The Impact of Online Travel Consumer Experience on Consumers' Purchase Intentions: The Moderating Role of Consumer Value Perceptions

Jiaxin Liu

School of Management, Shanghai University, Shanghai 200444, China

Abstract

There are currently many online travel platforms that serve to combine e-commerce with tourism. The boom in e-commerce has led to fierce competition among online travel companies, and how to win customers and further motivate them to buy is a crucial concern for the online travel industry today. A review of current research shows that creating an excellent online experience for consumers is an effective way for e-commerce companies to attract repeat business. Still, little literature has focused on this particular group of online tourism consumers. Based on TAM theory, this paper focuses on exploring the impact of consumers' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of online travel websites on consumers' purchase intentions and examining the mediating role of immersion and the moderating role of consumers' value perceptions to increase online travel consumers' purchase intentions further. The study has theoretical implications and practical insights for the marketing of online tourism enterprises.

Keywords

Consumer Value Perceptions; Online Travel Platforms; TAM Theory; Marketing of Internet Tourism Enterprises.

1. Introduction

In the context of the "Internet + tourism" policy and the increasing consumer demand for a better life, tourism portals and mobile e-commerce platforms have become virtual channels for consumers to complete their purchase decisions[2]. As the primary consumers, consumers are the key factors driving the development of tourism e-commerce. The analysis of consumer behavior on online tourism websites is critical for tourism e-commerce development research.

Previous studies have focused on consumers' willingness to purchase mainly tangible goods but not on tourism products; at the same time, most research perspectives are based on consumer loyalty, online satisfaction, etc. Few scholars have analyzed tourism consumers' willingness to purchase from the online experience standpoint.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following three questions from the perspective of consumers' perceived ease of use and usefulness of tourism websites. Firstly, do consumers' perceived ease of use and effectiveness of travel websites affect their purchase intentions? Secondly, does consumer immersion in travel websites mediate the relationship between consumers' perceived ease of use and benefit of travel websites and their willingness to purchase? Finally, does focusing on consumer value perceptions to identify boundary conditions moderate the effect of consumers' perceived ease of use and usefulness of travel websites?

2. Literature Review

In any field where consumers are the focus of industry development, travel e-commerce is no exception. Therefore consumer online travel behavior has been a primary focus of academic research.CASTAEDA (2009) argues that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness impact consumers' actual and future behavior in searching for information on online travel websites. In previous studies, most scholars have mainly used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explain the impact on consumers' booking intentions. Song Lijun [3] developed a model of factors influencing the choice to secure travel items based on TAM and demonstrated that perceived ease of use was the primary factor influencing consumers' attitudes towards online travel booking. To better understand consumer behavior, scholars have introduced different variables to study consumer behavior in additional research content; for example, LIU [4] et al. used website quality as a research variable and explored its influence on consumers' online information search intention and hotel online booking intention, CASALO et al. [5] used trust variables based on TAM theory to explain how users pay attention to online travel community reviews.

In summary, although there is much literature based on TAM theory, very little literature uses TAM theory to explain online travel consumers' purchase intentions. And even if there is a discussion based on TAM theory regarding perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, there is no literature detailing how it affects consumer purchase intentions and the process. What are the paths? Are there specific factors that make it more influential in certain situations? This study aims to add to the previous research and further contribute to the sustainable development of online e-tourism commerce.

3. Theoretical Hypothesis and Research Model

Based on the literature review, this paper puts forward the following hypotheses about the factors that influence consumers' willingness to purchase online tourism products:

3.1. TAM Theory

The Technology Acceptance Model TAM is a model that has been widely used in recent years and has been most influential in predicting and explaining end-customer behavior and system use [6]. Davis (1989) proposed the technology acceptance model (TAM) based on TRA, incorporating the rich nutritional cores of expectancy theory models, self-efficacy theory, input-output theory, and change adoption theory to explain individuals' acceptance behavior toward information systems. The link between consumer attitudes, intentions, and behaviors has been established. Therefore, the existing literature on TAM theory to explain consumer behavior provides a theoretical basis for exploring the influence of perceived ease of use and usefulness of online travel websites on consumers' purchase intentions.

3.2. Perceived Usefulness & Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use and usefulness are the two main variables in the Technology Acceptance Model TAM. Davis (1989) found that both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were significantly related to current and future system use. et al. [8] found that perceived usefulness and ease of use were key factors influencing learners' satisfaction with system use. In this study, perceived usefulness was considered as the validity of consumers' perceptions that purchasing travel products from travel websites would enhance their shopping. Perceived ease of use of travel websites for purchasing travel products mainly refers to the ease of online shopping. According to TAM theory, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness determine users' attitudes toward using travel websites.

The following hypotheses are proposed for this study.

H1a. There is a positive relationship between consumers' perceived usefulness of buying travel products online and consumers' willingness to purchase

H1b. There is a positive relationship between consumers' perceived ease of use of online travel products and consumers' willingness to purchase

3.3.   The Mediating Role of Immersion

The American psychologist Csikszentmihalyi proposed the famous immersion theory, "Flow Theory," which believes that immersion is a high level of enjoyment and satisfaction that an individual obtains when they concentrate all of their energy on a particular activity and is not distracted by other things. This feeling is so emotionally gratifying that the individual is unconcerned with personal effort.

The following hypothesis is proposed for this study.

H2a. There is a positive relationship between consumers' perceived usefulness of purchasing travel products online and immersion

H2b. Consumers' perceived ease of use of online travel products is positively correlated with immersion

3.4.   Consumers' Willingness to Purchase

Most of the previous studies have focused on purchase behavior and the factors influencing it. Consumers' willingness to buy is not a mere purchase behavior or purchase psychology, it is a gradual evolutionary process, so it is necessary to study consumer willingness in today's market economy.

The following hypotheses are proposed for this study.

H3a. Immersion mediates the relationship between consumers' perceived usefulness of buying travel products online and consumers' willingness to purchase

H3b. Immersion mediates the relationship between consumers' perceived ease of use of travel products purchased online and consumers' willingness to purchase

3.5.   The Moderating Role of Consumer Perceptions of Value

The perception process in tourism activities is critical, as the level of sensation and perception of tourists directly affects the effectiveness of tourism activities and influences their behavioral decisions. Higher value perceptions evoke higher product expectations, higher purchase quantities, less search effort, higher willingness to pay, and higher satisfaction among consumers, and can even lead to scarcity preference polarisation [9].

The following hypotheses are proposed for this study.

H4a. Consumer value perceived value moderates the relationship between consumers' perceived usefulness and immersion in online travel purchases, with the relationship becoming stronger as consumers' value perceptions become higher

H4b. Consumer value perceived value moderates the relationship between perceived ease of use and immersion of travel products purchased online, with the relationship becoming more vital as consumers' perception of value increases

Based on H3 and H4, a moderated mediation model is proposed whereby consumer value perception moderates the role of immersion in mediating the relationship between consumers' perceived usefulness and ease of use of an online travel product and consumers' willingness to purchase it.

The following hypotheses are proposed for this study.

H5a. Consumer value perception moderates the indirect effect of consumer perceived usefulness of online travel product purchases on consumer purchase intentions through

immersion, such that the positive effect of the indirect effect will be stronger when consumer value perception is higher

H5b. Consumer value perception moderates the indirect effect of perceived ease of use on consumers' willingness to purchase travel products online through immersion, such that the positive impact of the indirect effect is more potent when consumers' perception of value is higher

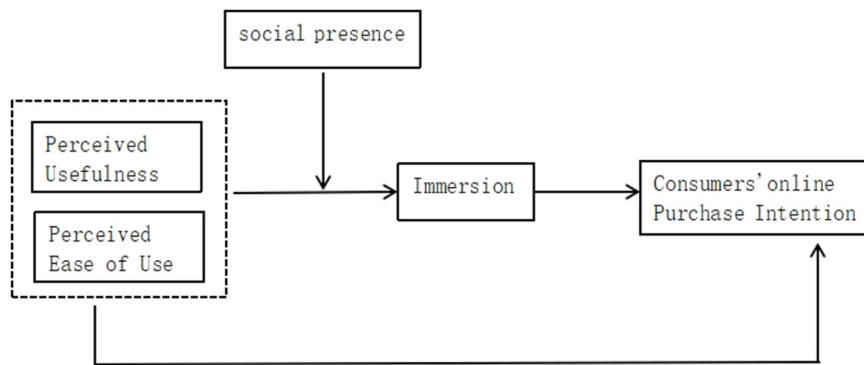The conceptual model for this study is as follows:

Figure 1. Article Model

4. Research Design

This study proposes using a questionnaire method to test the research model and hypotheses. Based on previous studies, the data collection for this study was based on an online questionnaire [10].

4.1. Participants and Process

The survey was mainly based on the Questionnaire Star website and was open to university students with some experience in online learning at various universities in Shanghai, China.

The research process consisted of three main steps: the preparation of the questionnaire, the distribution and collection of the questionnaire, and the statistics and analysis of the data.

(1) Questionnaire development: The questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first of which mainly investigated the basic information of the respondents, including demographic information (gender, age, education level, etc.), experience in purchasing travel products online, etc. The second part is the central part of the questionnaire, which measures the five latent variables.

(2) Questionnaire distribution and collection: A random sample was used to distribute and collect questionnaires via the internet from university students who had experience in online learning and were proficient in operating tourism websites.

(3) Data statistics and analysis: The questionnaire data were entered into SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis.

4.2. Variable Measurement

The scales used in this paper are all mature scales tested by empirical research. The rankings were adapted from existing questionnaires, and a five-point Likert scale was used to measure the observed variables, with "l" indicating total disagreement and "5" indicating entire agreement. A "5" indicates complete agreement.

The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for each key and control variable (student demographic information) were also measured in this study to ensure internal consistency.

4.3. Study Methodology

For data processing, validated factor analysis was conducted through AMOS21.0 software to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the five key constructs and whether they fit well. Stratified multiple regression analysis was performed using SPSS19.0 statistical software, while the mediating effect of immersion was further validated using MacKinnon's (2007) PRODCLIN procedure. Aiken & West's (1991) procedure was followed to map the interaction effects, and the moderating effect of consumer value perceptions was further verified through simple slope plots. Finally, a moderated mediation path analysis was conducted to confirm whether the differences were significant at 95% confidence intervals by following Edwards & Lambert's (2007) procedure.

5. Significance of the Study

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study explores the influence of consumers' perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of online tourism products on consumers' purchase intention in the context of "Internet+Tourism" and finds that consumers' perceived effectiveness and perceived ease of use of tourism websites affect online consumers' immersion, thus The study will see that the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of travel websites affect online consumers' immersion and thus indirectly influence travel consumers' purchase intentions, which will to some extent enrich the theoretical research on consumer behavior.

Firstly, this study will complete and enrich the research on consumer purchase intentions in the context of online tourism. As mentioned in the introduction, previous research on consumer purchase intention has only focused on tangible goods. Therefore, based on the theoretical foundation of the technology acceptance model, this paper will fully reveal the transmission mechanism of online travel consumers' perceived usefulness and ease of use of travel websites on their purchase intention, providing a new perspective and direction for the study of consumer purchase intention. The study will provide a unique perspective and advice for the study of consumers' purchase intention.

Secondly, the study will reveal the transmission mechanisms of online consumer experiences on consumers' purchase intentions. The study introduces immersion, a state often found in virtual interactions, as a mediating variable and constructs "consumers' perceived usefulness of travel websites - immersion - travel consumers' purchase intention. "This study will provide a new approach to analyzing the intermediary mechanisms influencing consumers' purchase intentions. It will also be a new application of immersion theory.

Thirdly, the further theoretical contribution of this paper will be to explore the influence mechanism of online consumer experience on consumers' purchase intention based on TAM theory, analyze the moderating role of consumers' value perception and propose a new moderating factor, which will further expand the scope of application of TAM theory and enhance the applicability boundary of the model.

5.2. Practical Implications

Firstly, the results of this study will help to understand consumers' perceptions of the experience of online tourism websites. Online tourism enterprises should base consumers' perceived usefulness and ease of use of travel products purchased online on the first place to formulate corresponding marketing strategies, improve the information quality and service quality of websites, pay attention to the maintenance of customer relationships, and establish a sound credit system, to promote the future development of tourism e-commerce further.

Secondly, the future development of online tourism enterprises should be based on improving the quality of information and services on their websites while focusing on the operation of

their brands and the image of their online shops; for example, when designing their online websites, they can make use of simple and generous information that can catch the eye of consumers.

At the same time, businesses must adhere to ethical business practices and focus on business reputation and customer reviews; only then will consumers' perceived usefulness and ease of use of the travel website be higher, the more they will be prompted to immerse themselves in it, thus stimulating their desire to buy.

In addition, big data can be used to analyze the demographics and purchases of online travel website users to personalize information and services to meet consumers' individual needs and enhance their perception of value, thus prompting them to become more immersed in the travel website and find the travel products that meet their consumption needs.

Furthermore, online tourism companies can actively seek support and promotion from the government to strengthen their promotional efforts. With government linkages, they can provide more convenient policies and facilities for tourism companies, enhancing consumers' trust and making their immersion more burden-free.

Finally, many consumers choose to buy travel products online because of the psychology of cheaper online goods. Combined with this psychology, online travel businesses can make an effort to reduce consumers' purchase and search time costs, in addition to doing an excellent job of marketing and promotion to get their goods out of the homogenized envelope. For example, discount promotions can attract consumers and increase the number of visitors to the website and its distribution, thus allowing more consumers to use and recognize the website and immerse themselves in it, further enhancing their willingness to buy.

References

[1] Liu Yan, Pu Bo, Guan Zhenzhong. The influence of tourism consumers' online experience on rebooking from the perspective of immersion theory[J]. Journal of Tourism,2016,31(11): 85-95 Xiang Z, and Gretzel U. Role of Social Media in Online Travel Information Search[J]. Tourism Management, 2010, 31(2): 179-188.

[2] Song Lijun. Research on online travel booking intention based on TAM [D]. Jinan: School of Management, Shandong University, 2010.

[3] LIUJNK, ZHANGE. An Investigation of Factors Affecting Customer Selection of Online Hotel Booking Channels [J]. International Journal of Hospitality Management,2014,39(1): 71-83.

[4] CASALOLV, fLAVIANC, GUINALIUM. Understanding the Intention to Fllow the Advice Obtained in an online travel Community[J]. Computers in Human Behavior,2011,27(2): 622-633.

[5] Extending the TAM for a World-Wide-Web context[J].Ji-Won Moon, Young-Gul Kim. Information & Management,2001 (4).

[6] Moon J-W, KimY-G. Extending the TAM for aWorld-Wide-Web context[J]. Information& Management, 2001, (38): 217-230.

[7] Sun,p. Tsai,R.j., Finger,G., Chen,Y.,&Yeh,D. What drives a successful e-learning:an empirical investigation of the eritical factors influencing learner satisfaction[J]. Computers& Education, 2008, 50 (4): 1183-1202.

[8] Heijden H V D,Verhagen T,Creemers M. Understanding online purchase intentions:contributions from technology and trust perspectives[J]. European Journal of Information Systems,2003,12(1): 41-48.

[9] Heijden H V D.Factors influencing the usage of websites:the case of a generic portal in The Netherlands[M]. Elsevier Science Publishers B.V.2003.

[10] Tarafdar M, Zhang J J. Analyzing the Influence of Website Design Parameters on Website Usability[J]. Information Resources Management Journal,2005,18(4): 62-80.

[11] Chen Jie,Cong Fang,Kang Feng. A study on the factors influencing the purchase behavior of online travel consumers based on the perspective of mind-flow experience[J]. Nankai Management Review, 2009, 12(2): 132-140.

[12] Short J, Williams E, Christie B. The social psychology of telecommunications[M]. London:Wiley,1976.

[13] Gefen D, Karahanna E and Straub D W. Trust and TAM in online shopping: An integrated model[J]. MIS Quarterly, 2003,27(1): 51-90.

[14] Gao L,Bai X.Online consumer behaviour and its relationship to website atmospheric induced flow:Insights into online travel agencies in China[J]. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 2014, 21(4): 653-665.