

**THE EFFECTS OF PERCEPTION TOWARDS
TRAVEL BLOGS' CONTENT ON THE
BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO VISIT A
TOURIST DESTINATION**

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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

2016

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

BORANG PENGESAHAN TESIS

JUDUL KAJIAN: THE EFFECTS OF PERCEPTION TOWARDS TRAVEL BLOGS' CONTENT ON THE BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO VISIT A TOURIST DESTINATION

IJAZAH: MASTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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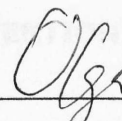
**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER IN BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION**

**FACULTY OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS
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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH 2016**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, except for the equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Stephen Laison Sondoh Jr, without his guidance and help I would never be able to complete my dissertation. I respect his sincerity for giving me the knowledge and not forgetting his patient to supervise me. I would also express my gratitude to all the lectures in University Malaysia Sabah for their knowledge and support in completing my dissertation.

Not to be forgotten my parents, which is my biggest supporters Nasib Daranpin and Piansu Giong which always, encourage and being so supportive in everything I do. Without their prayers I would not be able to be this far. I would like to thank them for their love and support. To my siblings Clive Nasib, Hubner Nasib, Rizwill Nasib, Marvin Nasib, Del Nasib and to my only sister Evagil Nasib I would like to express my gratitude for their support and I am grateful for their constant prayer, love and encouragements and with this I been so motivated to achieve my goal to obtain my Master in Business Administration.

To my awesome joyful friend Dymphna Edwin Gustin, she was the one to be with me in ups and down facing the challenges when we decided to take MBA. I would like to thank her sincerely for always be there to support me and always be there whenever I need her.

Not to be forgotten my special thanks and grateful goes to Neil Thompson A'saang for his love, support and always he's always there to motivate me to complete my Master in Business Administration. Finally I would like to express my appreciation to all my friends who had lend me their hands throughout my journey in UMS. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT


The purpose of this study is to examine whether the perception on travel blogs have effect on the perceived enjoyment and the intention to visit a destination among the Sabahan tourists. This study had been analyzing the relationship between the perception towards travel blogs and perceived enjoyment, perception towards travel blogs and intention to visit, the mediator effect of perceived enjoyment on the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variable has been explored. This study has identified the perception towards travel blogs, which consist of novelty, reliability, understandability and trustworthiness. The participants for this study are those did use travel blogs before this and the data were collected at Kota Kinabalu International Airport. Data from the survey were used for the statistical analysis. SmartPLS (Partial Least Square) version 2.0 was used to test the hypothesis. The results shows that perception related to novelty and understandability has a significant relationship with perceived enjoyment. Meanwhile reliability and trustworthiness has no relationship with perceived enjoyment. The results show that eh perceived enjoyment mediates the relationship between novelty and understandability with intention to visit. The findings of this study suggest that novelty and understandability is important in forming the perceived enjoyment and direct effect with the intention to visit a destination for future research other factors for the perception towards travel blogs should be examined.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji sama ada persepsi di blog perjalanan berkuat kuasa pada kenikmatan yang dilihat dan niat untuk melawat destinasi di kalangan pelancong dari Sabah. Kajian ini telah menganalisis hubungan antara persepsi terhadap blog perjalanan dan kenikmatan yang dilihat, persepsi terhadap blog perjalanan dan niat untuk melawat, kesan pengantara keseronokan dilihat pada hubungan antara pembolehubah eksogen dan endogen telah diterokai. Kajian ini telah mengenal pasti persepsi terhadap blog perjalanan, yang terdiri daripada sesuatu yang baru, kebolehpercayaan, dan kepercayaan. Para peserta untuk kajian ini adalah mereka lakukan blog penggunaan perjalanan sebelum ini dan data telah dikumpulkan di Lapangan Terbang Antarabangsa Kota Kinabalu. Data daripada kajian yang telah digunakan untuk analisis statistik. SmartPLS (Partial Least Square) versi 2.0 telah digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa persepsi yang berkaitan dengan sesuatu yang baru dan understandability mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan kenikmatan yang dirasakan. Sementara itu kebolehpercayaan dan amanah tidak mempunyai hubungan dengan kenikmatan yang dirasakan. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa kenikmatan eh dilihat pengantara hubungan antara sesuatu yang baru dan understandability dengan niat untuk melawat. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa sesuatu yang baru dan understandability adalah penting dalam membentuk kenikmatan yang dilihat dan kesan langsung dengan niat untuk melawat destinasi untuk kajian akan datang faktor-faktor lain untuk persepsi terhadap blog perjalanan perlu diperiksa.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides readers briefly on the broad scope of this research and its objectives. The sequence of this chapter allows readers to identify the research problems. From the stated research background, the research problems can be specified, define objectives accurately, propose research questions and set relevant hypotheses.

1.2 Background of the Study

Jaring Communication Sdn Bhd was known as Malaysia first Internet service provider based I Technology Park Malaysia and was formerly owned by MIMOS Berhad. Based on the study done by Rohaizan & Fatimah (2011) stated that the growth of Internet usage in Malaysia kept increasing each year since the JARING was built. Nowadays the use of Internet has emerged as one of the useful marketing tolls for sharing and delivering information and being platforms both for the domestic and international transaction since the transition into a global interconnection network (Yi Jin Lim et al., 2016).

Tourism is one of the most popular activities in modern life, which had contributed, abundantly in the economic development. However the tourism service providers found that it is difficult in keeping and acquiring customers (Ho, 2007). Therefore, greater attention from researchers, policy makers, and marketers are needed to be

able to attract tourist to a destination. Study conducted by Yoo and Gretzel (2012) shows that personal blogs have become an important source in helping the tourist to gain travel information.

The consumer- generated content (CGC) such as blogs, virtual communities, social networks, collaborative tagging, and media files shared on sites like YouTube and Flickr give such a huge impact on popularity in the online travelers on the use of Internet (Gretzel, 2006). By using blogs tourists can share their personal experiences with others and for those who are potential tourists can search and are respond to others' experiences. By using blogs it can be seen as an important channel in delivering travel-related electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Chen et al. 2014).

According to Vrana and Zafiropoulos (2010), stated that all of these platforms such as blogs, instant messaging, online reviews, and recommendations became as new digital for of word of mouth. Through blogs consumers can obtain product advice and opinions and this has become a crucial for obtaining information source. At the same time by using blogs it brought a huge impact on the consumers' review of products and also on the making of decision.

The use of Internet has a huge impact in reshaping the way tourism-related information are distributed and affect on the way people plan for and consume travel (Buhalis & Law, 2008). In addition Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier (2009) stated that the Internet also increasingly mediates the tourism experiences in relation on the use of the social media sites to portray, reconstruct and relive trips by the tourists. The uniqueness of using blogs as been mentioned by Xiang and Gretzel (2010) is blogs bring benefit on developing and sharing experiences, platform for marketing intelligence and also provide trustworthiness to the online travelers.

Due to the availability of information found on the Internet the use of Internet among tourists had becoming increasingly dominant (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Aligned with the research done by Travel Industry Association of America shows that 64% of online travelers use search engines in planning their travel (TIA, 2005). Johnson and Kaye (2009) stated that many consumers think that the contents found on blogs are useful and worth of trust.

1.3 Problem Statement

According to Koo et al., (2016) the tourism is currently demand for both of the tourism business and the experiences of the destination with the abundant of the industry limitation and due to the smart technologies in tourism it affect the behaviors of the travelers to change and get unpredicted experience. Thus it has changed the industry of tourism. Nowadays blog has become one of the tourists' decision-making processes in making decision for vacations (Lin & Huang, 2006). This is because sometimes tourists are not getting the information they needed from tourist agencies thus they start using blogs in seeking information about a destination.

Studies conducted by Bearden and Etzel (1982) and Engel et al., (1993) on consumer behavior show that reference groups had made influence on consumer's purchasing behavior. The review or recommendations from those groups play an important role in the decisions made by consumers especially purchasing expensive and/or new products and services that they are concerned. Therefore, this can reduce the risk and uncertainty in buying. One of the reasons would be due to consumers usually depends on opinions or suggestions from others to evaluate purchases (Kotler, 1999). The Travel 2.0 website (T2W), is a website particularly for travelling for example trip advisor, IgoUgo, Turn Here, Flickr Travel, Gusto, Travel the World Wiki and Hotel Chatter and this platform the users will take and active role for choosing and arranging their own trips, but also assisting other

tourist in initiating an plan of their destination prior to travelling by sharing their experiences through videos and pictures (Franciso et al. 2012)

One of the factors, found when readers read the blogs is the novelty of content which can lead to the intention to visit a destination. This is in conjunction with the case study conducted by Jang and Feng (2007) that discovered the novelty-seeking is an important motivation for the tourist to find pleasure. On the other hand if the content of the blogs found to be familiar the readers will not be attracted to a new destination.

Sparks and Browning (2011) indicated that tourists rely on the content from the blogs believe on the information provided by the bloggers because it was from the personal experience and not from the marketers. Since the information about a destination is hard to be found the readers rely on the experience from other people in relation reducing the risk and uncertainty through word of mouth (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). Meanwhile Dellarocas (2003) stated that people nowadays shows how they depend a lot on the internet postings before they make any decisions which compass from what kind of movies to watch up to which stocks need to be invested in. These studies shows that people rely a lot on the contents posted on the internet before making any decisions.

Chulmo (2016) mentioned to have the understanding on the content is crucial because it may affect the intention to visit by the readers. The result of study conducted by Chulmo (2016) shows that the understanding of content leads to positive effect on the intention to travel by the respondents.

Bansal and Voger (2006) stated that the blogs readers usually will trust and apply the information which been published on the blogs. One of the reasons would be due to frequent visit to the blogs. On the other hand Xiang and Gretzel (2010) stated that the blogs have the function of creating and sharing of new experience,

and also able to create trustworthiness to the blog readers on making their decision for choosing a destination.

The study conducted by the Nielsen Company shows that about six in 10 Malaysians stated that they would often read the online review before purchasing a product (68%) and will take a look at the products online before purchasing them in store (64%). Based on these studies it shows that consumers read blogs to know what to expect based on other people experiences before they make the decision to visit a place and thus make their decision based on their readings from blogs. Therefore, it shows that reading the blog have a significant impact on the intention to visit from the readers thus this study aims to address the question of what are the factor contribute to the blog readers and how the intention to visit is developed.

1.4 Research Question

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between perception towards travel blog and intention to visit?
2. What is the relationship between perception towards travel blog and perceived enjoyment?
3. What is the relationship between the perceived enjoyment towards intention to visit?
4. To what extend is the relationship between perception towards travel blogs and intention to visit mediated by perceived enjoyment?

1.5 Research Objective

The specific objectives this study addresses are in line with the above research objectives and are as follows:

1. To examine the influence of perception towards travel blog to visit to a tourist destination.

2. To examine the influence of perception towards travel blog on perceived enjoyment?
3. To examine the influence of perceived enjoyment to visit to a tourist destination?
4. To examine the role of perceived enjoyment as a mediating factor in the relationship between perception towards travel blog and intention to visit?

1.6 Significance of The Study

Based on the study conducted by Lever (2003) it shows that nowadays consumers are spending more time searching for information on products and services over the Internet and at the same time the online shopping are increasing. Therefore studying the reasons consumers tend to buy and find information online is worth to be investigated. It shows that there are huge demands for customers, which use the Internet get product and service knowledge.

In addition in today's world reading the online blogs before making decision on visiting to places have become part of the consumer's decision-making process. This study aims to give a better picture to marketers on what are the factors which influence the consumers, focusing on the Malaysian consumers in their decision making that is influenced by the consumers' perception of the information found from online blogs thus will affect on the intention to visit the customers.

By focusing on the right variable, this study can help the marketers to implement the right strategies so that they can meet the consumers' expectations by providing the right information in attracting more tourists to visit their place. The findings of this study would be able to give positive outcome and benefits to government, academics and also practitioners to understand the relationship between the perceived enjoyment of blog usage towards novelty, reliability, understandability and trustworthy and intention to visit.

From the theoretical perspective, this study will be able to contribute to consumer perceived enjoyment of blog usage and intention to visit by providing the empirical evidence to support the relationship between perceived enjoyment of blog usage and intention to visit. This study also provides knowledge to the indirect relationship. The perceived enjoyment of blog usage mediates the relationship between novelty, reliability, understandability, trustworthy and intention to visit. This could explain the effect of novelty, reliability, understandability, and trustworthy towards intention is enhanced to the extent that novelty reliability, understandability, trustworthy causes the perceived enjoyment of blog usage and it cause the intention of visit.

In practical contribution, this study would help the marketers to gain better understanding on the perceived enjoyment of blog usage by customers and identify the important factors that would affect the perceived enjoyment of blog usage and customers' intention of visit. This would be beneficial for marketers to pay more attention on the blog usage by customers in order to be able to attract more customers.

1.7 Scope of the Study

In this modernization era most of the tourist will seek for information before deciding on the tourist destination. This study is trying to identify the marketing strategy, which can be developed through information obtained from travel blog by tourists for example Trip Advisor, Ramble and wanderer, Malaysia Asia, My Travellicious, The Tiny Wanderer and Trip Hub. By using a theoretical framework, this study examines the mechanisms underlying on how travel blog reviews can influence the consumers' intention to visit. This study also consider how the online blog reviews can lead to the development of trust that subsequently affects the consumers' willingness to have the intention to visit a place. The subjects identified for this study consists of Sabahan tourists who use travel blogs at least once and Kota Kinabalu area has been chosen. In this research, simple sampling was used to gather the data information and the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents to achieve the task notably.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Blogs are shared online journals where people post diary entries on personal experiences or other information of their interest (Blood, 2007).

Novelty is defined as "the information within a traveler's blog which is perceived to be new" (Jang & Feng, 2007)

Understandability is defined as the extent to which a user perceives a retrieved document's information to be easy to read and also understand. (Xu and Chen, 2006)

Understandability is defined as the extent to which a user perceives a retrieved document's information to be easy to read and also understand. (Xu and Chen, 2006)

Reliability is determined by document content but the "source status, by influencing perception of source credibility, competence, or trustworthiness, which will provide message recipients with a simple rule as to whether to agree or not with the message (Petty, Priester, & Wegender 1994, p. 103)"

Trustworthiness is defined as a tendency of one party that is willing to accept the actions by the other party even though the first party is not being protected by the second party and fail to control the actions of the second party (Mayer et al., 1995, p.712).

Blog usage enjoyment "the degree of perceived enjoyment while using a blog." There are three items used for the measurement of enjoyment such as enjoyable, pleasant and fun (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Hsu & Lin, 2008)

Intention to visit "is the intention in accomplishing a commitment behavior which found when a person has the intention to visit when they have experienced a higher degree of desire to visit" (Hunter, 2006).

1.9 Organization of the study

The sequence of this thesis provides better understanding on the entire thesis. Every part of the sequence has it's own contribution. There are five chapters in this thesis. Chapter 1 provides an overall concept for this study, which presents introduction, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of the study and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive literature review on all independent variable such as novelty of content, reliability of content, understandability of content and trustworthiness of content, the mediator which is perceived enjoyment of blog usage and on the dependent variable intention to visit. This chapter also talks about on the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 3 of this study comprises the way this research is carried. Measurement of novelty, measurement of reliability, measurement of understandability, measurement of trustworthiness, measurement of blog usage enjoyment, measurement of intention to visit a destination, data analysis procedure used.

Chapter 4 in this chapter it provides the empirical result based on the conducted survey such as data collection and response rate, profile of respondents, reflective measurement models evaluation, cross loading, structural model evaluation and blindfolding.

Chapter 5 discussed on the recapitulation of the study, discussion on the findings, contributions of research on the managerial implication and on the theoretical and methodological contribution. This study also provides the limitation, future research and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide in-depth review on the relevant literature to this study. This chapter provides literature relevant to the present research objectives. After forming research problems, objectives and questions in Chapter One, the study will discover how each independent variable affects the dependent variable by reviewing on previous studies that are related to the topic. The first section talks on related Internet usage in Malaysia and the blogging concepts. Next, a review on tourist visits intention concepts and related research on the relationship between online blog review and customer visit intention are also discussed. The third section reviews the concept of novelty, reliability, understandability, trustworthiness, and customer's perceived enjoyment of blog usage. Lastly on the customer visit intention.

2.2 Internet Usage in Malaysia

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has a huge impact to social work lives and also to the leisure activities which increasingly widespread. Malaysia government had introduced the first computer system in 1966 and since then there are plenty initiatives implemented in facilitating the greater adoption of ICT in improving the capacities in every field. (Nabeel et al, 2013). The report made by the Internet World Statistics, the Internet users in Malaysia in the year 2000 was 3,700,000 and it was increased to 20,596,847 (67.5%) in 20th Nov 2015 with the number of population 30,513,848. In just 15 years from the year 2000 to