respond, they had very positive attitudes towards the use of social media for example for improving communications, enhancing trust, developing the community, and providing complementary information; although their answers varied more widely than in other areas. The role of user-generated content on social media in influencing user behaviour is an emerging and important line for further inquiry in the DMO sector (Hays et al 2013). The challenge for DMOs is to evaluate closely how a social media presence on its destination website influences overall behaviour and in particular intention to use.

This research has a number of limitations, including sample bias and a low response rate for social media questions. However the research model and its associated measures provide scope for developing future research, such as to study intention with samples from different contexts, in different geographic locations, or using specific design elements of website. This is still a research in progress paper and more empirical data will be collected to conduct a longitudinal analysis of users' perception, attitudes and actual usage of the website over a period of time.

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