



***PERSPECTIVES ON TECHNOLOGY READINESS, UNIFIED THEORY OF  
ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY, AND BEHAVIORAL  
INTENTION OF ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCY USERS***

**AZDEL BIN ABDUL AZIZ**

**GSM 2019 24**



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INTENTION OF ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCY USERS**

**By**

**AZDEL BIN ABDUL AZIZ**

**Thesis Submitted to the Putra Business School in Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2019**

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Abstract of thesis presentation to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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July 2019

**Chairperson: Professor Dr. Khairil Wahidin Awang**  
**Faculty: Putra Business School**

The pace of technology advancement is faster than ever before. The key to success is when the business focuses on online service technology, particularly online travel agencies (OTA) that enables easier and convenient room reservation. However, most of the recent technology acceptance studies have not addressed the consumers' psychological traits or general belief towards the new adoption of certain systems. In Malaysia, the application of OTA has not been empirically measured to any great extent, where the implementation of this type of reservation system is still in the early stage. It is therefore important to gain an in-depth understanding of the system by examining technology readiness as the psychographic factor and the technology acceptance on customers' OTA experiences. A survey questionnaire among customers, who have used OTA has been undertaken with a total of 453 respondents where all the data were found usable. The survey was conducted at Malaysia airports. The results from the descriptive analysis revealed that most of the respondents believed technologies can enhance and improve flexibility, efficiency, and control over their daily lives. The outcome also indicated that the respondents were not pioneers in using and owning new technologies. Their main concern is the security of using new technology especially if it involves monetary and personal identity in the transaction. The findings also proved that the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology mediates the relationship between Technology Readiness (TR) and Behavioral Intention. The knowledge in this area can benefit the managers in fine-tuning their product positioning as well as communication strategies in order to align the TR profiles of a potential customer based on the different stages involved in the product lifecycle.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERSPEKTIF KESEDIAAN TEKNOLOGI, PENYATUAN TEORI  
PENERIMAAN DAN PENGGUNAAN TEKNOLOGI SERTA TINGKAH LAKU  
KEMAHUAN BAGI PENGGUNA EJEN PELANCONGAN ATAS TALIAN**

Oleh

**AZDEL BIN ABDUL AZIZ**

**Julai 2019**

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Kadar kemajuan teknologi kini telah meningkat lebih laju berbanding dahulu. Kunci kepada kejayaan ini adalah apabila perniagaan, terutamanya ejen-ejen pelancongan fokus untuk memberi perkhidmatan atas talian yang membolehkan tempahan bilik menjadi mudah dan senang. Namun begitu, kebanyakan kajian berkenaan penerimaan teknologi gagal untuk mengadakan ciri-ciri psikologi pelanggan atau kepercayaan umum terhadap penerimaan terhadap sesuatu sistem. Di Malaysia, aplikasi ejen pelancongan atas talian masih belum diukur dengan lebih luas secara empirik, di mana pelaksanaannya masih pada peringkat awal. Oleh sebab itu, adalah penting untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam berkenaan sistem ini dengan cara mengkaji kesediaan teknologi sebagai factor psikologi dan penerimaan pelanggan terhadap penggunaan ejen pelancongan atas talian. Satu soal selidik terhadap pelanggan yang pernah menggunakan ejen pelancongan atas talian telah pun dilaksanakan dengan jumlah 453 responden yang semuanya boleh digunakan. Soal selidik itu telah dijalankan di beberapa lapangan terbang Malaysia. Keputusan daripada analisa deskriptif menunjukkan sebahagian besar daripada responden mempercayai bahawa teknologi boleh menambah baik fleksibiliti, kecekapan, dan kawalan dalam kehidupan seharian mereka. Hasil keputusan juga mendapati majoriti daripada responden bukan perintis dalam menggunakan atau memiliki teknologi baru. Kebimbangan utama mereka adalah pada sekuriti penggunaan teknologi baru terutamanya jika membabitkan kewangan dan identity peribadi dalam transaksi. Daripada dapatan berkenaan juga, terbukti bahawa Teori Penerimaan dan Penggunaan Teknologi dapat menjadi pengantara dalam hubungan di antara Kesediaan Teknologi dan Tingkah Laku Kemahuan Pengguna. Pengetahuan dalam bahagian ini dapat memberi manfaat kepada pengurus dalam menstruktur kedudukan produk bersama strategi komunikasi untuk menyeragamkan profil Kesediaan Teknologi pelanggan yang berpotensi berdasarkan perbezaan tahap dalam kitaran hayat produk.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 12 July 2019 to conduct the final examination of Azdel bin Abdul Aziz on his thesis entitled “Perspectives On Technology Readiness, Unified Theory Of Acceptance And Use Of Technology, And Behavioral Intention Of Online Travel Agency Users” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>COPYRIGHT</b>	ii
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	iii
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	v
<b>APPROVAL</b>	vi
<b>DECLARATION</b>	viii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	x
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xiv
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xvii
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	xviii

### CHAPTER

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
	1.1	Introduction 1
	1.2	Background of the Study 1
	1.3	Problem Statement 6
	1.4	Research Framework 8
	1.5	Research Objective 9
	1.6	Research Question 10
	1.7	Significance of the Study 10
	1.7.1	Academic Perspective 10
	1.7.2	Practical Perspective 10
	1.8	Definition of Terms 11
	1.8.1	Online Travel Agencies 11
	1.8.2	Technology Readiness 11
	1.8.3	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) 12
	1.8.4	Behavioral Intention 12
	1.9	Organization of the Thesis 12
<b>2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
	2.1	Introduction 13
	2.2	Online Travel Agencies 13
	2.2.1	Introduction to Online Travel Agencies 13
	2.2.2	Why hotels invest in Online Travel Agencies: Issues and concerns on its adoption 14
	2.2.3	The impact of Online Travel Agencies toward behavior and attitude 15
	2.3	Human Behavior 17
	2.4	Behavioral Intention 19

2.5	Technology Readiness	20
2.6	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology	23
2.7	Review Of Related Theory	27
2.7.1	Technology Acceptance Model	27
2.7.2	Limitation of Technology Acceptance Model	28
2.7.3	Positioning Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) in the study in relation to Technology Readiness: UTAUT versus TAM	29
2.8	The Relationship Among Variables in the Study Framework	30
2.8.1	The relationship between Technology Readiness and Behavioral Intention	30
2.8.2	The relationship between Technology Readiness and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology	31
2.8.3	The relationship between Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology and Behavioral Intention	32
2.8.4	The relationship between Technology Readiness, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology and Behavioral Intention	33
2.9	Conclusion	33
<b>3</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	
3.1	Introduction	35
3.2	Research Design	35
3.3	Population and Sample	37
3.4	Sampling Technique Used	40
3.5	Instrument Development	41
3.5.1	Questions in Section A of the questionnaire	42
3.5.2	Questions in Section B of the questionnaire	43
3.5.3	Questions in Section C of the questionnaire	44
3.5.4	Questions in Section D of the questionnaire	45
3.6	Pre-Testing and Pilot Study	45
3.7	Reliability Analysis	46
3.8	Data Collection Procedures	47
3.9	Process of Data Analysis	48
3.9.1	Structural Equation Modelling	48
3.10	Conclusion	49
<b>4</b>	<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS</b>	
4.1	Introduction	51
4.2	Demographic Profiles of Respondents	51
4.2.1	Gender	52

4.2.2	Age	52
4.2.3	Marital Status	53
4.2.4	Education Level	53
4.2.5	Profession	54
4.2.6	Frequency of Usage	54
4.3	Using Exploratory Factor Analysis	55
4.3.1	Exploratory Factor Analysis of Technology Readiness	56
4.3.2	Exploratory Factor Analysis of UTAUT2	58
4.3.2.1	EFA on Performance Expectancy	59
4.3.2.2	EFA on Effort Expectancy	60
4.3.2.3	EFA on Social Influence	61
4.3.2.4	EFA on Facilitating Condition	62
4.3.2.5	EFA on Hedonic Motivation	63
4.3.2.6	EFA on Price Value	63
4.3.2.7	EFA on Habit	64
4.3.3	Exploratory Factor Analysis of Behavioral Intention	65
4.4	Descriptive Statistics	66
4.4.1	Technology Readiness Mean Score	66
4.4.1.1	Optimism Mean Score	66
4.4.1.2	Innovativeness Mean Score	67
4.4.1.3	Discomfort Mean Score	68
4.4.1.4	Insecurity Mean Score	68
4.4.2	UTAUT2 Mean Score	69
4.4.2.1	Performance Expectancy Mean Score	70
4.4.2.2	Effort Expectancy Mean Score	70
4.4.2.3	Social Influence Mean Score	71
4.4.2.4	Facilitating Condition Mean Score	71
4.4.2.5	Hedonic Motivation Mean Score	72
4.4.2.6	Price Value Mean Score	72
4.4.2.7	Habit Mean Score	73
4.4.3	Behavioral Intention Mean Score	74
4.4.3.1	Revisit/reuse Intention Mean Score	74
4.4.3.2	Word of Mouth Mean Score	74
4.5	Conclusion	75

## **5 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING ANALYSIS**

5.1	Introduction	77
5.2	Measurement Model Evaluation	77
5.2.1	Measurement Model for Technology Readiness	79
5.2.2	Measurement Model for UTAUT2	82
5.2.3	Measurement Model for Behavioral Intention	85
5.2.4	Overall Measurement Model	86

	5.2.5	Model Fit Assessment	88
5.3		Structural Model Evaluation	89
	5.3.1	First Order Structural Model Evaluation	89
	5.3.2	Second Order Structural Model Evaluation	92
	5.3.3	Hypotheses Testing	93
		5.3.3.1 Hypotheses H1	94
		5.3.3.2 Hypotheses H2	95
		5.3.3.2.1 Hypotheses H2a	95
		5.3.3.2.2 Hypotheses H2b	96
		5.3.3.2.3 Hypotheses H2c	96
		5.3.3.2.4 Hypotheses H2d	97
		5.3.3.3 Hypotheses H3	98
5.4		Test of Mediating Variable	98
	5.4.1	Hypotheses H4	100
5.5		Final Model	102
5.6		Conclusion	103
<b>6</b>		<b>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>	
	6.1	Introduction	105
	6.2	Summary of Analyses and Recapitulation of Findings	105
		6.2.1 Users' state of Technology Readiness	106
		6.2.2 The effect of Technology Readiness on Behavioral Intention	107
		6.2.3 The effect of Technology Readiness on UTAUT2	108
		6.2.4 The effect of UTAUT2 on Behavioral Intention	110
		6.2.5 The mediating effect of UTAUT2 on Technology Readiness and Behavioral Intention	111
	6.3	Implications of the Study	112
		6.3.1 Theoretical Implication	112
		6.3.2 Practical Implication	113
	6.4	Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research	114
	6.5	Conclusion	114
		<b>REFERENCES</b>	115
		<b>APPENDICES</b>	145
		<b>BIODATA OF STUDENT</b>	187
		<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	189

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>		<b>Page</b>
3.1	Population of OTA users in Malaysia	39
3.2	Instrument Development	42
3.3	Technology Readiness Index 2.0 (TRI 2.0)	42
3.4	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2)	44
3.5	Behavioral Intention	45
3.6	Respondent's Background Information	45
3.7	Alpha Co-efficient of Internal Reliability	47
4.1	Gender	52
4.2	Age	53
4.3	Marital Status	53
4.4	Education Level	54
4.5	Profession	54
4.6	Frequency of Usage	55
4.7	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Technology Readiness	57
4.8	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Performance Expectancy	60
4.9	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Effort Expectancy	60
4.10	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Social Influence	61
4.11	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Facilitating Condition	62
4.12	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Hedonic Motivation	63
4.13	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Price Value	64
4.14	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Habit	65
4.15	Results of Factor Analysis Output for Behavioral Intention	65

4.16	Optimism Mean Score	67
4.17	Innovativeness Mean Score	67
4.18	Discomfort Mean Score	68
4.19	Insecurity Mean Score	69
4.20	Performance Expectancy Mean Score	70
4.21	Effort Expectancy Mean Score	70
4.22	Social Influence Mean Score	71
4.23	Facilitating Condition Mean Score	72
4.24	Hedonic Motivation Mean Score	72
4.25	Price Value Mean Score	73
4.26	Habit Mean Score	73
4.27	Revisit/reuse Intention Mean Score	74
4.28	Word of Mouth Mean Score	75
5.1	Measurement model for Technology Readiness	81
5.2	Measurement model for UTAUT2	83
5.3	Measurement model for Behavioral Intention	86
5.4	Fit Indices of Overall Measurement Model	88
5.5	Fit Indices of 1st Order Structural Model	90
5.6	Summary of Result for the First Order Structural Path	91
5.7	Fit Indices of 2nd Order Structural Model	93
5.8	Summary of Result for the Second Order Structural Path	93
5.9	Summary of Result for H1	94
5.10	Summary of Result for H2	96
5.11	Summary of Result for H2a	95



5.12	Summary of Result for H2b	96
5.13	Summary of Result for H2c	97
5.14	Summary of Result for H2d	97
5.15	Summary of Result for H3	98
5.16	Summary of Direct and Mediation Model	101



## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.1	Research Framework – Integrating TR with UTAUT2	9
2.1	Final version of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	28
5.1	Output Path Diagram for Measurement Model of Technology Readiness	80
5.2	Output Path Diagram for Measurement Model of UTAUT2	83
5.3	Output Path Diagram for Measurement Model of Behavioral Intention	85
5.4	Overall Measurement Model	87
5.5	Standardized Estimates for Hypothesized Models with Structural Components	90
5.6	Standardized Estimates for Hypothesized Models with 2nd Order Structural Components	92
5.7	Key Concepts of Classic Mediation	99
5.8	Direct Model of Mediation Test	101
5.9	Mediation Model of Mediation Test	102
5.10	Final Model	103

## LIST OF APPENDICES

<b>Appendix</b>		<b>Page</b>
A	Survey Questionnaire	145
B	Descriptive Analysis	156
C	Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)	157
D	Reliability Analysis	167
E	Mean Score and Standard Deviation	169
F	Measurement Model	170
G	Structural Model	181
H	Bootstrap Mediation Test	186

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The foundation of this study is explained throughout this chapter. The background of the study as well as the statement of the problem, research objectives and also the research questions are also discussed and highlighted. This chapter also includes the explanation of the conceptual framework in reference to the underlying theory regarding the consumers' technology readiness, technology acceptance, and behavioral intentions. In supporting the main purpose of the study besides achieving the main objectives, the research hypotheses are also presented. It is then followed by the significance and justification of the study. Lastly, the chapter involves a definition of terms used throughout the research.

### 1.2 Background Of The Study

Hotel is one of the world's fastest-growing businesses. This is in line with Hospitalitynet's (2015) report forecasted in 2016 which stated that the global hotel sector income would reach the United States (US) \$550 billion<sup>1</sup>. If the estimation proves to be accurate, it shows an increment of approximately US\$100 billion<sup>1</sup> compared to the past five years in 2011 which only worth US\$457 billion<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, Hospitalitynet (2015) also reported that Europe and Asia Pacific regions had the highest hotel occupancy rates at over 68% and continued to be key regions for the sector globally. The most expensive regions for hotel room rates are the Middle East and Africa with US\$165.97<sup>1</sup> average daily room rate.

In Malaysia, the hotel sector has become among the main contributors for the Gross National Income and additionally the sector is recognized as one of the key features when it comes to the National Key Economic Area (Economic Transformation Program, 2014). The increment of tourist arrival has given a fitting impression to the sector. According to Tourism Malaysia (2019), in 2018 Malaysia received 25.83 million tourists as compared to 25.72 million in 2015. Tourism Malaysia also reported that the total receipts by tourists in 2018 increased to RM84.1 billion in terms of the revenue of the country in comparison to RM69.12 billion in 2015; with about 21.67% increment. In general, in terms of the tourists' per capita expenditure for that particular period, the approximation is RM3,257.00 and an increase of 20.59% was observed compared to only RM2,700.70 in 2015. Moreover, the supply of hotels and rooms in 2018 increased to 4,750 hotels and 308,207 rooms compared to 4,070 hotels and 304,721 rooms in 2015. In 2018, Malaysia's hospitality market had a total of approximately 82.45 million hotel guests who stayed at the properties across the country. Commercial accommodations such as

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<sup>1</sup> Currency Exchange Rate US\$ 1 = RM 4.0895 (Central Bank of Malaysia, 2019)

hotels, bed, and breakfast, etc. are the top choice for international travelers to Malaysia with almost 96% of the arrivals utilizing commercial accommodation in 2018.

The statistics by Tourism Malaysia (2019) shows that the hotel sector in Malaysia appeared to grow well and accomplished the objective to attract more leisure and business tourists, whether locals or internationals to visit and spend in Malaysia. Furthermore, this situation has created demand for hotel rooms and the quality of four and five-star hotel rooms are required to handle this demand. Many domestic and foreign investors are keen to invest due to the government's liberalization of policies as well as the policies and rewarding incentives from the tax. They also feel that the stability of Malaysia's economy is convincing. Therefore, this situation has portrayed that the area of hospitality in Malaysia optimistically remains where it has been observed that the level of performance conveyed a continual growth. This also urged the public hospitality sector to anticipate for valuable opportunities in expanding their business besides maintaining it (Tourism Malaysia, 2019).

People now live in an age where they constantly need to travel. If the period of traveling is more than one day, they need a place to sleep and rest. Worldly, there are numerous types of lodging to accommodate them. As a result, the hotel sector has become so competitive and there is also an increase in demand as more travelers check in to their establishment. According to Hospitalitynet (2018), US lodging demand increased by 1.6% during the first half of 2018 compared to the same period in 2015. The rise of millennial traveler has also created new trends that force the hotel sector to venture into new types of business, technology and hotel marketing. The millennials travel more often than other generations and spend roughly US\$200 billion<sup>1</sup> a year (Travel Pulse, 2018). The pace of technology advancement is faster than ever before. This phenomenon is switching the expectation of both hotel guests and the hotels on how they conduct their business. According to MDGAdvertising (2018), Hotels business that venture in technology will receive the greatest number of reservations in 2018. The key to success is when the business focuses on online service technology, particularly online booking website that enables all types of hotel services. The Internet is tremendously vital to Millennials. This generation will be the majority of travelers and they demand personalized and customized service from the company they choose.

According to Buhalis & Sinarta (2019), over the last decade, the travel and tourism arena accomplished a dramatic growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). It also possessed an erratic impact on the hotel sector (Law, 2009). Travel and tourism sector had the highest volume of the online transaction as early as 2004 (Werthner and Ricci, 2004). According to Marcussen (2008), in terms of revenue generated through online channels, it has been observed that the reservation of hotel made online is the popular medium of making reservation nowadays as it is the second-largest sales item following the airline booking. According to Buhalis (2003), some hotels are reluctant to adopt new technologies. However, marketing and sales can significantly improve resulting from ICT development in the hospitality domain (Schegg, Stangl, Fux, and Inversini, 2013). The opportunities offered by the Internet is greatly significant towards modern tourist (Buhalis and Law, 2008). Furthermore, recent studies have shown that

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<sup>1</sup> Currency Exchange Rate US\$ 1 = RM 4.0895 (Central Bank of Malaysia, 2019)

tourist always finds precise information which is available on the internet (Xiang, Wober, and Fesenmaier, 2008), compare the information with other competitors (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009) and they eventually end up to make bookings online (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009).

The online hotel website has given travelers control over their travel planning due to the presence of the Internet. It is a perfect medium for the hotel sector to provide a quick and easy way to book travel arrangements. The internet has become the reservation instrument of choice for 57% of travelers throughout the world (Statisticbrain, 2015). The online travel booking phenomenon is even more apparent in the US, where 74% of leisure travelers and 77% of business travelers utilize the Internet as a primary tool in arranging their travel plans (Google and Ipsos Media CT, 2015). Thus, many companies move to the online world to cater to the global internet population. As other businesses move to the online world, hotels need to use the internet for the purpose of attracting new and more customers.

Advancement in information technology (IT) has changed the ways hotel sector operates. By nature, the hotel sector is not technology-oriented, but because of the increasing demands from sophisticated customers and characteristic of the sector, it has made the managers and hotel sector to utilize IT to meet the present and future business needs. Moreover, it has been suggested by Olsen and Connolly (2000) that information technology is the best dynamic force which happened to change the hotel's manifestation and it will certainly keep on changing how future business is done by the sector. Significant efforts have been made by hotels to encourage travelers to book their rooms online. These efforts include providing the lowest guaranteed rates, in which hotel claims that the lowest rates on the Internet are only available on their websites (O'Connor and Murphy, 2004). Additionally, a third-party distributor has been considered as an innovative technology that was designed to improve users' reservation experiences by creating an environment characterized by usefulness, convenience, and fun (Morosan and Jeong, 2008).

Furthermore, with the use of IT in the management system of the hotel, it has provided assistance in the development of service quality as well of service competence which largely contribute towards the decrease in the management costs besides improving the satisfaction of the customers (Wang, 2013). Consequently, the hotel managers need to take advantages of the IT and incorporate it into the business to provide new and varied services into their operations of activities. Besides, utilizing technology as value-added amenity help to promote differentiation, increase guest satisfaction and build loyalty among guest (Cobanoglu, Corbaci, and Ryan, 2001). Henceforth, it is an advantage for the hotel sector to grab this opportunity to attract more tourists to stay at their hotel.

Approximately 32% of the hotel's income derives from online reservation (TravelClick, 2012). Nevertheless, a hotel-owned website is not the only distribution channel that the hotel used. The hotel also uses Online Travel Agencies (OTA) because they have the capability to extend the scope of a customer to a bigger market and increase the hotel's occupancy (Hotelmarketing, 2012). An OTA is known as an agency that is involved in selling as well as arranging accommodations, tours, transportation, and trips for travelers

using the online medium. Furthermore, these agencies help the hotel to distribute their inventory effectively and stretch to the customer that the hotel may not be able to connect directly (Kotler, Bowen, and Makens, 2010). In the second quarter of 2014, the OTA experienced the largest jump in bookings, with a 12.8% increase compared to the previous year (TravelClick, 2015).

Hotels normally used international OTA such as Hotels.com, Expedia, Booking.com, Orbitz and many more as one of their distribution channels to attract customers to make a room reservation. According to Statisticbrain (2015), there are 8 top visited travel sites ranked by Alexa Rank. Alexa Rank is the measurement of the global popularity of a website as calculated by Alexa Internet, which is a web traffic and reporting firm owned by Amazon (Reputationx, 2014). These 8 top visited travel sites are:

1. Booking.com
2. Expedia.com
3. Hotels.com
4. Priceline.com
5. Kayak.com
6. Travelocity.com
7. Orbitz.com
8. Hotwire.com

In response to this e-business opportunity, most hotels will have their own recognized websites to enable promotion and reservations on the internet. With the Internet users currently reached 87.4% of Malaysia's population, (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commissions, 2019), this symbolizes an attractive market possibility. Not only that, the third party or the online agencies also begin established their own website to gain opportunities in the market and also in the hotel sector. It has been acknowledged to have potentials in contributing to the growth of the service sector and boosts the economy of the country. Malaysian government's determination is to explore the potential of the tourism sector. With the existence of the information technology and digital services, it will be the advancement for the sector to grow and compete with the others.

The hotel sector is undertaking changes because of the speedy growth of digital services and information technology. Online travel has intensely reformed the way tourism firms cooperate with their consumers. Online booking website has the possibility to take this expansion even further. Yet, several matters have been emphasized from the time when the early days of online services expansion such as the lack of relevance and ease of use of many services. Hence, the extensive implementation of online booking website and the Internet in more than a few countries as well as the establishment of so-called ecosystems in between vendors of technology specify that many of these issues have been overcome (Eriksson, 2013).

Websites related to travel, for example, Agoda, Booking.com, and Expedia which are owned by the third-party organization are noticeably conveying that online travel and

tourism services are implemented and consumed by many individuals (Eriksson, 2013). Nevertheless, as the business is projected to start growing in the Internet era, various concerns have a tendency to be disregarded. Without any personal contact, websites act as complimentary self-service systems and certainly will not be replacing agents. Websites can also be useful tools for product research and some of the simpler booking processes, but many bookings are just more easily and conveniently done with the assistance of an experienced, live human being (Rosso, 2014; Yee, Ramlan, Hassan, Shukri and Mokhtar, 2018). Previous literature did suggest that websites have the possibilities for committing customers to use the same service provider, but electronic self-service may possibly erode customer relationship because of the lack of personal relationship in self-service use situation. Consumers want the online travel experience but are not satisfied and though travel has the most websites out of all industries, it has low consumer experience ratings on those sites (Cognizant, 2014).

With a high number of booking application that can be found in the travel websites, it is important to identify whether the applications have satisfied the users or otherwise (Cassidy and Pabel, 2019). Moreover, it is also important to investigate whether the distribution channel can be applied to hotel marketing strategies to multiply the satisfaction of the customers. Pura (2005) has claimed that; in the context of online service, there is a great need for understanding users, their relative value perceptions and emotions derived from using a service. This is parallel with a number of researchers (Komulainen, Mainela, Tahtinen, and Ulkuniemi, 2004; Lubbe and Louw, 2010) who stressed on the necessity of recognizing the values that initiate the intention to use online services. This information is mainly vital for the real creation of value.

In Business to Commerce (B2C) e-commerce, one of the major and rapid-growing divisions has been established by online reservation (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra, 2005). The socio-economic background of tourism will continue to stimulate additional changes because of the Internet (Ma Sabiote, Ma Frias, and Castaneda, 2012; Rayman-Bacchus and Molina, 2001). It is a necessity for the hotel to apply strategies concerning e-commerce so that they can gain several benefits such as improve sustainability, gain customer loyalty and improvement in marketing efficacy (Tsai, Huang, and Lin, 2005; Wu and Law, 2018). The growth of multichannel sellers that use both offline and online services has added to the number of increasing online businesses (Hahn and Kim, 2009). A retail organization that focuses exclusively on one distribution channel may lose the competitive advantage to the one which uses a multi-channel strategy (Izquierdo-Yusta and Mart'nez-Ruiz, 2011).

It is debatable that the business partnership of hotels and OTA create the situation where maintaining profitability in the long term is a battle for hotels (Green and Lomanno, 2012; Lee, Guillet, Law, and Leung, 2012). Moreover, hotels need to keep the room rate very low due to pressure from the price transparency of the online distribution channels (Green and Lomanno, 2012). To survive with these problems, hotels' pricing strategies, the value proposition from consumers, consumers' responsive behavior towards deal offerings and hotels' sales and promotional tactics need to be revised and improved (Buhalis and Law, 2008; McCartan, 2013). Hotels may develop their own hotel website and stuff all the information about the hotel on the website. They can also encourage travelers to make a reservation through the website. However, the challenge now is in



attracting potential buyers to make their travel booking on the hotel-owned reservation website (Pilepic, Šimunic, and Car, 2015). Considering this limitation, it is believed that OTA is the best answer to the above-stated problem as approved by Lai, Huang, Lu, and Chang (2013) who mentioned that OTA can enhance or bring about change in the booking experience of customers as a whole. With the heavy, extensive use of the profitable business model and advertising power, it made easy for the OTA to increase their revenues and become powerful than hotel websites (McCartan, 2013).

A study conducted by Pilepic et al. (2015), found that online booking business for the hotel sector is a logical way to extend bookings to their central reservation centers. OTA such as Booking.com, Expedia, last-minute, Traveloka, and Travelocity are among the platforms that have gained many visitors looking for a one-stop-shop for hotels all over the world. Pilepic et al. (2015) also stated that; to meet the needs, many consumers go to OTA to compare travel choices and to find the best solution. They often looked for a hotel room, flexibility, and packages. HawkPartners (2012), found that 52% of online travel websites were being used as a channel to research and evaluate hotels. HawkPartners (2012) also stated that Expedia, Tripadvisor, Hotels.com, Travelocity, and Orbitz are the five websites which are most often being used for evaluating hotels. The use of OTA is suitable and helpful for hotel managers in developing business marketing strategies since it can help to decrease overhead cost and supply extra constructive service (Lai et al, 2013).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Morosan and Jeong (2008), contended that although selling hotel rooms through OTA resulting in brand erosion due to the deep discounting, and rate disparity among distribution channels, in a long run; this way will improve hotel's financial burden and generate a higher level of customer satisfaction and behavioral intention. Nevertheless, in reference to Godoe and Johansen (2012) when a new technology system is being proposed, there is a need for the system to be tested by the hotel before adopting it as the hotel can take the actions that are necessary before implementing it. Parasuraman (2000) specified that customer frustration is also present when using the new technology and some of them feel the complexity has made them withdrawn with the brand. Diverse psychological responses will happen when customers encounter technology and it depends on their feeling towards it (Meuter, Ostrom, Bitner and Roundtree 2003). Customer beliefs and behavior towards technology can be affected by the feeling of anxiety (Meuter et al., 2003; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis, 2003) and fun (Agarwal and Karahanna, 2000). The authors also added that; in understanding the acceptance of technology adoption, personality dimension plays an important role where it actually has the tendency in influencing people's interaction, usability as well as experience when using the new technology.

Unexpectedly, only 34% of Malaysian internet users rely solely on the internet throughout the entire process of room reservation, and only 33% from that figure used OTA (GFK, 2015). In 2019, only 4.8 million internet users used an online travel booking website (Statista, 2019). It is low compared to internet users of Malaysia which is 28.7 million or 87.4% out of the total population in 2018 (Malaysian Communications and

Multimedia Commissions, 2019). Therefore, it is vital to address customers' technology readiness before businesses invest in technology particularly self-service technologies (Lin and Hsieh, 2006). In fact, customer satisfaction, as well as behavioral intention, is influenced by customers' technology readiness (Curran and Meuter, 2005; Lin and Hsieh, 2006; Parasuraman, 2000; Yieh et al., 2012). Curran and Meuter (2005) claimed that the challenge with acceptance and satisfaction to any kind of technology is not the technology itself but rather its use among customers. Thus, to understand the complexity of the relationship between customers' usage and the system, technology readiness must be incorporated into one's research (Lee et al., 2012; Parasuraman, 2000).

There are loads of theory on acceptance towards technology. Many kinds of research have focused on investigating the determinants of technology use especially the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which was originally rooting from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). In fact, TAM has been broadly used in explaining information system usage behavior. Other than that, Venkatesh et al. (2003) also formulated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) to integrate the main competing user acceptance models and consequently improve the expectedness and understanding of technology acceptance. Later, they developed an extension of UTAUT known as UTAUT2 (Venkatesh, Thong, and Xu, 2012) which will be adopted in this study and it is more towards the customer usage rather than an organization. The intention of the user is using the specific information system and also the user's following usage behavior is also explained by this particular model. By consolidating eight key models from previous prominent theory (i.e. The Theory of Reasoned Action, Technology Acceptance Model, Motivational Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour, The Combined Theory of Planned Behaviour/Technology Acceptance Model, Model of PC Utilisation, Innovation Diffusion Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory), the model is used as a platform in predicting the usage behavior in reference to the information systems.

Nevertheless, psychographic traits are not a consideration in the model. According to Agarwal and Prasad (1999) and agreed by Straub (2009) and Slade, Williams, and Dwivedi, (2014), one of the most noticeable criticisms of the technology acceptance research is the absence of acknowledgment of individual variances. Customer psychological traits and general attitude towards technology have become increasingly important to understand, where most technology-based services create anxiety to those who lack experience in most technologies (Claffey and Brady, 2009; Wang and Wu, 2014). According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2004), E-service cannot be separated from customers' active participation. To apply UTAUT2 in marketing settings, it may not explain enough on the consumers' technology adoption behaviors, mainly because of the high contribution of customers to co-produce the service.

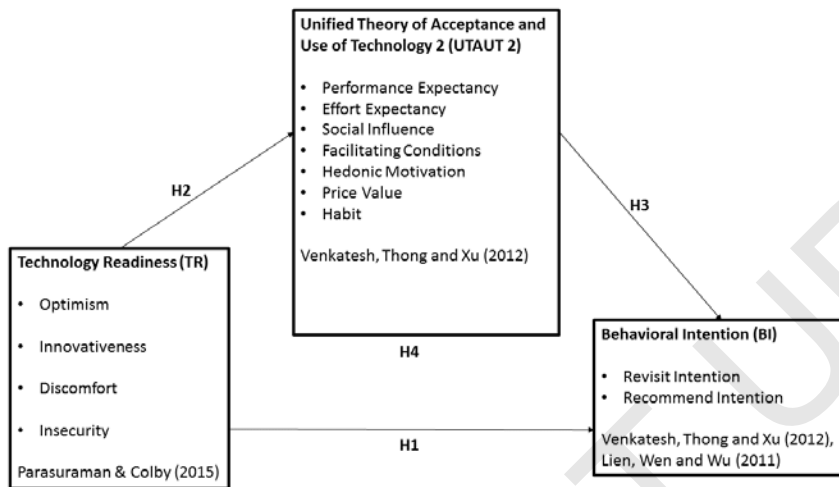
According to Straub (2009), future research on technology adoption needs to examine the consequences of technology towards individual differences so that it can create a holistic understanding on how technology change influences the organization or the individual. Researchers should also be looking at how technology alters individuals' views of technology. So much of the current research focuses on technology adoption too precisely on systems, but what may be professed as a slight change in consumers' psychographic traits may have deeper repercussions on their intention. Therefore, in classifying and qualifying the psychological process of customers' perception, it is

necessary to incorporate some individual difference variables. Technology readiness (TR) can be seen as a multidimensional psychographic construct, offering a way to segment online customers based on their underlying positive and negative technology beliefs.

Not much is known about Malaysian customers' technology readiness and how they perceived the value offered by OTA, thus it is difficult to figure out the effectiveness of the system based on their perception on OTA' usage which will then influence customers' behavioral intention. In an academic or practical perspective, knowledge of online consumer behavior is still in a developing stage (Muthaly, Ha, Yeo and, Kim, 2009; Vazquez and Xu, 2009). According to Piercy (2012), there is a need to consider the effect of psychographic factors on the acceptance of online services, since past studies only confirmed the influence of online features such as E-Quality and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) towards online service adoption. Previous researchers has studied on how consumer characteristics influence technology acceptance (Dabholkar and Bagozzi, 2002; Ellen, Bearden, and Sharma, 1991; Hill, Smith, and Mann, 1987) but the role of Technology Readiness (TR) by Parasuraman (2000) within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) by Venkatesh et al. (2003) has been under-explored. Therefore, this study aims to form a better understanding of the effect and relationship of personal characteristics of the customer towards the acceptance of OTA by implementing TR and UTAUT2 as the two main dimensions.

#### **1.4 Research Framework**

The following framework is presented along with the proposed hypotheses and sub-hypotheses of the study. According to Yieh, Chen, and Wei (2012), all technology readiness dimension may influence individuals in various ways. This same goes to UTAUT2 dimensions as all seven dimensions included are selected based on the literature review and their suitability to the current research. Therefore, this study aims to form a better understanding of the effect and relationship of personal characteristics of technology by implementing TR and technology acceptance by using UTAUT2 towards online travel agencies. Figure 1.1 shows the proposed framework and hypotheses of the study.



**Figure 1.1: Research Framework – Integrating TR with UTAUT2**

From the explanation in the previous section, the following are the hypotheses that will be tested throughout the research.

H1: Technology Readiness influences Behavioral Intention.

H2: Technology Readiness influences UTAUT2

H3: UTAUT2 influences Behavioral Intention.

H4: UTAUT2 mediates the relationship between Technology Readiness and Behavioral Intention

## 1.5 Research Objective

The primary focus of this study revolves around identifying the significant impact of TR toward UTAUT2 for the OTA. Thus, listed below are the objectives outlined for this study:

1. To assess the state of technology readiness level among OTA users.
2. To examine the influence of technology readiness on the users' behavioral intention in using OTA.
3. To examine the influence of technology readiness on the users' UTAUT2 dimensions in using OTA.
4. To examine the influence of UTAUT2 on the users' behavioral intention in using OTA.
5. To examine the mediating effect of UTAUT2 on the relationship between technology readiness and behavioral intention.

## **1.6 Research Question**

In manifesting the direction of the study, listed below are the research questions which have been developed:

1. What is the state of technology readiness among the user of OTA?
2. Does technology readiness influence the users' behavioral intention in using OTA?
3. Does technology readiness influence the users' UTAUT2 factors in using OTA?
4. Does UTAUT2 influence the users' behavioral intention in using OTA?
5. Does UTAUT2 mediate the relationship between technology readiness and behavioral intention?

## **1.7 Significance Of The Study**

### **1.7.1 Academic Perspective**

From the academic perspective, it is expected that the findings of this study will significantly contribute towards additional knowledge on Technology Readiness and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology which focus on the hotel sector. Different with the previous integration of TR and TAM or TR and UTAUT, this research includes three important constructs of UTAUT2 such as hedonic motivation, price value, and habit which are crucial in the context of the consumer. This new integrated model will be developed to improve the understandability and deeper insight into general consumer belief of technology and attitudes towards specific technology (Claffey and Brady, 2009; Wang and Wu, 2014). Besides, with the integration of TR and UTAUT2, it will contribute towards broadening the scope of this research as well as the generalizability of the present technology acceptance models; simply by the including the dimension of psychographic characteristics which in return impact on the improvement of amount of variance explained in the dependent variable (Melisa and Indrawati, 2016).

Furthermore, the model also includes the mediating effect of UTAUT2 on technology readiness which will act as an important indicator of customers' behavior changes. With the support of Technology Readiness and UTAUT2, all the above injections of new ideas will, therefore, provide a new body of knowledge as well as enriching the current literature available on online booking experience.

### **1.7.2 Practical Perspective**

From the perspective of the hotel sector, the adoption of technology along with careful consideration of customer readiness and acceptance will help in reducing the operational cost. This is particularly true when promoting and marketing are more demanding recently prompting operators to find creative ways to penetrate a bigger market that is

proven to be the only solution in this situation. However, every promotion and marketing strategies will be outdated eventually. Technology, in this case, OTA will be a better solution for most hotels in a longer run. In fact, the investment will be worthwhile as technology today is relatively inexpensive as compared to the cost of extensive promotion and marketing (Azdel, Khalid, Radzi, and Yusof, 2016).

This study may also create awareness on the potential benefits in understanding consumer behavior on the usage of OTA so that it can be adapted in the hotel. If the customers like the system and believe that the system does improve the reservation experience, promoting the usage of OTA will benefit the hotel sector in general. OTA is gradually becoming a trend in the hotel sector nowadays due to the fun of using it. The number is still low in this country but if this technology is carefully considered and integrated into the operation, it could be one of the tools to achieve competitive advantage over the other competitors (Azdel, Awang, Yusof, Radzi, and Ahmad, 2018). Industry practitioners are expecting this booking method to boom in the near future hence when the time comes, then the necessity to sustain and survive in the industry will be seriously taken into account. Hence, this study will be beneficial to the hotel managers in a way that it allows them to structure strategies to ensure that guest loyalty is retained.

This particular study will also provide insight into the behavior of the guest who uses OTA. It is never denied that the knowledge regarding the effect of TR can benefit the managers in order to identify the potential adopters as well as heavy and light users who utilize their technology-based services and offerings. It will also be beneficial for the managers in order for them to fine-tuning their related product positioning and also communication strategies so that it will match the TR profiles of potential customers for distinctive stages involved in the lifecycle of the product.

## **1.8 Definition Of Terms**

### **1.8.1 Online Travel Agencies**

Online travel agents are basically traditional travel agents, except customers need self-serve, as they operate online. They are websites where consumers can conduct multiple searches, plan and place an order for a booking (Qi, Law, and Buhalis, 2013).

### **1.8.2 Technology Readiness**

Individual's propensity to embrace and use new technologies for accomplishing goals in home life and at work. It is a state of mind, resulting from a gestalt of mental enablers and inhibitors that collectively determine a person's predisposition to use new technology (Parasuraman, 2000).

### **1.8.3 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)**

The technology acceptance model explains the intentions of the users in using information technology and subsequent usage behavior. UTAUT is one of the most popular technology acceptance theories which was developed by unifying eight different theories. It aims to explain user intentions by proposing a unified model for information system use (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

### **1.8.4 Behavioral Intention**

An indication of an individual's readiness to perform a given behavior is known as behavioral intention. It is assumed to be an immediate antecedent of behavior. It is based on attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, with each predictor weighted for its importance in relation to the behavior and population of interest (Lien, Wen, and Wu, 2011).

### **1.9 Organization Of The Thesis**

The thesis involved six chapters which include this chapter as well. Mainly, Chapter 2 focuses on the literature, which is apparently relevant to Online Travel Agency, Human Behavior, Behavior Intention, TR and UTAUT. The chapter also includes the relationship between constructs, theoretical framework and the hypotheses posited in this study. Chapter 3 covers the methodology used in the study. It includes a description of the research approach, the population and sampling design, items development, the data collection procedure, and the statistical methods used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 discusses all the findings from the analysis of data collected for this research. Chapter 5 also covers data analysis but only the Structural Equation Model analysis. Lastly, Chapter 6 conclude the research by discussing the empirical findings of the research based on the research questions, the implications of the study resulting from the discussion of the study as well as recommendations, the study limitations, future trends forecast and the need for further research on the topic.

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