

A TAM-Based Model of Technological Factors Affecting Use of E-Tourism

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ABSTRACT

In tourism, ICT provides new channels anywhere/anytime for tourism services that impacted how customers access and consume those services, hence the emergence of the concept of e-tourism. Internet can be used to attract customers, communicate with them, customize their required services, access international markets, and provide all types of touristic information through e-tourism platforms. The salient feature of this research is to identify the key technological factors that influence customers' acceptance and use of the services provided through e-tourism platforms. Other behavioral aspects related to the use of these services are treated as exogenous factors. The study constructed an e-tourism technology acceptance model (ETAM) concentrating only on technology-related factors. To assist in understanding how users will reflect in these four technological factors affecting the use of e-services, the model recognizes two moderating influential factors: trust and attitude. The model is augmented with exogenous factors as intervening factors related to customer's background.

KEYWORDS

Attitude, E-Tourism, Technological Factors, Technology Acceptance Model, Trust

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries and among the most promising economic resources worldwide (Alrashid, 2012). Tourism constitutes a group of services, activities, and industries (accommodation, entertainment sites, sports centers, transportation, shops, and restaurants) that contributes to tourists' traveling experiences (Pitoska, 2013). Sustainable tourism is a proven tool for the development of any country (World Bank, 2019), with a substantial impact on the economic sector that significantly contributes to the global economy and development. The direct contribution is estimated by one statistic at USD 2.57 trillion in 2017 (Statista, 2019).

Tourism benefits countries by creating new job opportunities for employment in the hospitality, food, and crafts sectors, and promoting the country's local products boosting the local industry (Bennett, 2014). Moreover, tourism facilitates injecting cash flows in local communities, as tourists need food, clothing, medical services, transportation, gifts, and souvenirs. Other advantages of the tourism sector include preserving historical sites and encouraging locals to maintain their culture and traditions (Bennett, 2014).

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Legenerz is a multilocation company in the Middle East that operated in the marketing and advertising industry. It specializes in conducting scientifically driven business processes, namely devising strategies for start-ups, branding, creative advertising, and data science practices using scientific methods to extract knowledge and insights from structured and unstructured data (www.Legenerz.com). Detailed interview was conducted with the founder of the company's branch in Amman, Jordan to obtain some of these insights (M. Al Dabbas, personal communication, November 15, 2019). In tourism industry, services are provided by four main parties; accommodations providers (hotels, motels...etc.), transportation providers (car rental agencies), experience providers (like paragliding or mountain climbing experiences providers) and travel agencies (who make the trip booking and might integrate services by the above mentioned to provide full tourism packages) (M. Al Dabbas, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

Tourism agencies use the Internet for communicating with customers, attracting prospects, customizing services, accessing international markets, providing tourism information and more (Zaidan, 2016). Many tourism agencies worldwide have digitized their tourism services using e-tourism platforms (websites/mobile) with unique multimedia and interactive features that create product trial-like experiences (Ku & Chen, 2015). To offer high-quality e-tourism services, governments and travel organizations must prepare proper infrastructure (Hardware, software, and network). Furthermore, alliances with relevant intermediaries (flight agencies, local transportation agencies, hotels/accommodations, restaurants...etc.) that support full integrated e-tourism services must be considered (Ku & Chen, 2015).

For tourism practitioners to remain competitive and sustain their businesses, they should adapt to the global flow and digitize their services, following a planned strategy to implement the best practices of e-tourism. Tourism agencies must understand their customers (needs, demand, culture ...etc.) to identify the factors that impact their behavioral intention and accommodate them on their websites (Shafiee et al., 2016).

This study keeps the basic structure of the original TAM but only concentrating on core technological factors that characterizes e-tourism services acceptance and satisfaction. Other behavioral factors are grouped together and treated as intervening variables.

In the ensuing discussions, the paper first provides review of literature and detailed systematic review research methodology. Then the paper has the main section on building the model of this research. Finally, the last section contains conclusions, recommendation, and future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

E-tourism refers to the use of Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT) in tourism. This terminology describes the dependence of the tourism industry, tourism destinations, and tourists on applications of ICT to transform massive amounts of data to value propositions, through integrating and sharing real-time data, using sophisticated analytics, modeling and visualization to make functional decisions (Gretzel et al., 2015). Other authors state that e-tourism reflects using e-business in travel by digitizing of the value chain and transactions in tourism (hospitality, travel, catering and all tourism-related industries), where there is a set of internet standards and protocols that facilitate publishing information in new formats like text, images, videos, flyers, catalogs, Infographics, and even promotional teasers (Shafiee et al., 2016; Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2017).

Importance of E-Tourism

Providing the e-tourism services online helps firms reduce administrative and communication costs, supports better integration with suppliers and vendors, provides better information management, better market understanding, and expanding geographical coverage (Pitoska, 2013; Dargah & Golrokhsari, 2012). On the other hand, e-tourism has some disadvantages. Many customers prefer

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