

Interactive tourism websites attributes and tourist decision to visit Malaysia

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts (JTHCA)
2017, Vol. 9 (2) pp 47-58
© The Author(s) 2017
Reprints and permission:
UiTM Press
Submit date: 24th June 2017
Accept date: 27th Aug 2017
Publish date: 30th Sept 2017

Zuliah Abd Hamid*
Nurul Izzati Md Khairuddin
Mazlina Mahdzar
Nor Asmalina Mohd Anuar

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Selangor, Malaysia
hailuzulfa1920@gmail.com

Proposed citation:

Hamid, Z.A., Khairuddin, N.I.M., Mahdzar, M. & Anuar, N.A.M. (2017). Interactive tourism websites attributes and tourist decision to visit Malaysia. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 9(2), 47-58.

Abstract

This study explores the three attributes of interactive tourism websites, namely visual information, information content and communication. This study investigates whether interactive tourism websites attributes affect international tourist decision to visit Malaysia. This research function is an initial step of an exploratory study to determine necessary influence of attributes in the website to define the concept. A variety of standard methodologies were employed which are reliability test, descriptive analysis by using mean score and multiple regressions approach which is to explore the relationship between continuous dependent variable and numbers of independent variable. Quantitative approaches through questionnaire surveys were answered by international tourists from the continent of Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and America. Demographic information was recorded for each respondent based on their continent of origin. The findings from this study presented that, visual presentation attribute indicated the highest mean score compared to the information content attribute and communication attribute where the main hypothesis and sub-hypotheses were supported and accepted.

Keywords:

Interactive tourism website, visual information, information content, communication

1 Introduction

The Internet is changing the tourism industry structure by altering barriers to entry, minimizing switching costs, revolutionizing distribution channels, and facilitating price transparency, while enhancing efficiency. Numerous travel organizations utilize the Internet as the medium in promoting and marketing their products and services to engage in one-on-one marketing once potential customers have entered their website (Hsu, Killion, Brown, Gross & Huang, 2008). Tourism websites have become one of the primary sources by online customer especially international tourist in holiday arrangements, selecting the destination, and trip planning that cater their needs. According to Stepchenkova and Svetlana (2012), by understanding the need of seeking the information and fascination of the website, the service provider will know when to intervene who to target at a particular time with the particular tourism product. Hence, travelers need information before going on a trip to help them plan and choose between options (O'Connor & Frew, 2001). As a result of using the tourism websites in the planning of a holiday, it contributes to a greater enjoyment of the holiday irrespective of previous attitude towards the destination (Castañeda, Frías, & Rodríguez, 2009). Koufaris (2002) claimed the need to understand and measure such online in selecting the destination before travelling is high.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Interactivity

Interactivity is defined as the whole thing a human does to or with objects or entities in an environment. In fact, interactivity was a one-way flow of information changed by mutual interactive communication between the consumer and the company (Hsiu & Li, 2013). Wang (2012), supported that interactivity is an intermediate element between a consumer and company. Interactivity is not limited to two people or direct communication, it may be treated as a changing reaction in interpersonal or public communication. Krebs (2010), agreed that the most effective web sites offer a conversation, not a monologue.

2.2 Tourism websites

Lončarić, Bašan & Jurković (2013) defined website as a site that is connected to the Internet which maintains one or more web pages typically served from a single web domain. Website is evolving into an environment that provides for a range of activities, including entertainment, exploration, communication, and learning. According to Forrester Research (2014), a tourism website is defined as a website on the World Wide Web that is dedicated to travel. The site focused on travel reviews, trip fares, or a combination of both. In the tourism industry, Kim and Fesenmaier (2007) postulated travel and tourism website is one of top visited websites by internet users. Due to that reason, travel and tourism websites are visited to search information or to buy travel

and tourism products such as packaged tours, airplane tickets, accommodation, viewing image of destination and others (Law & Chung, 2003). Nusair and Kandampully (2008) postulated that many websites take the form of a digital version of a traditional guide book, aiming to provide advice on which destinations, attractions, accommodations, and so on, are worth a visit and providing information on how to access them.

2.3 Interactive tourism websites

In tourism industry, the tourism website uses innovative ways to interact with the customers. It can significantly increase their virtual experience about the destination and thus increase in their intention to visit (Liao, Liu & Chen, 2011). As supported by Li and Zhang (2011), more tourism businesses now provide virtual experience, such as panoramic views, animation, and interactive photos, so that their consumers can get a virtual experience without actually being there. To create most virtual experience for their potential customers, many tourism destination marketing organizations have developed websites with varying levels of interactive features (Klenosky & Gitelson, 2012). Many of these tourism websites assist consumers in posting and sharing their travel-related comments, opinions, and personal experiences, which then serve as information for others.

2.4 Visual presentation

Visual is defined as any transformation of data to image, however obviously its purpose seems essentially different from those of information graphics or data-based artworks (Hunt, 2008). Visual presentations in tourism can be defined as “the original characteristics of a destination are transformed into simulations and conveyed by means of various media for the sake of destination promotion” (Hunt & John, 2008, p. 49-60). Schlosser and White (2006) stated that behind the images lays a system of beliefs and representations; visual representation tells something not only about the culture being portrayed, but also about the values that motivate that culture. Bieger and Laesser (2004) stated that another important factor that influences destination selection is visual or image. Beeton, Bowen and Santos (2006) also proposed that destination marketers use images to portray the ideas of quality in tourism experiences to the general public. Images of destination can also persuade people to visit places and once there, people “gaze” at that which initially drew them to the destination, photographs are then taken, and postcards are sent to those unfortunately left out of the gaze. Prayag (2009), added the formation of good image is not the end of the effort in sustaining demand to a destination.

2.5 Information content

Based on literature search, Buhalis and O’Connor (2000), travel information is the important role played in the destination-choice process and to assess theoretical developments, as well as the considerations concerning the impact of travel

information on tourists' actual destination choice. They added, the potential tourists need to gather sufficient information on various aspects of their planned trip. In most decision-making processes, the information-collecting stage takes place before probable decision alternatives have been established they received in website about the destination. This is supported by Loncaric (2013), that information is the assessment of information provided in the website and should be useful and up-to-date, and it matches user needs and links relevant sites to the users. The information involves destinations' attractions, activities, hotels, restaurants, transportation, tours, shop entertainment, sports and recreations (Pujani, 2014). She further noted that, the associate information provision includes local maps, news, healthcare, laws and culture environment that are very helpful for user to make a tourism plan and selecting the destination. Gursoy and Umbreit (2004), on the other hand contend that when user search and browse information, they will understand more what, when, who, and how regarding of the selection of destination. In line with that, the potential tourists will be interested of touring the destination and encourage their intention to select the destination. The travel and tourism website should present simplicity of location and attraction descriptions (Vogt, 2005). It should also provide the opportunity to the user to trade-off between facilities, locations, or prices according to their ability and preference. According to Moutinho (2008), the basic goal of a website is to provide information.

2.6 Communication

Based on the previous research, communication on the websites is one of the factors to evaluate the successful of tourism websites (Perdue, 2001). According to Bai, Law and Wen (2008), communication is the activity that brings people together and this occurs through interactivity, personalization and dialogue or with constant, timely, and tailored communication flow. Gurau (2008), mentioned that for marketing purposes communication brings the customer closer to the product, get to know the customer better and create the opportunities to invite the customer to get involved with the product. Such communication can be ensured or enhanced by providing multiple communication channels such as email, online FAQs, online forum, reviewing, testimonials and online chat.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

Quantitative approach is used instead of qualitative approach because it provides a measure of how people think, feel or behave in a certain way and uses statistical analysis to determine the result. The use of quantitative research in this study is acceptable as the aim is to gain wider information of how the influence of the interactive tourism website attributes towards international tourist's destination choice.

3.2 Sample and data

Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling procedure, the selected sample size for this research is 384. Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the main setting for the collection of data. The populations of the study were among the international tourists who are active. The non-probability sampling was used and the approach is using convenience sampling. The respondents were approached by the researcher in answering the questionnaires. The instrument used to gather the data for this study was a structured questionnaire which employed five points Likert type scales anchored by 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Measurements for interactive website attributes were adapted and modified from McCarthy (1964) and Perdue (2012). Tourist destination choice was measured using scale adapted and modified from Seoho (1990). The data was collected between March 13th to March 30th, 2015 at top five destinations most visited in Kuala Lumpur which are Kuala Lumpur Tower, Petronas Twin Tower/KLCC, Central Market, Bintang Walk and Petaling Street. 400 questionnaires were distributed, from self-administered a total of 350 response were received and collected but only 310 were usable for analysis.

4 Findings

The analysis is organized in four parts. First, the profile respondents were highlighted based on their demographics characteristics. Second, the measures and the distribution of the data collected through the constructs and dimensions were tested through its validity and internal consistency. Third, is to test the research hypotheses. Finally, the multiple regression analysis was used to confirm the relationship between interactive tourism websites attributes (visual presentation, information content and communication) towards international tourist's destination choice. The result of the data collection and the statistical method applied were presented, analyzed and interpreted as follows.

4.1 Analysis of international tourist destination choice

Table 1 showed the analysis of the dependent variable which is international tourist's destination choice. Most of the international tourists agreed with most items in this section. The ranges of mean score were from 4.35 to 4.55. The international tourists (M=4.55, DC1) strongly agreed that after browsing the tourism websites, they can influence them to choose Malaysia as a destination to travel and with (M=4.47, CD2) tourists strongly agree that the full information provided on tourism websites influenced tourists to select Malaysia as a travel destination. Meanwhile, with (M=4.34, CD3) strongly agree that tourism websites draw tourists to travel to Malaysia and (M=4.52, CD4) the tourists strongly agree that interactive and entertaining photos and videos of the destinations influenced tourists to choose Malaysia to travel. While

(M=4.48, DC5) international tourists strongly agreed that after reviewing testimonial and participating in online chats made them choose Malaysia as a destination to travel. In sum, these points clearly indicate that tourism websites influenced international tourists to choose Malaysia as a destination. It was supported by Seoho (1990) that tourism websites are fundamental sources that influence them in selecting the destination especially in Malaysia.

4.2 Hypotheses testing

Three sub-hypotheses were analyzed in this part. The main hypotheses determined the significance relationship between interactive tourism website attributes and tourist destination choice. First sub-hypotheses were used to determine the significance between visual and tourist destination choice. Second sub-hypotheses were used to determined information content and international tourists’ destination choice. Finally, the third sub-hypotheses were used to determine communication and tourist destination choice. Table 1 below is the summary of the result from multiple regressions.

Table 1: Summary of the hypotheses testing results of Multiple Regression

Hypotheses	Statement of Hypotheses	Remarks
H _{1a}	There is positive relationship between information content and international tourists’ destination choice	Supported
H _{1b}	There is positive relationship between visual presentation and international tourists’ destination choice	Supported
H _{1c}	There is positive relationship between communication and international tourists’ destination choice	Supported

4.3 Analysis of finding

Table 2 revealed that, visual presentation is the most influential interactive tourism website attributes. Visual presentation shows the highest mean score that influence international tourist in selecting the destination. From the results, it shows the mean score is quite high (M=4.43 on a 5-point scales) and the minimum score of visual presentation is (M=3.88 on a 5-point scales). It is revealed that visual presentation is the most influential for the international tourist in selecting the destination and become their primary source for references. The importance of ease of use in tourism website is undeniable due to it highly influence the user experience towards the website. As supported by Perdue (2011), more pictures and attractive videos influence the international tourist in selecting the destination and to give them a pre-visit experience. It is important to give them an overview of the destination, to effectively enhance their eagerness to travel. The destination image portrays by the website, influencing the decision process whether to choose or not. Many tourism websites provide the pictures that are parallel with the actual destination. The picture portrayed that the destination is in a good condition and well maintain.

Table 2: Reported mean scores and std. deviation for the Visual Presentation

Code	Items	Mean	S.D
Visual Presentation			
VC1	The webpage design is attractive and fascinating.	3.88	.684
VC2	High quality and quantity of interactive photo gallery destination around Malaysia in the website influenced me to visit.	4.20	.537
VC3	The pictures of nature in website are always fascinating and interesting, and therefore influenced me to make decision.	4.43	.596
VC4	The excitement of destination portrayed in virtual tour provided in website influenced me to travel to Malaysia.	4.23	.565
VC5	The website provided 360-degree videos of iconic buildings (KLCC, Petronas Twin Tower, KL Tower, etc) made me excited to visit Malaysia.	4.19	.545
VC6	E-brochures in website provided colour and appropriate design.	4.14	.607
VC7	The written text of destination in e-brochures is clear and easy to understand.	4.19	.545

Scales: 1=not at all influential, 2=slightly influential, 3= somewhat influential, 4=very influential, 5=extremely influential

Table 3 revealed that information content is the second most influential attribute of interactive tourism websites. Information content shows second highest mean score that influenced international tourists in selecting Malaysia as destination. From the result, this showed the mean score of information content with (M=4.27 on a 5-point scale) and the minimum score of information content are (M= 4.13 on a 5 point scale). It revealed that information content also influenced international tourists to choose Malaysia as a destination to visit. As supported by Perdue, (2011) information is the assessment provided in websites, and should be useful and up-to-date, and it matches user needs and links relevant sites to the users. Tourism marketers should be able to provide detailed, precise and inclusive information about the destination in websites to empower individuals to make their own decisions (Momoh, 2010). Hence, websites should be providing the marketing mix suggested by McCarthy (1964), those are price, promotion, place and product. Gursoy and Umbreit (2004) noted that when user searches and browses information, they will understand more on what, when, who, and how with regards to destination selection. Apart from that, providing maps to access the location is crucial. It makes customers' life much easier as they do not have to access to other websites such as Google maps to obtain the direction to the location.

Table 3: Reported mean scores and std. deviation for the Information Content

Code	Items	Mean	S.D
Information Content			
1B1	The information in tourism websites is timely and up-to-date pulls me to travel to Malaysia	4.27	.596
1B2	The website provides information of local product and culture (custom, food, language and region) around Malaysia makes me choose to travel to Malaysia	4.23	.565
IB3	The information of historical buildings, museums, monuments and theme parks motivate me to travel to Malaysia.	4.17	.547
IB4	The interactive maps and directions on websites of the destination make me decided to visit.	4.14	.607
IB5	Detailed price information of attraction destinations (theme park, waterpark, etc) provides on websites influence me to make decision.	4.13	.590
IB6	The website provides promotion packages for group pull me choose to go Malaysia.	4.18	.563

Scales: 1=not at all influential, 2=slightly influential, 3= somewhat influential, 4=very influential, 5=extremely influential

Communication has the lowest mean score of interactive tourism websites attributes. Communication revealed the lowest mean score with (M=4.19 on a 5 point of scale) and the minimum score of communication attributes is (M=3.60 on a 5 point of scale). It showed that communication attributes also influenced international tourists in selecting Malaysia as a destination to travel. As supported by Bastida and Huan (2014), communication on tourism websites is defined as interacting with tourists will assist them in choosing appropriate destination and packages. International tourists who have uncertainties about the products or services can have live conversations with the tourism website provider. Having a 24-hour live chat will enhance tourist enjoyment, satisfaction, and loyalty. In addition, tourism websites will also gain benefits such as round the clock sales, enhanced marketing, increase transaction and branding. Tourists can ask any questions and receive feedback immediately. A 24-hour interaction will help the tourism website to promote their products and services globally as well as can enhancing customer enjoyment and influence them to select the destination.

Table 4: Reported mean scores and std. deviation for the communication

Code	Items	Mean	S.D
Communication			
CD1	The website provides interactive online chat (sharing and discussion) about interesting destinations and local products around Malaysia.	4.19	.545
CD2	The website provides information reviews/testimonials about destinations.	4.08	.610
CD3	The links of social media such as (Facebook, YouTube, blog, etc.) provided in websites influenced me to make a decision.	3.60	.609
CD4	There is a link for contact information such as email, phone, mailing address, etc on the websites.	4.11	.627
CD5	Frequently Asked Questions is provided on websites.	4.09	.619
CD6	The websites provide simple and easy online booking (travel package, attraction package) around Malaysia.	4.10	.618

Scales: 1=not at all influential, 2=slightly influential, 3= somewhat influential, 4=very influential, 5=extremely influential

5 Conclusion

Result from this study shows that interactive tourism websites attributes could influence tourist in selecting Malaysia as a destination. The tourism websites featuring Malaysia has encouraged international tourists to explore more about Malaysia when surfing tourism websites. This was largely due to the effectiveness of technology in assisting tourists, service providers, travel agencies and destinations. It is believed that higher usage of visual presentation, information content and communication by consumers from tourism websites will result in greater customer intention to use the websites, and choosing Malaysia as a main destination. A concerted effort, networking and collaboration among local tourism marketers in planning a powerful action plans will increase the number of international tourists to visit Malaysia. By knowing the attributes of interactive websites also would help the marketers to bring out a proper communication message and encourage the arrival potential international tourists.

6 About the authors

Zuliah Ab. Hamid has vast experience in the Tourism and Management industry for over 25 years. She has been living abroad for the past 15 years in countries such as France, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, and the United States. She has a Master Degree in Tourism Management and currently holds the position of senior lecturer at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus. The author has several winning innovation awards related to tourism services and products as well.

Nurul Izzati Md Khairuddin is currently a Lecturer at the School of Tourism and Hospitality, Imperia College Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. She graduated from Universiti

Teknologi MARA with a Master degree in Tourism Management. Her interest is on the marketing communications aspect especially in the social media field.

Mazlina Mahdzar and Nor Asmalina Mohd Anuar are currently working as a Senior Lecturer at the Tourism Management Department, Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam.

7 References

- Bai, B., Law, R., & Wen, I. (2008). The impact of website quality on customer satisfaction and purchase intentions: Evidence from Chinese online visitors. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(3), 391-402.
- Bastida, U., & Huan, T. C. (2014). Performance evaluation of tourism websites' information quality of four global destination brands: Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Taipei. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(2), 167-170.
- Beeton, S., Bowen, H. E., & Santos, C. A. (2006). State of knowledge: Mass media and its relationship to perceptions of quality. *Quality Tourism Experiences*, 25-37.
- Bieger, T. & Laesser, C. (2004). Information Source for Travel Decision: Towards A Source Process Model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42(4), 357-371.
- Buhalis, D. & O'Connor, (2000). Marketing the Competitive Destination of the Future. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 97-116.
- Castañeda, J. A., Frías, D. M., & Rodríguez, M. A. (2009). Antecedents of Internet acceptance and use as an information source by tourists. *Online Information Review*, 33(3), 548-567.
- Dina Loncaric, L. B. (2013). Importance of DMO Websites in Tourist. Marketing in a Dynamic Environment. *Virtual Reality*, 10, 197-206.
- Forrester Research (2014, July 28). The Star Online. Retrieved July 29, 2009 from <http://startechcentral.com/tech/story.asp?file=/2009/7/28/technology/20090728104243&sec=technology>.
- Gurău, C. (2008). Integrated online marketing communication: implementation and management. *Journal of Communication Management*, 12(22), 169-184.
- Gursoy, D. & Umbreit, W. T. (2004). Tourist Information Search Behavior: Cross Cultural Comparison of European Union Member States. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 23(1), 55-70.
- Hsiu & Li Liao. (2013). Literary Places, Tourism, and the Heritage Experience. *Tourism Research*, 28(2), 312-33.
- Hsu, C. H. C., Killion, L., Brown, G., Gross, M., & Huang (2008). Tourism marketing: An Asia-Pacific perspective. Milford: John Wiley & Sons Australia.
- Hunt, J. D. (2008). Image as a Factor in Tourism Development. *Journal of Travel Research*, 13(3): 1-7. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 3(1), 49-60.
- Kim, H. & Fesenmaier, D.R. (2007). The Persuasive Architecture of Tourism Web sites: The Effect on First Impressions. In: Marianna, S, L. Mich & J. Murphy (eds.) *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007. Proceedings of the International Conference in Ljubljana, Vienna, Springer*, 255-266.
- Klenosky, D. B & Gitelson, R. E. (2012). Travel Agents' Destination Recommendations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(3), 661-674.

- Koufaris, M. (2002). Applying the technology acceptance model and flow theory to online consumer behavior. *Information Systems Research*, 13(2), 205-223.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.
- Krebs, L. R. (2010). The effectiveness of the internet as a marketing tool in tourism. Unpublished. Doctoral dissertation, University of Waterloo.
- Law, R. & Chung, T., (2003). Website performance: Hong Kong hotels. FIU Hospitality
- Li, N & Zhang, P, (2011), Consumer Online Shopping Attitudes and Behavior: An Assessment of Research. *Eighth Americas Conference on Information Systems*, 38(5), 229-306.
- Liao, H. L., Liu, S. H., & Chen, C. H. (2011), Destination marketing for remote area using an experience-based tourism website, 2011 International Conference on Mechatronics and Applied Mechanics (ICMAM2011).
- Lončarić, D., Bašan, L., & Jurković, M. (2013). *Websites as Tool for Promotion of Health Tourism Offering in Croatian Specialty Hospitals and Health Resorts*. In 1st International Conference on Management, Marketing, Tourism, Retail, Finance and Computer Applications (MATREFC'13).
- McCarthy, E. J. (1964). Basic Marketing, IL: Richard D. Irwin.
- Momoh, A. A. (2010). The Design of an Interactive Website for Tourism. Science in Information Technology.
- Moutinho, L. (2008). Consumer behaviour in tourism. *European Journal of Marketing*, 21(10), 5-44.
- Nusair, K. K, & Kandampully, J. (2008). The antecedents of customer satisfaction with online travel services: a conceptual model. *European Business Review*, 20(1), 4-19
- O'Connor, P. & Frew, A. (2001). Expert perceptions on the future on hotel electronic distribution channels. In P. J. Sheldon, K. W. Wober, & D. R. Fesenmaier (Eds.), *Information and communication technologies in tourism 2001*. (pp. 346-357). New York: Springer Wien.
- Perdue, R (2001). Internet site evaluations: the influence of behavioral experience, existing images, and selected website characteristics. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 11(2/3), 21-37.
- Perdue, R. R. (2012). Internet site evaluations: the influence of behavioral experience, existing images, and selected website characteristics. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 11(2/3), 21–38.
- Prayag, G. (2009). Image, satisfaction and loyalty –The case of Cape Town. *Anatolia International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 19(2), 205-224.
- Pujani, P. F. (2014). Tour and Travel Website Beliefs in Influencing Users. *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance*
- Schlosser, A. E., T. B. White, (2006). Converting Web site visitors into buyers: How Web site investment increases consumer trusting beliefs and online purchase intentions. *Journal of Marketing* 70(2), 133-148.
- Seoho Urn, J. L. (1990). Attitude Determinants in Tourism Destination Choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17(3), 432-448.
- Stepchenkova, Svetlana, & Alastair M. Morrison. (2012). Russia's Destination Image among American Pleasure Travelers: Revisiting Echtner and Ritchie. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 548-60.

- Vogt, K. K. (2005). Destination Marketing Organization Websites (DMOs): Evaluation and Design What you need to know. *Web Advertising and Marketing*.
- Wang, L. A. (2012). Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: Implications for international marketing strategy. *Business Horizons*, 261–271.