

Online Travel Agencies in China: The Impact of Online Reviews, Trust, Perceived Risk, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Enjoyment on Purchase Intention

ตัวแทนท่องเที่ยวออนไลน์ของประเทศจีน: ผลกระทบของการรีวิวออนไลน์
ความน่าเชื่อถือ การรับรู้ความเสี่ยง การรับรู้ความเรียบง่ายในการใช้งาน
การรับรู้ผลประโยชน์ และการรับรู้ความเพลิดเพลิน ที่มีต่อเจตนา
การจองซื้อห้องพักโรงแรมออนไลน์

Hanxin Zhang¹

Rosechongporn Komolsevin²

Ratanasuda Punnahitanond³

Pacharaporn Kesaparakorn⁴

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to better understand online consumer behavior by analyzing consumers' motivations and intentions leading to the purchase of hotel rooms through online travel agency (OTA). In particular, this paper seeks to demonstrate the impact levels of the following independent variables: electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (in the form of online reviews, or ORs), perceived risk (PR), trust (TR), perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), and perceived enjoyment (PE), on purchase intention (PI) or hotel room booking as the dependent variable. Quantitative research methods and Structural Equation Modeling were applied in order to construct a conceptual model into which survey data collected from 334 respondents in China were input. The results indicated that all of the independent variables could have significant impacts

¹ Ph.D. Candidate, School of Communication Arts, Bangkok University, E-mail: hanxin.zhan@bumail.net

² Graduate School, Bangkok University, E-mail: rosechongporn.k@bu.ac.th

³ School of Communication Arts, Bangkok University, E-mail: ratanasuda.p@bu.ac.th

⁴ School of Communication Arts, Bangkok University, E-mail: pacharaporn.i@bu.ac.th

on online travel agency customers' purchase intentions, and that consumers' attitudes and perceptions were critical factors affecting the motivation, which in turn affected these tourists' decision-making towards online hotel booking transactions.

Keywords: *Online Review, Perceived Risk, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Enjoyment*

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทำความเข้าใจกับพฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคออนไลน์ด้วยการวิเคราะห์แรงจูงใจและเจตนาที่ผลักดันให้ผู้บริโภคจองโรงแรมผ่านบริษัทตัวแทนท่องเที่ยวออนไลน์ (OTAs) งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้พิสูจน์ผลกระทบของตัวแปรอิสระดังต่อไปนี้ คือ: การบอกปากต่อปากทางอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ (eWOM) (ในรูปแบบการรีวิวออนไลน์หรือ ORs) การรับรู้ความเสี่ยง (PR) ความน่าเชื่อถือ (TR) การรับรู้ความเรียบง่ายในการใช้งาน (PEOU) การรับรู้ผลประโยชน์ (PU) และการรับรู้ความเพลิดเพลิน (PE) ที่มีต่อตัวแปรตามคือเจตนาการจองซื้อโรงแรมออนไลน์ (PI) ทั้งนี้ ผู้วิจัยสร้างกรอบแนวคิดและใช้กระบวนการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณและโมดูลสมการโครงสร้างและนำเข้าสู่ข้อมูลที่สำรวจจากผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม จำนวน 334 ราย ในประเทศจีน ผลการวิเคราะห์แสดงว่าตัวแปรอิสระทุกตัวมีผลกระทบต่อเจตนาการจองซื้อโรงแรมของผู้บริโภคจากตัวแทนท่องเที่ยวออนไลน์ โดยทัศนคติและการรับรู้ของผู้บริโภคเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่มีผลกระทบต่อแรงจูงใจในการจองโรงแรมออนไลน์ ซึ่งส่งผลกระทบต่อการตัดสินใจจองซื้อโรงแรมออนไลน์ของผู้บริโภค

คำสำคัญ: *รีวิวออนไลน์ การรับรู้ความเสี่ยง การรับรู้ความเรียบง่ายในการใช้งาน การรับรู้ผลประโยชน์ การรับรู้ความเพลิดเพลิน*

Introduction

In July 2020, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism had been one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, and that it remains an essential driver of economic growth and development. In terms of the proportion to global tourism revenue, World Tourism Cities Federation reported in 2019 that China's total tourism revenue has been ranked second since 2012. The vigorous growth of tourism in recent years has led to the development of many related industries, and has promoted the integration of the Internet industry with the hotel industry. TrustData also indicated in 2019 that, in the second quarter of 2018, more than 91.09 million active users purchased

hotel rooms online every month. In recent years, the number of Chinese citizens booking hotel accommodation via mobile terminals has grown substantially. Based on the "China Tourism Consumption Big Data Report 2018" released by the National Institute of Tourism, the value of domestic tourists reached about 5.54 billion, a growth of 10.76% in comparison to the same period last year. Moreover, the "2018 China Online Travel Industry Research Report" released by iResearch in 2019 pointed out that the online travel market transaction volume in 2018 would exceed 1.48 trillion yuan, a growth of 26.30% in comparison to 1.17 trillion yuan in 2017. Therefore, this research aims primarily to focus on the exploration of Chinese tourism and hotel market.

The Internet, as an integrated platform for business, marketing, sales, and customer engagement, has changed the relationship among hotel guests, customers, owners and relevant third parties (Green & Lomanno, 2012). In terms of participation, interaction and data-sharing, the degree of communication among travel agency websites and their users has advanced significantly (Gabbianelli & Pencarelli, 2020). Consumers can socially interact with one another, exchange product-related information, and make informed purchase decisions via computer-mediated conversations (Blazevic et al., 2013).

The Internet has become the primary information source for travel planning, and online travel agencies (OTAs) dominate online information dissemination and reservation channels in the travel market (Xiang, Magnini, & Fesenmaier, 2015). OTAs have been developing continuously and taking over much of the direct selling market in the tourism sector, becoming powerful players (Stangl, Inversini, & Schegg, 2016). Further, with their strategies of agglomeration, intelligence, standardization and internationalization, OTAs have risen to a dominant position in most of the world's tourism markets (Drozdowska, Faron, & Gruszka, 2019). In the context of the shared economy in China, the non-standard accommodation market has been on the ascent; this trend presents both opportunities and challenges for online travel agencies.

The quality of online hotel information content strongly influences online transactions; however, many recent studies on customers' level of trust in such information have focused on e-commerce between trading partners, while scant attention has been paid to the sense of faith

and privacy among customers in their customer journey towards placing a hotel reservation. While prior research has examined the impact of trust and value on individuals' intentions to book hotel rooms, there is a lack of research on the effects of online reviews and customer's trust on these consumers' purchase intentions (Kim, Kim, & Park, 2017). In addition, in the canon of knowledge on Chinese e-commerce, there exist few studies on customers' purchasing decisions, and fewer studies concerning the customer's desire to purchase items from the same online vendor. Therefore, to address this critical gap in the literature, this paper focuses on consumer perception and travel agency website characteristics.

The process of online shopping exists in an environment affected by information asymmetry. Where there is an incomplete symmetry of information, consumers perceive a certain risk when considering whether to purchase goods. Nowadays, many online customers consult browsing and purchase-related reviews issued by previous customers in their efforts to collect more effective information and reduce the risk of purchase decisions; access to reviews, particularly when most of them are positive, engenders a sense of trust in the first-time customer.

Academic researchers have investigated the impact of online transaction evaluation on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and on related mechanisms. However, few articles concerning the impact of purchasing decisions have combined online communication with consumer perception. In addition, this paper will divide online reviews into three dimensions (quality (QA), valence (VA), and volume (VO)) as the process of online reviews dissemination, and

will consider the influence of each dimension on perceived risk (PR) and trust (TR) towards OTAs, and take PR and TR as mediating variables in its exploration of the relationship between online reviews (ORs), PR and TR towards OTAs, and purchase intention (PI). Further, this paper additionally explores the psychology of consumers, namely the variables of perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived enjoyment (PE).

Objectives of Study

1. To investigate the relationship between customers' evaluation of eWOM in the form of online reviews, psychological factors, website characteristics and purchasing behavior by combining the various perspectives which have been utilized in the process of consumer decision making.

2. To grow an integrated model to explain the influence of online review and psychological factors on customer purchasing behavior in hotel bookings through an online travel agency.

Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

The term eWOM can be defined as the sharing of ideas and experiences concerning products or services by customers within the medium of the Internet (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013). It generally assumes the form of informal communication among online consumers about business or product characteristics. Generally, eWOM can be spread via Internet communication channels such as social media, online travel agencies, e-mail, SNS communities, and online comment websites. It has proven to be more effective than traditional media-based advertising, including magazines, television,

radio and newspapers (Martinez-Costa, Pladevall Viladecans, Mas-Machuca, & Marimon, 2018).

Basically, eWOM consists of diverse media forms and website types, of which the most accessible are online reviews and ratings. Market research conducted by Invesp showed that 90% of consumers read online reviews and that 88% of them trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations (Saleh, 2015). In addition, a survey conducted by eMarketer showed that 78% of customers believe that their decisions are influenced by online reviews (eMarketer, 2013).

According to a Nielsen's survey (cited by McKenzie & Adams, 2018), 63% of tourists visiting online vendors would conduct their own background research before purchasing a product or service online. Among the survey respondents based in the United States, almost half (48%) said they had posted online reviews. In China, a survey conducted by the China Internet Network Information Center in 2010 revealed that 82.10% of the internet users in the sample said they read online reviews, while 41.10% would read online reviews before buying each product. Furthermore, eWOM seems to be particularly crucial for experience products, because the quality of hotels cannot be judged easily prior to consumption (Casaló, Flavián, Guinalíu, & Ekinci, 2015). This is because Chinese consumers have strong conformity behavior and psychology of following. When faced with new things, their behavioral decisions are susceptible to the speech or behavior of others.

Online reviews provided by consumers who have previous purchase experience have become the primary source of information for consumers and marketers in relation to product

quality. Online reviews constitute a valuable eWOM channel and a strong influencing factor affecting the consumer decision-making process and attendant product sales (De Pelsmacker, Van Tilburg, & Holthof, 2018). In addition, exposure to online reviews influences hotel customers' online hotel booking intention (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Most people generally read online reviews before making a reservation, and the results of online purchases conducted by previous customers will affect their booking decisions (Leeraphong & Mardjo, 2013). Kim, Ferrin, and Rao (2008) demonstrated that trust and perceived risk felt among Internet consumers strongly influence their PI.

Davis (1985) proposed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in his doctoral dissertation. The model posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, as two particular beliefs, strongly affect computer acceptance behavior and determine the willingness of users to adopt information systems. Since then, TAM has received an extensive empirical support (Chiemek, Ewiewpaefe, & Chete, 2006; Kesharwani & Bisht, 2012; Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2007). In e-commerce, customers have the same characteristics as

those browsing in an analog environment; the key difference is that they can shop online by using commodity search engines. Therefore, the TAM can be used to predict the user's behavior in terms of accepting new technology, and has therefore been employed in studies on online consumers' purchase behaviors. With the ever-increasing popularity of network technology, the TAM has played an important role in studies of the online shopping environment. This is due to the fact that online consumers possess general consumer characteristics, as well as computer and network user characteristics.

The TAM has undergone vast development, and the extended TAM is adopted in this study to examine online customers' willingness to book hotels via online travel agency (OTA) platforms. In this enhanced TAM, based on the results of previous studies, online review (OR), trust (TR), perceived risk (PR) and perceived enjoyment (PE) are taken as independent variables.

The model used in this study takes into consideration a number of factors impacting customers' intention to use OTAs for making hotel room reservations. The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1:

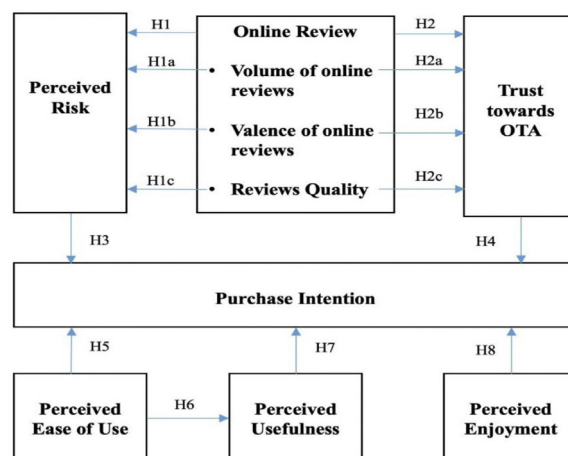


Figure 1 Concep

Online reviews play a significant role in eWOM as they are the opinions of real customers, not merely advertisements. A review can have an importance influence on a person's purchasing decisions (Togas, Kindangen, & Tumbuan, 2019). In the process of searching for hotel accommodation online, customers will purposefully search for comment information, so as to access more realistic and detailed information on relevant goods and services, and assess the risk of making a reservation with a particular provider. Risk and uncertainty are therefore the main intermediary factors affecting the customer's level of trust. Smith (2002) proposed that comments that can fully express consumers' subjective wishes and shopping experiences will reduce consumers' perceived risks and directly affect the formation of trust. This study also takes into account the quality (QA), valence (VA) and volume (VO) of online reviews. VO refers to the number of online reviews, i.e. about a hotel in a given period; and, VA refers to the degree of positivity (rating) of these reviews (Blal & Sturman, 2014).

Consumers' buying behavior is significantly affected by previous, especially positive, ratings by other users (Moe & Trusov, 2011): the valence of consumer reviews shares a positive relationship with product sales (Xie, Zhang, & Zhang, 2014). High-quality online comments are characterized by relevance, timeliness, accuracy, and comprehensiveness; they are more persuasive and often contain more product-related content or understandable and reliable argumentation (Lee & Shin, 2014). People may treat the number of reviews as an indicator of the product's popularity which will affect their willingness to buy a product (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008).

To conclude, online reviews can help customers reduce the risk of booking unsatisfactory accommodation, and reduce the level of distrust among potential customers about products, thus building confidence in their shopping choices. Based on the preceding discussion of the impact of online reviews on customers' purchase intention (PI), the following hypotheses and sub-hypotheses guiding this study are presented:

H1: Evaluation of the online reviews (ORs) of online travel agencies (OTAs) has a significant impact on customers' perceived risk (PR):

H1.1: There is a significant negative association between volume of online reviews (VO) and perceived risk (PR).

H1.2: There is a significant negative association between valence of online reviews (VA) and perceived risk (PR).

H1.3: There is a significant negative association between quality of online reviews (QA) and perceived risk (PR).

H2: Evaluation of the online reviews (ORs) of online travel agencies (OTAs) has a significant impact on customers' trust (TR) towards the OTAs:

H2.1: There is a significant positive association between volume of online reviews (VO) and trust (TR).

H2.2: There is a significant negative association between valence of online reviews (VA) and trust (TR).

H2.3: There is a significant negative association between quality of online reviews (QA) and trust (TR).

Bauer (1960) introduced the concept of perceived risk to the field of marketing. He claimed that any purchase behavior by

consumers might not ascertain the expected results, and that some results may leave consumers feeling dissatisfied. Therefore, perceived risk can be considered a function of the uncertainty over the potential outcomes of the behavior, and the possible unpleasantness of these outcomes. The customer's perception of risk in e-commerce is generally higher than that in offline business (Lee & Tan, 2003). Forsythe and Shi (2003) defined perceived risk in Internet shopping as "the subjectively determined expectation of loss by an internet shopper in contemplating a particular online purchase."

In exploring the field of online shopping, Masoud (2013) and Dai, Forsythe, and Kwon (2014) claimed that perceived risk affects online consumers' purchase decisions to varying degrees. Consumers' purchase intentions are influenced by perceived risk, and their purchasing decisions are determined by the level of risk they feel. If consumers cannot reduce perceived risk in some ways (such as searching for evaluation information, etc.), they are likely to purchase less, or even withdraw from the shopping process altogether. Perceived risk has a significantly negative effect on consumers' intention or behavior (Pavlou, 2003). Nepomuceno, Laroche, and Richard (2014) reported that consumers will find ways to reduce their perceived risk to a large extent, such as investigating past shopping experiences and brand image. In view of these assumptions, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Perceived risk (PR) is negatively associated with purchase intention (PI).

Trust is the intermediary between consumers' purchase intention and word-

of-mouth communication. It not only affects consumers' purchase decisions, but is also affected by online reviews. Kim, Chung, and Lee (2011) put forward that online consumers place much credulity in online reviews on e-commerce websites, often making purchasing decisions solely on the basis of these reviews. If there is no trust as a prerequisite, customers will avoid shopping online (Kim, Zhao, & Yang, 2008). Therefore, trust plays a relevant role in online transactions (Kim et al., 2011; Wu & Chang, 2005). In the tourism context, trust has also been proved to be one of the most relevant variables that makes e-business successful in the travel industry and the accommodation industry (specifically hotels and resorts) (Fam, Foscht, & Collins, 2004). The aforesaid assumptions lead to a fourth hypothesis:

H4: Among online customers visiting OTA websites in the search for hotel accommodation, trust (TR) is positively associated with purchase intention (PI).

Drawing on the theory of rational behavior, the self-efficacy theory, expectation theory, input-output theory, and change adoption, Fred Davis modified his original TAM model and produced a revised model suitable for information technology research (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). He posited that two particular beliefs – perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use – are of primary relevance for computer acceptance behaviors. These two perceptual beliefs determine the user's intention to adopt a particular information system.

As mentioned, the TAM has received an extensively empirical support throughout its development (Chiemeké et al., 2006; Kesharwani & Bisht, 2012; Lee, et al., 2007). This article

uses the extended TAM model to study the customer's intention to book accommodation via an OTA, and, in developing a user acceptance model, combined perceived enjoyment and perceived interactivity with traditional adoption theory. Moreover, online experience and perceived online enjoyment are the antecedents of an online purchase (Bedi, Kaur, & Lal, 2017).

The modified TAM model employed in this study includes OR, TR, PE and PR as independent variables, making the research results more comprehensive and persuasive. Online consumers not only possess general consumer characteristics, but also computer and network-specific user characteristics. Therefore, a further of four hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is positively associated with purchase intention (PI).

H6: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is positively associated with perceived usefulness (PU).

H7: Perceived usefulness (PU) is positively associated with purchase intention (PI).

H8: Perceived enjoyment (PE) is positively associated with purchase intention (PI).

Methodology

The data presented in this paper were sourced from an online survey prepared and disseminated using the professional survey platform www.wjx.cn. This survey was conducted in April, 2020. The quantitative approach was applied in order to examine the relations between motivational factors and customers' purchase intention. A total of 438 people consented to participate in this study, of which 334 responses were considered valid (76.20%). The participants are Chinese customers aged 21

to 50 years old, who made hotel reservations using OTAs during the previous calendar year. Using the G*Power tool, it was determined that a minimum of 117 subjects is required to achieve a large effect size. Thus, the sample size (N=334 subjects) in this study is considered adequate. The proportion of men and women is reasonably balanced, and most of them were married at the time of sampling (75.80%).

Quantitative data compiled from the disseminated questionnaires were analyzed using a statistical program and the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software package. Using univariate skewness and multivariate kurtosis for testing the sample normality, it was found that all items had a normal distribution. The 5-point Likert scale was employed, with intervals ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted during the first stage of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and composite reliability and average variance extracted were used to test the model for convergent validity. SEM was applied in order to build and analyze statistical models of relationships among the latent variables and manifest variables.

Research Findings

According to the research findings, the proportion of males and females was quite balanced, with 194 males (58.08%) and 140 females (41.92%). The age of the target population in this study are between 21 and 50 years. Most respondents were between 31 and 40 years old, and most of them were married (75.75%). Also, more than half of the respondents bought hotel room(s) 1 to 2 times a year (51.80%), the average browsing time was about 16 to 30 minutes, and the purchase

price of each room was mainly between 501 and 1000 Yuan (33.53%). When asked about the reasons why they used the particular website they chose, the highest number of them indicated it was due to a large number of hotels are available for reservation (61.68%).

The initial measurement model was examined by reliability analysis and validity analysis. Cronbach's Alpha test was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the constructs, each of which was also tested for convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha of all scales is above 0.70, indicating the good reliability of the scale. The KMO value is 0.97, and the Bartley sphere test result is significant, indicating good structural validity and satisfying the conditions of factor analysis.

In the factor analysis, a total of 9 factors were obtained. After the varimax rotation, it was found that with each of the items there is a large difference in factor loading; the cross factor phenomenon was not detected. Thus,

the scale has discrimination validity. In addition, the measurement model has good convergence validity in general. The standardized factor coincidence of all measurement items is >0.60 , reaching the detection value, which indicates that each measurement item has strong explanatory power to the latent variable.

According to the results of the validity test, the factor loading of each item in the measurement model satisfies the validity standard. Therefore, the whole structural equation model was constructed based on the measurement model. As detailed earlier, the model incorporates the 9 variables: PE, PEOU, PI, PR, PU, QA, TR, VO, and VA. A total of 33 observation variables have been used to indirectly measure these 9 variables. Measuring the consistency between the hypothetical model and observed data is the main purpose of this model evaluation. As shown in Table 1, the degree of fit of the model is tested using the six indexes detailed below.

Table 1 Model fitting results

Goodness of fit indices	Threshold	Model results	Conclusion
Chi-square(X^2)	Non-significant	0.34	√
Normed Chi-square(CMIN/DF)	<5.00	1.13	√
RMSEA	<0.08	0.02	√
GFI	>0.80	0.99	√
CFI	>0.90	1.00	√
TLI	>0.90	1.00	√

From the fitting results, it can be seen that the Chi-square, CMIN/DF, RMSEA, GFI, CFI and TLI values all indicate a good level of fitting, indicating that the model constructed in this study is well-adapted and satisfies the

requirements of an empirical market research-related survey.

According to the AMOS output (Table 2), the normalized coefficients of the 8-path hypothesis relationships in the theoretical

model established by the research institute are significant, an indication that the path relationships in the theoretical model established have been verified. In order to better reflect the test results of theoretical

models and hypotheses in this study, and to more intuitively show the path coefficient and significance level between each latent variable, the test results are presented in the model path diagram shown in Figure 2.

Table 2 Path significance test

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P.	Standardized path coefficient
H1	PR <--- OR	-1.052	0.043	-24.388	<0.001	-0.937
H1a	PR <--- VO	-0.36	0.043	-8.327	<0.001	-0.373
H1b	PR <--- VA	-0.286	0.038	-7.438	<0.001	-0.288
H1c	PR <--- QA	-0.3	0.044	-6.867	<0.001	-0.306
H2	TR <--- OR	1.089	0.053	20.518	<0.001	0.853
H2a	TR <--- VO	0.449	0.061	7.389	<0.001	0.409
H2b	TR <--- VA	0.347	0.054	6.428	<0.001	0.308
H2c	TR <--- QA	0.175	0.061	2.839	0.005	0.156
H3	PI <--- PR	-0.153	0.036	-4.213	<0.001	-0.196
H4	PI <--- TR	0.26	0.032	8.168	<0.001	0.38
H5	PI <--- PEOU	0.184	0.044	4.143	<0.001	0.232
H6	PU <--- PEOU	0.821	0.035	23.514	<0.001	0.79
H7	PI <--- PU	0.275	0.043	6.418	<0.001	0.36
H8	PI <--- PE	0.057	0.025	2.338	0.019	0.08

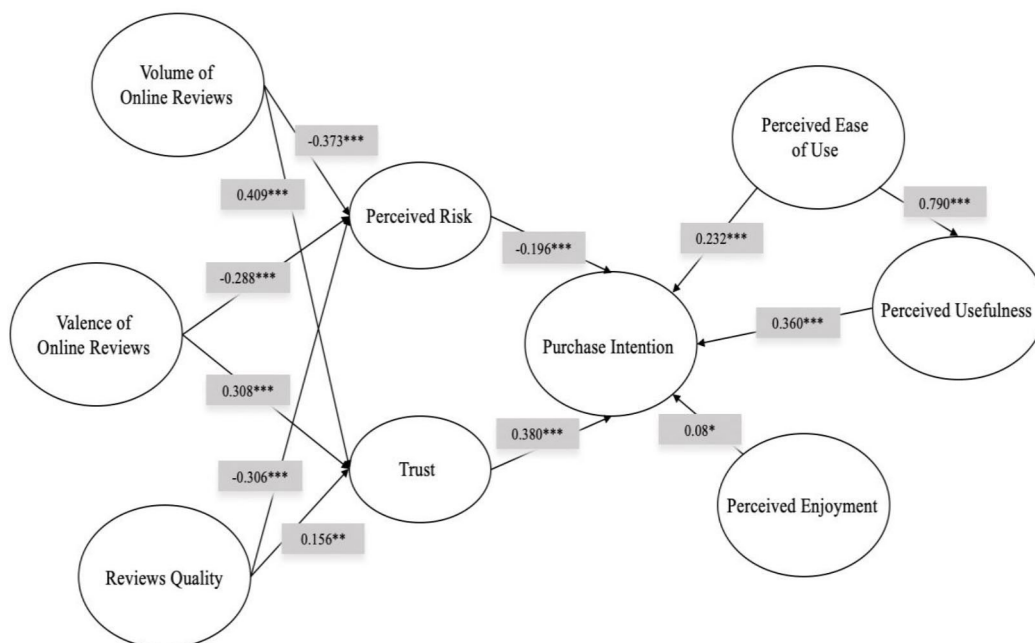


Figure 2 Structural model

The structural model summarized the testing result of all hypotheses. Online reviews and its three dimensions (volume, valence, and quality of online reviews) had a significant negative impact on customers' perceived risks, and had a significant positive impact on customers' trust. Under the condition of perceived risk as the dependent variable, the volume of online reviews ($\beta = -0.373$) had a stronger impact than valence ($\beta = -0.288$) and quality ($\beta = -0.306$) of online reviews.

Similarly, under the condition of trust as the dependent variable, the influence intensity of the quality of online reviews ($\beta = 0.156$) is the lowest among the three dimensions. Moreover, both trust and perceived risk as mediating variables had a significant impact on purchase intention, in which perceived risk ($\beta = -0.196$) has a negative effect and trust ($\beta = 0.380$) has a positive effect. Therefore, trust has a greater impact on purchase intention. Furthermore, perceived ease of use had a significant positive impact on perceived usefulness and purchase intention, with the standardized path coefficient of 0.79 and 0.232 respectively. Both of perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment had significant positive effects on purchase intention, with standardized path coefficient of 0.36 and 0.08 respectively. Further, perceived usefulness had a higher impact on purchase intention.

Discussion and Conclusion

The hospitality industry has benefitted greatly from the rapid developments in information and communication technology, together with the popularization of Internet usage during the past three decades (Wu & Chang, 2005). The primary purpose of this study is to explore the influence of online reviews, trust, perceived risk,

perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived enjoyment on the hotel accommodation purchase intention among customers approaching online travel agencies. Data for a sample of a satisfactory size were collected and analyzed in an effort to determine the mutual influences and relationships among these variables.

The results confirmed the significance of the influence of online reviews, that positive and negative trust influences customers' purchase intention to reserve hotel online. The findings also indicated that perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness of online reservation positively and directly influence purchase intention, while perceived risk exerted a negative impact.

Online reviews have become a significant source of information affecting tourists' decision-making (Sparks, Perkins, & Buckley, 2013) by enabling them to make more informed evaluations of hotels (Browning, So, & Sparks, 2013). The impact of online reviews on consumer outcomes, such as their trust in the provider and intention to book hotel accommodation (Sparks & Browning, 2011) and future consideration of the same hotel (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009), has been demonstrated in several previous studies. For example, Torres, Singh, and Robertson-Ring (2015) and Ye, Law, and Gu (2009) reported that a greater number of reviews leads to more online hotel reservations. Sparks and Browning (2011) argued that the overall valence of a set of hotel comments affects trust and therefore purchase intention. In addition, Awad and Ragowsky (2008) also demonstrated that the quality of eWOM significantly affects the formation of online trust. From the above analysis and the model survey results, it can be concluded that online reviews

have a positive impact on consumer trust in terms of the three dimensions of online review (quality (QA), valence (VA), and volume (VO)).

Consumers' trust and perceived risk play an intermediary role between online reviews and purchase intention. If online shopping consumers have trust in the products or services, they will approve and accept the products or services, and this will engender a greater purchase intention among consumers. Making a decision to purchase a product involves risk, prompting some customers to depend on eWOM to guide their choice.

Perceived risk plays an important role in online purchasing (Bhatnagar & Ghose, 2004), especially in the category of experiential products like hotels. According to Ye et al. (2009), as the volume of eWOM increases, this source of information becomes a more trustworthy indicator of hotel performance, which reduces the uncertainty related to hotel services, which in turn translates into more online hotel bookings. As demonstrated in a study by Gabbianelli and Pencarelli (2020), as the number of reviews online increases, the perceived risk associated with the provider decreases.

The results of this research showed a successful application of technology acceptance model, which was put forward by Davis et al. (1989) to explain system adoption regarding users' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the system, to investigate hotel customers' acceptance of OTA website in the process of making reservations. The results of this study are also a testimony to the possibility of using the modified TAM for investigating hotel customers' acceptance of OTA websites.

Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa (2004) noted that the user-friendliness of web pages is a strong determiner of retention of users during the customer journey: only when customers feel that the website is easy to use will they feel inclined into utilizing it. The findings of this study also indicated that perceived ease of use has a significantly positive impact on purchase intention and perceived usefulness, lending support to the results of similar studies, which showed that website characteristics strongly influence online customers' purchase intention (Agag & El-Masry, 2016).

Online purchase intentions are also strongly influenced by perceived enjoyment and other attitudes towards online shopping. As mentioned, online experience and perceived online enjoyment are the antecedents of the customer making an online purchase (Bedi et al., 2017). It has been demonstrated in a number of previous studies that perceived enjoyment has a significantly positive effect on customer behavioral intentions (Van der Heijden, 2003).

The consequences of this study directly contributed to managerial and theoretical implications of online communication, online customer behavior, and website characteristics in the hospitality market. In particular, the research model of this paper is more effective for China, where the hotel industry and tourism industry are in the thawing period. Research on "2020 Outlook for the Recovery of Hospitality and Tourism Industries in China after COVID-19 Pandemic" was published by iResearch in April, 2020. The resumption of work in all regions has been basically completed, and online hotel reservations are recovering. Further, after the vaccine is in effect or after an effective

preventive measure is initiated, the tourism and hospitality industry will surely be prosperous again due to its enormous potential.

Suggestion

This study has investigated the influence of online reviews on the psychological mechanisms which precede and influence consumers' purchase intention, specifically Chinese online users who have visited online travel agency platforms. The findings shed light on the strong influence of online reviews and web characteristics on online purchase intention.

The results of this study have practical significance for marketers and managers to design strategic plans and implementation tools to improve the performance of online hotel reservations. Online travel agencies need to realize the importance of establishing close and lasting relationships with customers, and constantly improve customer experience to maintain competitiveness. For example, hotel managers may design promotion strategies based on trust factors, such as inviting hotel connoisseurs to write experiences or guiding customers to share positive experiences on the website. Hoteliers may use special software, such as "intelligent" monitoring tools, to capture hotel reviews for online reputation and comment management. Briefly, hoteliers need to invest in customer relationship management to create and improve positive eWOM.

Perceived risk was found to act as an inhibitor in the process of online reservation, and lack of trust was the main reason why consumers do not shop online. To attract consumers to participate in online shopping, hotel suppliers should increase consumers' trust, such as

publishing privacy policies, interacting with customers, promoting their excellent reputation, or providing guarantees. Also, hotel operators must also pay attention to the attributes of a website, including well-designed, easy to navigate, and high interaction efficiency. Further, marketers should also emphasize the fun of online shopping during the hotel search and purchasing process to create a positive shopping experience for consumers. Generally speaking, sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism domain comes from higher service standards and continuous customer care.

In order to verify its validity as well as obtain further insights into the psychological processes which affect the conversion rate (proportion of online visitors making purchase decisions), the research model employed in this study should be tested with different tourism products. Another means of widening the experimental field is to investigate the similar phenomena in different countries, from which cross-cultural differences may be determined. Other external factors such as brand and platform reputation/recognition should be taken into account in more detailed and comprehensive future studies. Another future research line is to include other behavioral and also economic variables, such as consumer heterogeneity, consumer personality traits, product price, and user experiences with the Internet, as well as social demographic characteristics. Future studies might entail a cross-cultural comparison between hotels of different countries, or a study on integrating organic communication with that of third parties, as well as new approaches for eWOM-based marketing strategies.

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