

**The effect of reviews credibility on customer's intention to book
the hotel**

(An applied study on hotels customers in Egypt)

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Abstract

The present study aimed at determining the impact of reviews credibility on perceived usefulness of online reviews which affects an attitude toward hotel. Also, it investigates the relationship between an attitude toward hotel and intention to book. The study was applied on hotels customers in Egypt. Data were collected from 443 customers using two methods named, systematic sampling (213) and online survey (230). 400 out of 443 questionnaires were valid. A Path analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses through AMOS version 23 programs. The results showed that reviews credibility

positively affect perceived usefulness of online reviews. Furthermore, there is a significant positive effect of perceived usefulness of online reviews on attitude toward hotel. Finally, an attitude toward hotel positively affects intention to book.

Keywords: (Reviews Credibility, Perceived Usefulness of Online Reviews PU, Attitude toward Hotel, Intention to Book).

ملخص البحث:

قامت هذه الدراسة بالتحقق من كيفية تأثير مصداقية المراجعات علي المنفعة المدركة من المراجعات عبر الإنترنت و التي تؤثر على اتجاه العميل نحو الفندق. أيضاً، فإنه يحقق في العلاقة بين الإتجاه نحو الفندق و النية للحجز. تم تطبيق الدراسة على عملاء الفنادق في مصر. عن طريق تجميع البيانات من ٤٠٠ من عملاء الفنادق، تم إيجاد علاقة إيجابية بين مصداقية المراجعات والمنفعة المدركة من المراجعات عبر الإنترنت. أيضاً، تم إيجاد علاقة إيجابية بين المنفعة المدركة من المراجعات عبر الإنترنت و الإتجاه نحو الفندق. علاوة على ذلك، يؤثر الإتجاه نحو الفندق بشكل إيجابي على النية للحجز. بالإضافة إلي ذلك، تمت مناقشة الآثار النظرية والعملية لنتائج الدراسة وكذلك البحوث المستقبلية للدراسة.

الكلمات الرئيسية: مصداقية المراجعات، المنفعة المدركة من المراجعات عبر الإنترنت، الإتجاه نحو الفندق، النية للحجز.

1. Introduction

The hotel industry is one of the most rapidly growing industries worldwide with the internet now acting as a major communication channel for customers and suppliers of travel services and products (Ye et al., 2009). Thus, it has led to customers actively searching for information and

consequently being influenced by customer opinions, because of the massive amounts of easily accessible information online (Litvin et al, 2008).

Online customer reviews (OCRs) are increasing all over the world as customers read these reviews to make informed decisions about the products and services, especially in the hospitality field(Filieri and McLeay, 2014; Filieri, 2016). Research has shown that OCRs have an effect on new customer decisions (Sparks and Browning, 2011; Filieri and McLeay, 2014), the awareness of customers to hotels (Casalo et al., 2015),and sales of hotel rooms (Ye et al., 2009).

Prior literature indicated that credible word-of-mouth (WOM) is a strong driver of purchase intentions since it relieves uncertainty and lowers the risk, more so in the case of experience products such as hotels (Jeong and Lambert, 2001; Ayeh et al., 2013a). Hence, there is a need to examine whether OCRs are capable of satisfying customers efficiently and effectively with accurate and complete information.

Information technology (IT) has a significant impact on online customer behavior (Koufaris, 2002), consequently, Davis' technology acceptance model (TAM) framework (1989) was adopted and has been used as a theoretical basis to forecast technologyacceptance behavior towards various types of IT applications. In brief,TAM is regarded as the backbone of the research models (Chen, 2009). Accordingly,TAM was applied in the conceptual model in order to facilitate the adoption of online reviews in the hotel industry.

By reviewing prior studies, online customer behavior is a contemporary topic, as the customer perceptions and attitudes have changed significantly because of the availability of information sources. Therefore,

reviews credibility plays a vital role of supporting the message information. Generally, levels of review credibility eventually define the levels of review acceptance. Moreover, there has been an increasing trend in the hotel and tourism industry in both local and global perspectives. Accordingly, the researchers concluded that it is important to understand the needs of customers in this market and the factors influencing their decisions.

The aim of the current research is to figure out the influence of reviews credibility on customer's intention to book the hotel. Consequently, the researchers are seeking to answer the following questions:

- 1- What is the effect of reviews credibility on the perceived usefulness of online reviews?
- 2- What is the effect of the perceived usefulness of online reviews on the attitude toward hotel?
- 3- What is the effect of attitude toward the hotel on intention to book?

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development:

2.1) Reviews Credibility

Burgoon et al. (2000) is defined credibility as “the recipient's judgment that a message and/or its source are convincing and believable, and mentioned that understanding a message and assigning credibility to it or its information source is supposed to be information requirements for acceptance”.

In the travel sector, Casalo et al. (2015) is defined perceived credibility as “the extent to which a customer believes that the information presented by an online hotel rating scheme is honest, credible, and trustworthy”. The credibility

is one of the most significant component that influence customer decisions (Wathen and Burkell, 2002).

2.2) Perceived usefulness of online reviews (PU)

According to Davis (1989), PU is defined as “the extent to which a user believes that using a specific system would improve his or her job performance”. Likewise, Elwalda et al. (2016) is defined PU as the “degree to which a customer believes that using OCRs improves their online shopping experience”.

In the travel sector, Casalo et al. (2015) is defined PU as “the degree to which customers believe that information offered by online hotel rating lists is useful for their task of completing an online hotel booking”. As reviews become more popular, it becomes harder for customers to evaluate the usefulness of the information presented reviews (Willemsen et al., 2011). Hence, the PU of online review is regarded as a major forecaster of the intention of the customers to accept the review (Cheung et al., 2008).

2.3) Attitude toward hotel

According to Davis (1993), attitude is “the degree of evaluative effect that a user associates with using the target system in his / her job”. Likewise, attitude toward a particular behavior defined “as the level that can represent individual’s feeling as appropriate or not” (Ajzen, 1991).

The concept of attitude was one of the most important concepts of social psychology. Thus, theory of planned behavior TPB and the theory of reasoned action TRA proposed that the behavior of the individual toward performing particular behavior can be determined by his attitude (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein and

Ajzen, 1975). Intentions to perform the behavior will increase through positive attitudes.

2.4) Intention to book

Behavioral intentions reflect “the strength of a person’s willingness to achieve a specific behavior” (Ajzen, 1991). Intention to purchase is “a critical behavioral intention that associates strongly with actual purchases behavior” (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000).

Furthermore, Casalo et al. (2015) defined booking intentions as “the customer’s willingness to book that hotel, and suggested that the intention of the customer to book a hotel can be known after reading the list and finding out which hotel is best and which is worse”

2.5) Hypotheses Development:

2.5.1) Reviews credibility and the PU of online reviews

Basagöze et al. (2012) extended TAM by adding brand credibility to understand better about the adoption of technological services or systems by the customers. They also pointed out that the brand credibility positively affects the usefulness perceived by the customer.

Moreover, Cheung et al. (2009) suggested a positive correlation between credibility and adoption information, and indicated that the perceived credibility of the review positively influences the acceptance of the review. Likewise, as the credibility of online reviews increased, the more online reviews will be adopted by the customers (Lee and Koo, 2012).

According to Xue and Zhou (2010), the system usefulness was influenced by the perceived credibility built from past customer experiences through the use of e-WOM. Also, Cheung and Thadani (2012) explained that the

source credibility has a positive effect on the adoption of e-WOM, and, can directly influence the credibility of e-WOM.

When customers established that a review is credible, they have more confidence to accept the e-WOM contained in the review. Accordingly, Fan and Miao (2012) specified that higher levels of perceived e-WOM credibility create higher levels of e-WOM acceptance.

Furthermore, the credibility of source plays a crucial role in decision making regarding information persuasiveness. Consequently, Chang and Wu (2014) declared that message source credibility has a positive correlation with information credibility that is perceived by customers.

From previous studies the researchers' address that reviews credibility will be associated with the PU of online reviews. Therefore, this research suggests the following hypothesis:

H1: Reviews credibility has a significant positive effect on the PU of online reviews

2.5.2) PU of online reviews and attitude toward hotel

According to the TAM, a positive association exists between PU and attitude (Davis et al., 1989; Van der Heijden et al., 2003). Also, prior studies have shown the effect of PU on attitude toward online shopping (Ha and Stoel, 2009; Palvia, 2009).

In the context of mobile banking, Mehrad and Mohammadi (2017) indicated that PU positively affects attitude. In the online environment, Juniwati (2014) found that PU positively affects attitude toward online shopping. Park (2006) declared that PU of the intranet was positively associated to attitude toward using the intranet.

In terms of hotel reservations, Morosan and Jeong (2008) concluded that (PU) has a positive impact on attitudes toward using Websites to reserve the hotel. Also, Casalo et al. (2011) confirmed this association between PU and attitude in case of an online travel community.

In support of this notion, in tourism context, Ayeh et al. (2013a) revealed that PU of using consumer-generated media (CGM) positively influences attitude towards its use for travel planning. Likewise, Agag and El-Masry (2016b) constituted that PU is positively related to customers' attitude towards online hotel booking.

From previous studies the researchers' address that PU of online reviews will be associated with attitude toward hotel. Therefore, this research suggests the following hypothesis:

H2: PU of online reviews has a significant positive effect on attitude toward hotel

2.5.3) Attitude toward hotel and intention to book

According to (TRA), behavioral intentions are affected directly through attitude (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Also, in the original TAM, the attitude was included as a mediator between PU, PEOU, and behavioral intention (Davis et al., 1989).

Attitude plays a critical role in customers' intention to adopt a new technology (Davis, 1989). Therefore, Van der Heijden et al. (2003) explained that attitude plays a robust role as a mediator between the intention to use and beliefs. Moreover, in the travel sector, Casalo et al. (2011) explained that customers' attitude toward the advice received in an online travel community positively influenced by customer intention to follow that advice.

Alsajjan and Dennis (2006) analyzed the factors that influence users' online banking acceptance behavior, and, they explained that attitude positively affects intention in the context of online banking. Likewise, Agag and El-Masry (2016a) supported the positive association between customers' attitude toward the hotel and intention to book such hotel online. In support of this notion, Morosan and Jeong (2008) confirmed this association between attitude and intention toward using Websites for hotel reservations. Also, Ayeh et al. (2013a) revealed that attitude toward using customer-generated media (CGM) for travel preparation positively affects the intention to use travel preparation.

From previous studies the researchers agree that attitude toward hotel will be connected with intention to book. Therefore, this research suggests the following hypothesis:

H3: Attitude toward hotel has a significant positive effect on intention to book

Depending on the previous hypotheses, the study developed the conceptual framework that presents in the following figure (1)

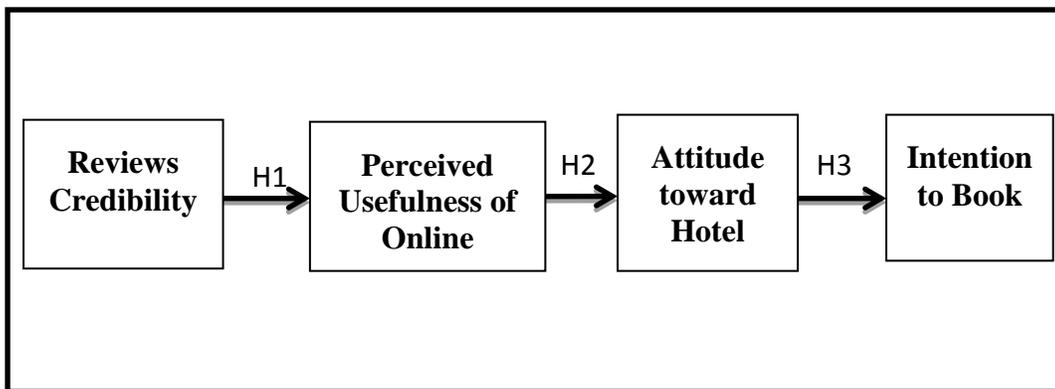


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

3) Research Method

3.1) Population and Sampling

The population of this study is hotels customers in Egypt. The researchers collected data through questionnaire by using two methods. The first one, the researchers collected 230 online questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed on the 8th of February 2018, in which participants had twenty days to access the given questionnaire link. The questionnaire was distributed online and is not restricted to a geographical location.

Because of the lower number of respondents, the researchers decided to collect more data from three hotels in Giza governorate (5*) named Marriot Mena House, Le Meridien Pyramids Hotel & Spa, and Movenpick Hotel Cairo-Media City. We used a systematic random sampling –the second method- by choosing random days of week and customers were approached at different working hours of the hotels within one month time period on the 2nd of April 2018. As a result, we collected 213 questionnaires based on self-administered questionnaires directed to the hotels customers. Finally, 400 of 443 questionnaires were valid and free of missing data, while the other 43 were invalid.

3.2) Variables Measurement

Reviews credibility is measured by a construct which involves 3 items (I think the message that I read is factual, I think the review that I read is accurate, and, I think the review that I read is credible) proposed by (Cheung et al., 2009). Furthermore, PU of online reviews are measured by a construct which involves 3 items (This online review provides relevant information about the hotel, this online review helps me form a more realistic image of the hotel,

and, in general, this online review is useful) proposed by (Casaló et al., 2010). Next, attitude towards hotel is measured by a construct which involves 4 items (I have a positive opinion about this hotel, I think that booking this hotel is a good idea, I think that booking this hotel is a wise idea, and, I think that booking this hotel is an appropriate idea) proposed by (Casaló et al., 2015).

Finally, intention to book is measured by a construct which involves 3 items (If I needed it, I would likely book this hotel, I intend to search for this hotel to book it in the near future, and, I expect to book hotel rooms online in the near future) proposed by (Casaló et al., 2015) and (Agag and El-Masry, 2016).

3.3) Data analysis

This study employs path analysis to test the research hypotheses through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model using AMOS version 23.

The evaluation mechanism of the AMOS research model is carried out in two stages:

3.3.1) Measurement Model:

Face validity correlated to particular qualities, for example, completeness of the questionnaire's items, transparency, and clarity. Moreover, in order to verify the questionnaire's content validity, the initial questionnaire was directed to academic experts. The group comprises five assistant professors and professors¹ from different universities who are specialized in business management.

The validity of the measurement model depends mainly on two elements: the construct validity and the level of model goodness of fit (Blunch,

2013). Furthermore, the validity and reliability of the measurement model should be investigated, before examining the significance of the relationships in the structural model (Fornell and Lacker., 1981).

Table (1): The indices of model fit for the measurement model

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	107.495	--	--
DF	59	--	--
CMIN/DF	1.822	Between 1 and 3	Good
CFI	0.972	>0.95	Good
RMSEA	0.045	<0.06	Good
P Close	0.698	>0.05	Good
RMR	0.020	<0.05	Good
GFI	0.960	>0.8	Good

In order to assess the value of construct validity, the value of convergent and discriminant validity should be examined.

Firstly, the convergent validity was tested by using the factor loadings, if the values of loadings are equal to or greater than 0.5, they can be considered to be significant (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, convergent validity can also be measured by (AVE) whether the value was higher than 0.5, it would be accepted. The reliability of the measurement model was measured using both composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Table (2) mention all the factors utilized to evaluate model validity:

Table (2): The validity and reliability of the measurement model

Factors	Item code	Factor Loading	A	AVE	CR
Reviews credibility	CRE1	0.685	0.73	0.5	0.723
	CRE2	0.707			
	CRE3	0.655			
PU of online reviews	PU1	0.634	0.709	0.5	0.712
	PU2	0.722			
	PU3	0.659			
Attitude toward hotel	AT1	0.666	0.804	0.516	0.809
	AT2	0.805			
	AT3	0.708			
	AT4	0.685			
Intention to book	IN1	0.638	0.790	0.575	0.801
	IN2	0.804			
	IN3	0.820			

According to table (2), the values of cronbach's alpha are accepted because it's higher than 0.6. As well, the values of AVE range between 0.4 and 0.5 and composite reliability values are higher than 0.6 which can be accepted according to Fornell and Larcker (1981). Likewise, discriminant validity is evaluated in table (3). This table shows the correlations between the factors and

the square roots of AVEs and also presents that the values of the square root of AVE are higher than the inter-constructs correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Thus, the discriminant validity is accomplished. Lastly, the measurement model has satisfied all factors utilized to measure validity and reliability.

Table (3) Construct Correlations and Square Root of Average Variance Extracted

	AT	CRE	PU	IN
AT	0.718			
CRE	0.437	0.683		
PU	0.286	0.653	0.673	
IN	0.714	0.410	0.405	0.758

Finally, the measurement model was developed, after examining the validity and reliability and the model fit of the measurement model. The measurement model contains seven main constructs namely, reviews credibility (CRE), PU of online reviews (PU), attitude toward hotel (AT), and intention to book (IN).

3.3.2) Testing the research hypotheses:

Byrne (2010) revealed that structural model is not only utilized to test the hypothesized research model but also present the causal relationships between research constructs. Table (4) presents the indices utilized to test the fit structural model.

Table (4): The indices of model fit for the structural model

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	141.007	--	--
DF	62	--	--
CMIN/DF	2.274	Between 1 and 3	Good
CFI	0.954	>0.95	Good
RMSEA	0.057	<0.06	Good
P Close	0.184	>0.05	Good
RMR	0.033	<0.05	Good
GFI	0.947	>0.8	Good

Table (5): The results of testing relationships

Hypothesis	Hypothesis direction		Estimate	P
H1	Reviews Credibility	----->	PU of online reviews	0.652 ***
H2	PU of online reviews	----->	Attitude toward Hotel	0.407 ***
H3	Attitude toward Hotel	----->	Intention to Book	0.937 ***

According to table (5), it is clear that reviews credibility has a significant positive impact on PU of online reviews ($\beta = 0.652$, $P < 0.05$). Further to this, PU of online reviews has a significant positive impact on attitude toward hotel ($\beta = 0.407$, $P > 0.05$). Moreover, attitude toward hotel has a significant positive impact on intention to book ($\beta = 0.937$, $P > 0.05$). Consequently, H1, H2, H3 were accepted.

4) Discussion

The results of the study showed that reviews credibility have a significant positive effect on the PU of these reviews. Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that PU of online reviews has a significant positive effect on attitude toward hotel. Last but not least, the results of the study revealed that attitude toward hotel has a significant positive effect on intention to book.

Firstly, especially for an online context, the customer's judgment on the review credibility is considered essential. On the whole, levels of review credibility eventually define the levels of review acceptance. Basgöze's study of technological products declared that, as the brand credibility in customers' mind increases, also the usefulness they perceive in relation with a technological product of that brand can increase. In general, customers will have a greater perception about the usefulness of the reviews, if the customer believes that the reviews are posted by high credibility customers and trusted source (Cheung et al., 2008).

Next, according to TAM, there is a positive association between PU and attitude (Davis et al., 1989). Additionally, many prior studies have confirmed

the positive correlation between PU and attitude toward online shopping (Brunner and Kumar, 2006; Ha and Stoel, 2009; Palvia, 2009; Juniwati, 2014).

In the context of online banking, Alsajjan and Dennis (2006) and Al-Somali et al. (2009) found that PU positively affects attitude. As well, Mehrad and Mohammadi (2017) revealed that when customers comprehend the several benefits that can be obtained by mobile banking, they tend to have more positive attitude toward the adoption of new technology. Therefore, they concluded that PU has a positive effect on user's attitudes.

Finally, attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the online environment have been extensively supported by TAM (Davis, 1989), TRA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980) and the TPB (Ajzen, 1991).

These findings are in the line with supporting the available literature. Previously researches confirmed the association between attitude and intention (Lin and Lu, 2000; Van der Heijden et al., 2003; Agag and El-Masry, 2017). As well, this association has supported in electronic commerce (Brunner and Kumar, 2005). Consistent with the empirical evidence by Legris et al. (2003) who approved that attitude toward a new system positively influences intention to use that system.

In brief, our findings highlighted that by extending TAM model by adding the reviews credibility with PU of online reviews the customers will have a positive attitude toward the hotel generated by online reviews which leads to higher intention to book a particular hotel.

5) Implications

This study provides significant practical implications and guidelines for marketers, hotel managers, researchers, who are interested in online review, e-

WOM, and online customer behavior aspects, these implications will lead to a clear understanding of the significant role of online hotel customer reviews in attitudes and intention to book a particular hotel.

Firstly, the sample analyzed in this study concludes that most customers examine online hotel reviews to determine whether a hotel is good or bad before making a purchase decision. Thus, the key step in helping marketers with strategies about how to engage with their audience is to understand how customers perceive review content online.

On the other hand, negative reviews can be valuable to hotel managers as well. Especially, when customers shared negative reviews, these reviews will help the hotel managers to avoid the negative consequences by reaching out to complaining customers, providing customer services, and doing their best to save the relationship. Hence, these valuable and free customer feedbacks can help hotel managers to improve services based on their customer needs.

Secondly, marketers should put online reviews into their marketing communication mix. They can include reviews from well-known websites, for example, TripAdvisor and Yelp in order to display more reviews. As well, marketers can also send emails to remind customers of sharing their experience, or offer incentives such as reward points, discounts, or coupons for customers to encourage them to write a review.

6) Limitations and Future Research

Although the results of this research have both theoretical and practical contributions, there are many limitations that should be taken into consideration. Firstly, this research is limited to three hotels in Giza governorate (5*) named Marriot Mena House, Le Meridien Pyramids Hotel

&Spa, and Movenpick Hotel Cairo-Media City. Due to the higher number of Egyptian and foreign customers in those hotels. Therefore, the future research is suggested to conduct the research in Sharm el sheikh governorate.

Secondly, the research scope is limited to online reviews which are one type of e-WOM. Moreover, traditional communication WOM, is excluded from this research, which is also very influential. Thus, future research might compare the effect of e-WOM and traditional WOM to customers' intention to book a particular hotel.

Finally, future research could include the qualitative method, for example, practical experiments or in-depth person to person interview to get more obvious results concerning the effects of online reviews to customers' intention to book a particular hotel, as the researchers have chosen a quantitative research methodology to conduct the research. It is also considered a disadvantage that bounds the application and accuracy of the result.

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