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THE EFFECT OF WEBSITES ON CUSTOMER PREFERENCES RELATED TO TOURISM PRODUCTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF TECHNOLOGICAL ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM)

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Abstract: The rapid dissemination of internet use through the society changes not just lifestyles of individuals but also the behaviors and habits as a customer. The customers willing to be informed about the products/services and compare them use internet more and more intensely. The aim of this study is to examine the effect of hotel's websites' features on customers' information searching for accommodation. Following this aim, a model has been developed within the framework of "TAM". In this model the effect of independent variables (Navigability-Interactivity of the websites and Information on accommodation-destination in the websites) on "Intention to Use the Websites to Search for Information" through "Perceived Ease of Use of The Website" and "Perceived Usefulness of the Websites" were examined. The data were gathered through convenience sampling with the help of online questionnaires. A total of 102 usable responses were gathered and the model was tested by using path modeling with PLS algorithm. The results showed the appropriateness of the TAM theoretical framework for the examination of the travelers' intention to use the website to search information

Key Words: Technology Acceptance Model, Structural Equation Modeling, Website Use

1- INTRODUCTION

The adoption of information technology (IT), new technologies and the internet have gained a lot of interest from researchers, policy makers and practitioners during the last two decades. For the tourism industry "researchers have begun to envision and propose various models for mobile tourism services and support systems" (Oh, Lehto & Park, 2009: 766).

From the customers' viewpoint, *the internet provides direct communication with suppliers, giving them the means to choose and purchase their own itineraries at any time and place and data show that this trend is on the increase* (Castaneda et al, 2009, 549). According to IET; the number of tourists using the internet to enquire about, reserve or purchase a holiday-related service has risen from 25 percent in 2002 to 38.7 per cent in 2004, going as high as 86.5 per cent in the case of international tourists choosing to fly to their holiday destination (Castaneda et al, 2009, 549).

Most of the studies used three main models for new technologies and their adaptation: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) (Cheng & Cho, 2011: 488). TAM predicts user acceptance of a technology based upon estimation of three core constructs,

perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and behavioral intention (Svendsen et al., 2013: 323). In this context, this study attempt to develops and tests a model that explains the intention to use the website of the accommodations by users, paying special attention to factors related to the content (i.e. categories of information) and the functionality (i.e. interactivity and navigability) of these websites with the frame of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This model was selected because previous studies have suggested that The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a useful theoretical framework to explain the use of new information technology (ex.: Huang et al, 2013, Hsu & Lu, 2004) as well as consumption behavior in computer-mediated environments.

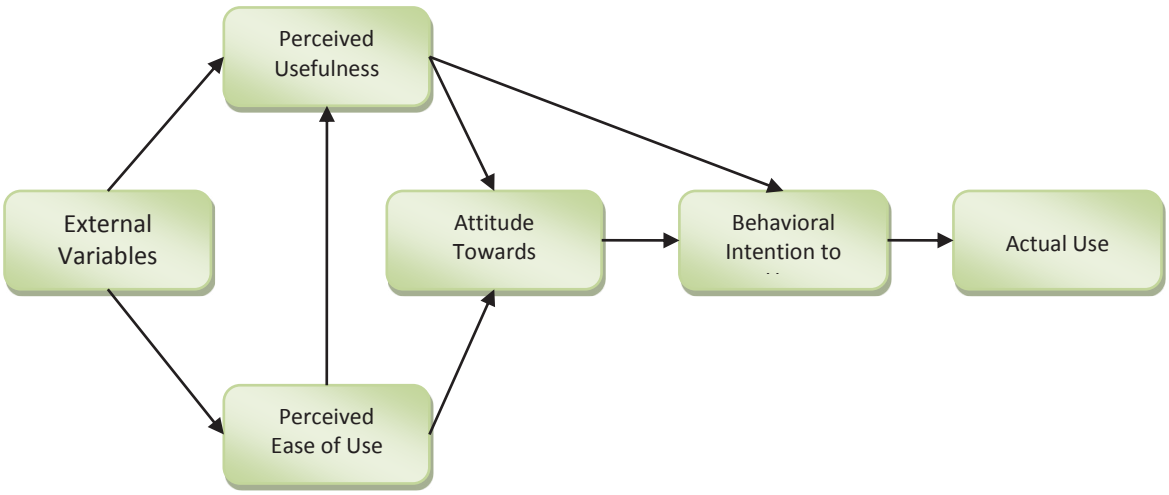
2- LITERATURE

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was first introduced by Davis in 1986 and was later completed by Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw in 1989 (Mai, Yoshi & Tuan, 2013: 233). This model is an adaptation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Luarn & Lin, 2005: 875), which focuses on the use of new technologies. "A key purpose of TAM is to provide a basis for tracing the impact of external variables on internal beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. (Legris, Ingham & Collerette, 2003; 192)

According to Technology Acceptance Model, a user's decision to use a new technical device or software package is determined by the behavioral intention to use the system. This behavioral intention is influenced by the individual's 'perceived ease of use' (PEOU) of the system and its 'perceived usefulness' (PU). (Chun Chu & Chun Chu, 2011: 1165). "Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology would enhance his or her job performance. Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology would be free of physical and mental effort (Wallace & Sheetz, 2014; 252)

The Original Technology Acceptance Model is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Original Technology Acceptance Model



Source: Park, 2009: 151

Several studies have attempted to modify the TAM by adding new variables or relations to it. For example Venkatesh & Davis (2000) proposed a new version of TAM. They added new variables such as "voluntariness", "experience to original model" and named the model as TAM2.

According to Surendran, (2012), Lim proposed to modify TAM by adding variables such as "experience", "self efficacy", "perceived risk" and "social influence". Moon & Kim (2001) have added "perceived playfulness" factor to model to study World Wide Web acceptance.

Lee (2009) used an integration model of Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Planned Behavior with perceived risk and perceived benefit to understand adoption of internet banking. Lee, Xiong & Huc (2012) have added "perceived enjoyment" factor to model to test Facebook users' intention to go to a festival.

The use of TAM model has also been found in several tourism related studies. Some of these studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Previous Studies Conducted In Tourism Sector Related To TAM Model

Writers (Year)	Research Subject and Methodology	Findings
Castaneda, Frias & Rodriguez (2009)	A model was developed based on the TAM to explain internet use as an information source for the tourist. The data collected from Malaga Airport with the help of questionnaire. The total number of valid questionnaires was 331. The data were analyzed with SEM[1*] and RML[2*] method	- It was found that two main antecedents of Technology Acceptance (Ease of Use & Usefulness) had a similar and significant effect on "attitude toward the internet". - "Usefulness" and "attitude" have direct and significant effect on "future use of internet as a source for destination information". - "Usefulness" has a significant effect on "Actual use of internet as a source for destination information"
Cheng & Cho (2010)	A comprehensive model was developed that incorporates attitudinal variables in TAM, motivational variables in the "innovation diffusion theory (IDT)" and the social variable in the "theory of planned behavior (TPB)" to investigate the attitude, behavioral intentions, and usage of information and communication technologies by employees in Hong Kong travel agencies. The data were collected with questionnaires and the final sample was 171 and structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data.	- It was found that "Observability", "Trialability" (dimensions of IDT), "perceived usefulness" and "perceived ease of use" (dimensions of TAM)" had a significant effect on attitude toward the adoption of information technologies. - "Subjective norm" and "perceived behavioral (dimensions of TBP)" had a significant effect on intention to adopt information technologies - Personal attitude was found to be more important than subjective norm.

Chun Chu & Chun Chu (2011)	Study was focused on explaining the relationships of intranet adoption and newcomers' organizational socialization in the hotel industry. The model was based on TAM. Data were gathered for a structural (SEM) analysis, from 298 individual participants, who had only worked in a hotel for 6 months to 1 year in hotels located in Taiwan.	- It was found that "perceived ease of use of Intranet" was significantly predictive of "perceived used of intranet". - "Perceived used of intranet" had significant effect on "frequency of intranet usage" and "newcomers' socialization". Also frequency of intranet usage" contributed to the prediction of "newcomers' socialization" - Gender differences in the models were not significantly revealed in the adoption of intranet technology affecting a newcomers' socialization, with the routes being the same for both genders.
Herrero & Martín (2012)	Study was developed a model that attempts to explain the adoption of the websites of the rural tourism accommodations by users, paying special attention to the factors related to the content (information) and functionality (interactivity and navigability) of these websites. The data were collected in Cantabria region of Spain. The respondents had to have visited one or more websites of rural tourism accommodations in Spain during the last six months. A total of 1083 valid responses were collected through a personal survey.	- It was found that information on accommodation and destination in the website significantly predictive of perceived usefulness of the website. - "Interactivity" and "navigability" of the website had a positive effect on "perceived ease of use the website". - "The intention" to use the websites of the rural tourism accommodations to search for information and make online reservations was determined by the "usefulness" and the ease of use of websites as perceived by users.
Morosan (2012)	A model was developed based on the TAM to clarify the travelers' intention to use biometric systems (fingerprinting, face recognition, iris scan etc.) in the hotel industry. The data were collected with online survey. The sample frame included email addresses of an USA university's students enrolled in the MBA program in 2008. The survey was conducted with respondents who traveled during a period of 12 months prior to the survey. A total 162 valid responses were collected. Structural Equation Modeling was used to analyze the data.	- It was found that "perceived usefulness"(β =.72) was a significant predictor of attitudes (for using biometric systems in hotel), - Also, "perceived ease of use" (β =.23) had a significant direct impact on attitudes toward using biometric systems in hotels. - Furthermore, "perceived ease of use" was a significant predictor of "perceived usefulness" (β =.69) - "Attitudes toward use of biometric systems" explained approximately 79% in the variability of "intentions to use biometric systems in hotels" (β =.89) - At last, "perceived innovativeness" had a significant direct impact on perceived ease of use (β = .29)

3- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Model and Hypothesis

Based on the TAM methodology and previous studies presented in table 1, the research model proposed by this study is shown in Figure 2. Each arrow in research model (Fig. 2) represents a research hypothesis.

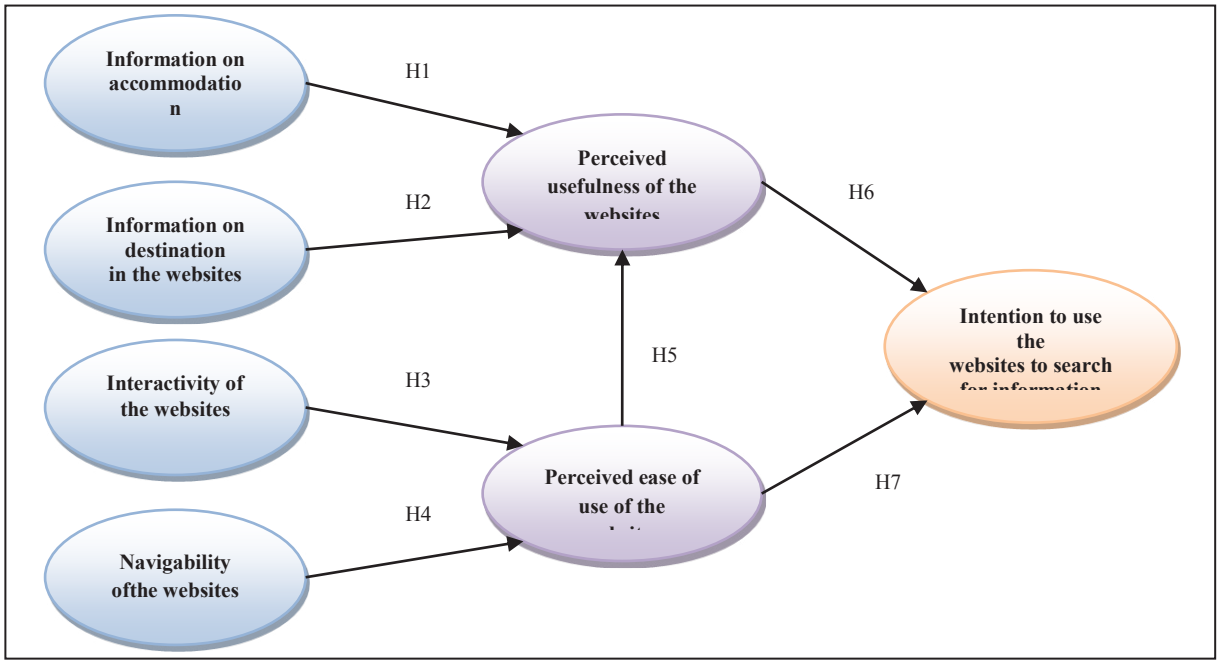
"Information on accommodation in the website (IOA)", and "Information on destination in the website (IOD)" are the two types of information offered by the websites are established (Herrero & Martin, 2012). For this reason two

hypotheses are proposed in order to examine the effect of information on the perceived usefulness of websites:

H1- The information on accommodation offered by the web sites of the tourism accommodations positively influences the perceived usefulness (PU) of these websites.

H2- The information on destination offered by the web sites of the tourism accommodations positively influences the perceived usefulness (PU) of these websites.

Figure 2. The Research Model



Baloğlu & Pekcan (2006) expressed that "interactivity" and "navigability" are two important features in the design of the website. Interactivity is defined as the capacity for bidirectional contact and communication between the user and the supplier (website). This characteristic of websites is associated with specific applications, such as email, reservation and cancellation interfaces, forums, or chats. Also website navigability is the easiness that the users find the required piece of information by moving through a website (Zhang, Zhu & Greenwood, 2004). This attribute is related to the design of the structure and the specific applications of websites. Therefore, navigability is associated with the perceived ease of use of websites (Herrero & Martin, 2012).

According to these approaches the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3 - The interactivity of the websites(IOW) of the tourism accommodations positively influences their perceived ease of use (PEOU).

H4- The navigability of the websites (NOW) of the tourism accommodations positively influences their perceived ease of use (PEOU).

The other hypotheses (H5-H6-H7) have been developed considering the original Technology Acceptance Model and previous studies (Kim & Qu, 2013, Read, Robertson & McQuilken, 2011, Chun Chu & Chun Chu, 2011, Venkatesh & Davis (2000) etc.).

In original TAM, perceived ease of use and the perceived usefulness of a new technology influence customers' attitude toward using the technology (Davis, 1989) and also PEOU is also associated with the PU of technology (Read, Robertson & McQuilken, 2011). Therefore the following hypotheses are formulated:

H5 - Perceived ease of use (PEOU) has a positive effect on perceived usefulness (PU).

H6 - PU has positive effects on intention to use the websites to search for information (IUSI)

H7 – PEOU has positive effects on intention to use the websites to search for information (IUSI)

Data Collection

To test the research model, a questionnaire was developed to measure the constructs. Each construct consisted of statements against which the respondent was asked to rate their level of agreement (7 point Likert Scale) or adequacy of information in hotel's websites (7 point Likert Scale).

The constructs (appendix 1) were derived from Herrero & Martin, 2012 and Ustasüleyman & Eyüboğlu, 2010. Questions in English were translated into Turkish by the author and checked by an English Lecturer. The questionnere has been sent in the first week of July, to author's social network friends which are above the age of 18 and have a permanent income (430 people) by mail.

After three weeks, total of 102 usable responses were gathered, which shows %23,72 respond rate. The participants consisted of 66 males (64,7%) and 36 females (35,3%). Also, the majority of respondents (70,6%) were married. 86 of participants were (%84,3) between age of 30-45. Most of the participants (72 participants %70,6) had household income between 3000-5000 Turkish Liras. 78 of participants (76,5%) graduated from a four year college.

To examine the reliabilities of the scales, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated. The alpha values for all scales ranged between 0,71-0,92. Thus, it was concluded that the constructs had satisfactory reliability (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998) and were kept for further analyses.

The data were analyzed by using PLS-SEM (Partial Least Square- Structural Equation Modeling) because PLS is useful for structural equation modeling in applied research projects especially when there are limited participants (Wong, 2011). Also total scores of constructs were used in analysis because of the same reason. Before proceeding PLS-SEM analysis, all data were screening and 41 empty data were estimated with the help of "expectation maximization algorithm (EM)".

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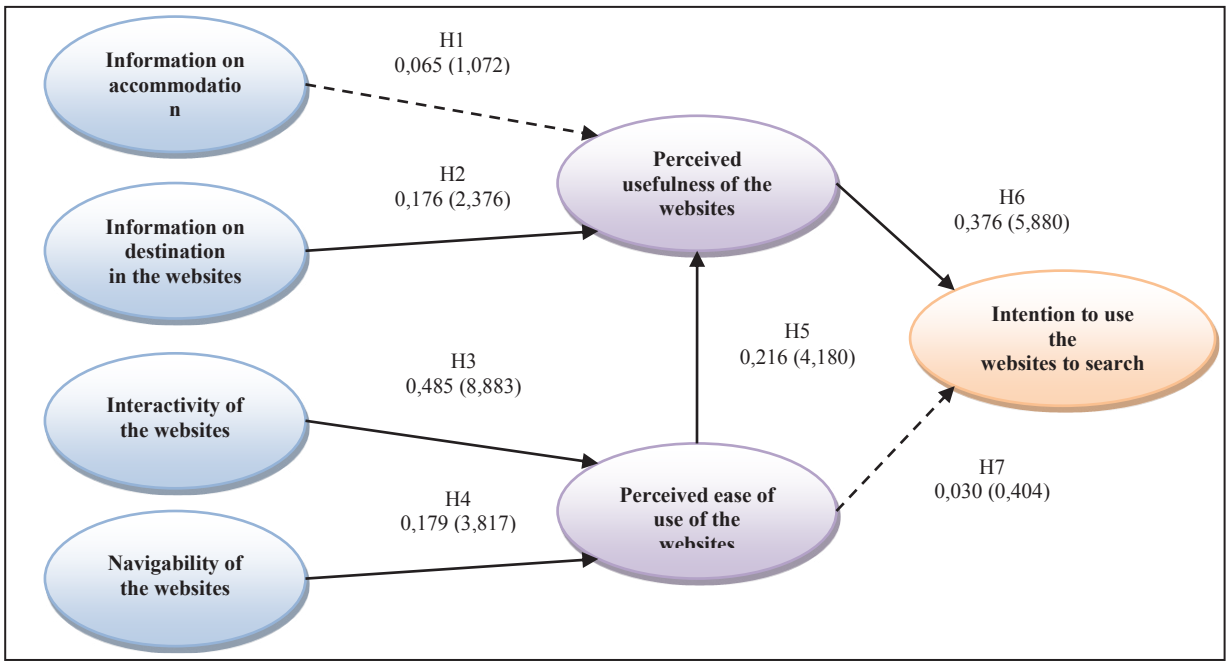
The PLS-SEM analysis results (analyzed with Smart PLS 2.0) are given in Figure 3.

The estimated coefficients indicated that the information on destination offered by the websites of the tourism accommodations significantly influence the perceived usefulness (B=0,176), supporting H2. Further, travelers' perceived ease of use of the website was significantly influenced by the interactivity and navigability of the website Thus H3- H4 received empirical support. At this point; it has been seen that, interactivity of website's having greater effect on the perceived ease of use the website compared to navigability of websites was also found (B=0,179). On the other hand; perceived ease of use was found significantly predicting perceived usefulness (B=0,216), supporting H5.

Also intention to use website to search for information was significantly affected by perceived usefulness (B=0,376, supporting H6) but not perceived ease of use (H7).

Figure 3. PLS Model Results



Note: Hypothesis number, coefficient (t score)

4- DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to define TAM and empirically examine the effect of websites' features on customers' intention to search for information related to accommodation. The model paid special attention to the factors related to the content (information) and functionality (interactivity and navigability) of hotel websites.

The findings of the research mostly supported the research model and most of the hypotheses. The results indicated that; "the intention to use the websites to search for information about

accommodation" was determined by "usefulness of the website" supporting the findings of previous TAM studies (eg. Tseng et al, 2012 Phatthana & Nik Mat, 2011, Varol & Tarcan, 2009). However, no significant effect of "perceived ease of use" was found on "website use to search for information". This finding was not in accordance with the results of many previous studies in which strong correlation was found between these variables. However Leiva, Hernandez-Mendez & Sanchez-Fernandez, (2012) found no significant effect of perceived ease of use on intention to use online travel sites, which is in parallel with the finding of this study. Also, no significant effect of perceived ease of use on intention to use e-learning in the case of university students was observed in Park's (2009) study.

Moreover, similar to findings of the previous empirical studies (eg. Kim & Qu, 2013, Nunkoo Ramkissoon, 2013, Tseng et al, 2012. , Tsai, Wang & Lu, 2011, Casalo, Flavian & Guinaliu, 2010, Venkatesh & Davis, 2000); it was found in the present study that "perceived ease of use had a positive and significant effect on perceived usefulness". According to this result, it was suggested that the hotel businesses need to reorganize their websites to improve usefulness. But, it should be noted that the customer's perceived usefulness was affected by ease of use of the website.

Three out of four website properties (Information on destination, interactivity and navigability) had significant effect on perceived ease of use or perceived usefulness of hotel website; but "information on accommodation in the websites" did not have a significant effect on perceived usefulness. This may be due to the fact that many customers do not pay attention to the "information on accommodation in the websites" to evaluate the usefulness of the website. Herrero & Martín (2012) found all four website properties had significant effect which was mostly similar to our study.

The findings indicated that the hotel websites' contents and design play important role for customers' information search. These findings may provide useful guidelines for developing suitable websites for customer satisfaction and this satisfaction can lead the customer's tendency to select the hotel rather than its competitors.

5. LIMITATIONS

Overall, this study contributes to the tourism literature by developing and testing a model for the adoption of websites but it has several limitations that should be noted. First, the sample size and data collection method were not appropriate to generalize the findings. It could decrease the power of significance. Second, structures were tested with total scores thus it was hard to understand the whole effects and relations effectively. Third, the PLS model doesn't have fit index like GFI, CFI or TLI. Therefore it was impossible to find out the suitability level of the model.

This study should be repeated in different regions, different sectors and sub sectors to obtain more reliable results. Also examining additional factors in addition to the conceptual framework in this study may improve our ability to predict customers' usage behavior in regard to hotel website.

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Appendix 1: Measures (some items translated from Turkish)

The intention to use the websites of an hotel to search for information (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree)
I intend to use the websites to search for information on accommodations.
I will probably use the websites to search for information on accommodations.
I am decided to use the websites to search for information on accommodations.
I will use the websites to search for information on accommodations as soon as possible
Perceived usefulness of the websites (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree)
Using the websites is very useful in the purchasing process.
Using the websites enables me to accomplish the purchasing process more quickly.
Using the websites increases my efficiency in the purchasing process.
Using the websites improves the performance in the purchasing process.
Perceived ease of use of the websites (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree)
Using the websites is simple for me.
Using the websites is an activity at which I consider myself skillful.
It is easy for me to learn to use websites
Using the websites implies little effort for me.
Information on accommodation in the websites (1 = information is very inadequate; 7 = information is very adequate)
Rooms.
Facilities.
Rates/offers.
Photographs.
General information.
Information on destination in the websites (1 = information is very inadequate; 7 = information is very adequate)
Transportation.
Tourist attractions (monuments, museums,. . .)
Tourism activities (excursions, touristic visits,. . .)
Recreational/sports activities.
Events.
Restaurants.
Local products (gastronomy, craftwork,. . .)
General information (history, culture,. . .)
Near destinations.
Interactivity of the websites (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree)
The websites allow communicating with the accommodations for further questions about the services.
The websites has the ability to respond to my specific questions quickly.
The websites allow comfortably communicating with the accommodations.
The websites allow accessing the information quickly.
Navigability of the websites (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree)
The information displayed on the websites is well organized.
The sequence of obtaining information in the websites is clear.
The layout of the websites makes tasks easier always

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TURİSTİK ÜRÜN TERCİHİNDE WEB SAYFALARININ ETKİSİNİNTEKNOLOJİK KABUL MODELİ (TAM) ÇERÇERVESİNDE İNCELENMESİ

Özet: Günümüzde internet kullanımının hızlı bir şekilde toplumun her kesiminde yaygınlaşması, bireylerin yaşamlarının yanı sıra tüketici olarak da alışkanlık ve tercih davranışlarını değiştirmektedir. Birçok ürün ya da hizmet hakkında bilgi almak ve farklı seçenekler arasında karşılaştırma yapmak isteyen tüketiciler internet üzerinden eriştikleri kaynaklara giderek daha sık başvurmaktadırlar. Turistik ürünler de son yıllarda internetten araştırma yapılan ürünlerin arasında yer almaktadır. Tatil için gideceği bölgeyi seçmek, daha önce gitmediği bir bölge ile ilgili bilgi almak ve kendisine uygun olabilecek mevcut konaklama alternatifleri arasından en yüksek faydayı sağlayacak olan tesisi seçmek isteyen tüketiciler, internet üzerinden araştırma yapmaya yönelmektedirler. T*üketicilerin* yaptığı araştırmalar sırasında başvurdukları kaynaklar arasında tatil rezervasyonu yapan tarafsız siteler, tur operatörlerine ait web sayfaları, sosyal ağlar ya da konu ile ilgili forumlar sayılabilir. Bununla birlikte, bölgede yer alan ve tüketiciler tarafından alternatif olarak görülebilecek konaklama tesislerine ait web sayfalarının da bu noktada önemli birer bilgi kaynağı olduğu unutulmamalıdır. **Amaç:** T*üketicilerin* konaklama yeri tercihleri ile ilgili bilgi arama eylemlerinde, bölgede yer alan konaklama tesislerine ait web sayfalarının özelliklerinin etkisinin incelenmesi bu çalışmanın ana amacını oluşturmaktadır. **Problem:** *Çalışma temel olarak şu araştırma problemlerinin çevresinde şekillenmektedir. "Konaklama işletmelerinin web sayfalarına ait özellikler, tüketicilerin tatil yeri seçimleri ile ilgili bilgi arama davranışlarını etkilemektedir. Eğer etkil*iyor ise bu etki ne düzeydedir? Web sayfasına ait algılanan kullanışlılık ve algılanan kullanım kolaylığının, müşterilerin bilgi arama davranışları üzerinde anlamlı etkileri bulunmakta mıdır? **Yöntem:** *Çalışma amacı* doğrultusunda "Teknolojik Kabul Modeli (TAM) " temelinde ve geçmiş çalışmalar ışığında bir model geliştirilmiştir. İlgili modelin test edilebilmesi için farklı çalışmalardan yararlanılarak bir anket formu hazırlanmıştır. Oluşturulan anket formu, yazarın bir sosyal medya sitesinde yer alan arkadaşlarından; 18 yaşının üstünde ve sürekli bir gelire sahip olan 430 arkadaşına mesaj olarak gönderilmiştir. Temmuz 2014 sonu itibari ile 102 adet kullanılabilir anket geri dönmüştür (geri dönüş oranı = %23,72). Geri dönen veriler ile yapılan Cronbach's Alpha güvenilirlik analizleri sonucunda, anketi oluşturan *ölçeklerin güvenilirlikleri*nin 0,71-0,92 arasında olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Yüksek güvenilirliğe sahip olan veriler ile hipotez testine geçilmiş ve oluşturulan modelin test edilmesi için PLS algoritması ile test edilen Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesinden (YEM) yararlanılmıştır. Geri dönen geçerli veri sayısının az olması nedeni ile analizde toplam skorlar kullanılmıştır. Smart PLS 2.0 programı yardımı ile yapılan analize geçilmeden önce geri dönen anketlerde yer alan 41 boş veri Beklenti Maksimizasyonu (expectation maximization) yöntemi kullanılarak tahmin edilmiş ve bu şekilde kayıp veri olmayan bir veri seti oluşturulmuştur. **Sonuç:** Analiz sonucunda tüketicilerin konaklama tesisinin web sitesine ait algıladıkları kullanışlılığın (perceived usefulness) üzerinde, web sitesinde yer alan destinasyon bilgisinden etkisinin olduğu; tesise ilişkin bilginin ise böyle bir etkiye sahip olmadığı bulunmuştur. Ayrıca tüketicilerin web sitesinin kullanım kolaylığı algılamalarında da (perceived ease of use) web sayfasının sahip olduğu etkileşim ve gezilebilirliğinin istatistiksel olarak anlamlı etkiye sahip olduğu görülmüştür. Araştırmanın bir diğer önemli sonucu da tüketicilerin konaklama yerleri ile ilgili bilgi aramalarında web

sitesini kullanma eğilimlerinde; algılanan kullanışlılığının istatistiksel olarak anlamlı etkisinin olduğu; algılanan kullanım kolaylığının ise böyle bir etkiye sahip olmadığıdır. Elde edilen bu sonuçlar*ın* birçok noktada "teknoloji kabul modeli (TAM)" ve bu modelin turizm sektöründeki uygulamaları üzerine yapılan geçmiş *çalışmalar* ile paralellik gösterdi*ği görülmüştür*. **Kısıtlar:** *Ç*alışmada elde edilen sonuçların genellenmesinde bazı kısıtlamalardan dolayı dikkatli olunmalıdır. Bu kısıtlamaların başında örneklem sayısı ve veri toplama süreci yer almaktadır. 102 kişi ile yapılan test sonuçlar*ın*a dikkatli yaklaşılması gerekmektedir. Bununla birlikte; analizde toplam skorlar ile oluşturulan modelin PLS algoritması ile test edilmiş olması da bir başka önemli kısıttır. Toplam skorlar, ilgili yapıyı bozacak sorulara ilişkin açık bilgi vermede yetersiz kalmaktadır. Ayrıca PLS algoritması genel kabul görmüş uyum indekslerini (TLI, GFI, CFI vb.) sunmadığından, modelin temsil yetkisi ve uyumu konusunda net bilgi verememektedir. Analizde kullanılan ölçekler ile modelin farklı zaman ve örneklemler üzerinde tekrarlanmasının, modele ilişkin daha geçerli sonuçlar alınabileceği düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Teknoloji Kabul Modeli, Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi, Web Sayfası Kullanımı