Hotel Website Quality Perceived Values and Behavioral Loyalty among Baby Boomers: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract

Majority of the customers need to look over the information and make purchases using the hotel websites other online travel agencies. It is crucial for hotels to understand the factors that influence customers to use and make bookings from their websites and consequently turn them into loyal customers. This study focuses on five dimensions of perceived values of the hotel website towards behavioural loyalty among baby boomers due to a common stereotype that they have technologies anxiousness to adopt new technologies. There were studies that suggests baby boomers are just as obsessed as Millennials with their smartphones and spend their time with the smartphone at home to connect with friends and family members and also to search for any information. They are still being considered as one of the most profitable market segments in the industry thus the main aim of this study is to empirically investigate the effectiveness hotel website quality on customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers as well as to assess their level of behavioural loyalty. A quantitative approach will be used to collect the data for the study. It is believed that this study will be able to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on the extent of importance given by the hotel towards the website quality and its effect on baby boomers' behavioral loyalty. This study results will provide insights and response for website developers and hotel managers on how to build high customer loyalty to book the hotels' rooms by enhancing website quality.

Keywords: Hotel Websites, Online Travel Agency, Perceived Values, Baby Boomers, Behavioural Loyalty

Introduction

Hotels must adopt new technologies and expand the interactivity with the customers in the marketplace in order to fulfil and to satisfy tourism demands in the long run (Kandampully, Bilgihan & Zhang, 2016). Information technologies (IT's) in the hotel industry may enable customers to get the right information about the hotel as well as to undertake reservation in a fraction of the time, cost

and inconvenience required by the conventional method. In a simple word, IT's can improve the service quality and give more satisfaction.

Hospitality and tourism industry has vastly changed due to the Internet which has primarily taken the role as a distribution channel (Pan, 2015). The two main online hotel booking channels are hotel website and online travel agency (OTA) websites (Hird, 1997). Besides that, based on Travel Click (2016), the share of temporary rooms sold by hotel website itself in the second quarter of 2016 acquired the biggest share (35.3%), followed by hotel direct through which customers call the hotel directly and walk-in (19.1%), online travel agents (OTA) (16.0%), global distribution systems (GDS) (15.8%), and central reservation offices channel (CRO) (13.80%). This statistic shows that people made reservations directly through hotel brand websites while OTA websites cover almost half of the market share by using online distribution channels. A previous study on revenue manager's survey responses shows that the hotel websites had the highest possibility to survive into the future while OTAs remained as centrepiece of generating profit (Mest, 2017).

Hotel websites are considered as a critical marketing tool as they present the hotel directly to customers (Amrahi, Radzi & Nordin, 2013). In addition, hotel websites were reported to have the lowest cost a hotel pays to acquire a new customer instead of the other online booking channel (Duran, 2015). Moreover, hotel's properties are more likely to be generous to customers who book directly with them in terms of upgrades, Wi-Fi and all of the other add-ons that will make customers happy (McGuire, 2017). It can be said that hotel website quality plays an important role in forming a positive attitude, trust, and customer satisfaction with the website, which in turn affect their intention to use it for travel-related purposes (Tang, Jang & Morrison, 2012). More importantly, the positive effect generated from website quality can be transported from the website to the focal product itself. For example, Perdue (2002) showed that website quality affects consumers' overall perception of a hotel's quality. However, hotels still need to understand the essentials of website quality and other variables that may influence and form the behaviour of their customers such as the perception of value (Hsu, Chang & Chen, 2012).

Perceived value is one of the most powerful drivers of today's marketplace (Chang, Wang & Yang, 2009). The concept of perceived value has been recognized as one of the most important measures when hotels attempt to obtain a competitive edge in the market (Demirgunes, 2015) and it has been suggested that perceived value is the best indicator of purchase and repurchase intentions (Anuar, Musa & Khalid, 2014). Hence, this study will focus on further investigating the relationship between perceived hotel website values that determine customer loyalty namely ease-of-use, usability, information quality, security risk and website aesthetic. The selection of these values will be discussed later in this section.

Contextual Problem
Nowadays, there are many issues in the hospitality industry and one of them revolves around the reservation system technology in the industry. The biggest problem in tourism and hospitality industry is that they provide too much data, instead of lack of data because the online reservation system has seen many trends in its magnification over the years (Deshmukh, 2017). Thus, most

customers need to look over the information and make purchases using the hotel website itself. So the industry players need to understand the factors that give an impact on customers to use and make purchases or bookings from their websites (Morosan & Jeong, 2008) and how different factors compromise online booking system selection (Liu & Zhang, 2014).

Prieto (2017) highlighted in his report that hotels brands are intensely searched terms and hotels can get critical direct movement. This proprietary and direct movement are generally high changing but sometimes the hotel's booking and user experience is sub-optimal, bringing potential direct customers away from the hotel brand website and change towards digital native Online Travel Agents (OTAs) who offer a highly optimized search and booking flow. After that, based on Voughton (2017), customers inevitably switch to other channels if information on a hotel website does not meet their requirement. Thus, hotels should make hotel websites easy to search and book to avoid directing away customers to intermediaries as well as to increase direct booking from their own brand websites (Prieto, 2017).

Kroib, Kapsammer, Proll, Retsehitzeggar and Wagne (2014) mentioned that the main function of online booking is most certainly the reservation procedure itself. It is about the secure payment system which makes it compulsory for customers to pre-pay for the room being reserved directly by inserting a proper credit card number; otherwise, there is always a problem that the reservation service can be distorted. In addition, there is a case when customers were more likely to be careful to the privacy risk since they experienced credit card data violation which happened in 2013 involving 14 hotels including Marriott, the Westin, Hilton and Radisson (Sutton & Yan, 2014). Therefore, perceived security risk will assess this issue within the hotel website quality.

To tackle this issue, this study will focus on five dimensions of perceived values of the hotel website towards customer's behavioural loyalty. Two dimensions of perceived values; ease-of-use and usability, in this study were adapted from Zehira et. al., (2014), while three more namely information quality, security risk and website aesthetic were adapted from Xu (2017). Prior studies (Ali, 2016; Bai, Law & Wen, 2008; Hsu et. al., 2012) have researched the impacts of hotel website quality on customer satisfaction and purchase intention. Apart from that, however, far too lack of attention has been paid to the impacts of hotel website quality towards customer behavioural loyalty among baby boomers. This study will focus on Baby Boomers which is born from 1946 until 1965 (53–72 years old) (Whitebourne & Willis, 2016) because they continue to trail both Gen Xers and Millennials on most measures of technology adoption, but adoption rates for this group have been growing rapidly in recent years (Jiang, 2018).

This study will specifically examine the hotel website among baby boomers due to common stereotype among them. Based on Matos, Costa, Pinheiro, Salvador, Vale-Dias and Zenha-Rela (2016), this group of people is always associated with technologies anxiousness and reluctant to adopt new technologies. Previous research also mentioned the baby boomers face some unique barriers in adopting new technologies: from a lack of confidence in using new technologies to physical challenges manipulating various devices (Anderson & Perron, 2017) but there was a study that suggests a completely different situation. Jaclyn (2017) stated in her study that the baby boomers are

just as obsessed as Millennials with their smartphones and spend their time with the smartphone at home to connect with friends and family members and also to search for any information. Perhaps, the same author suggested that baby boomers are still being considered as one of the most profitable market segments in the industry. Hence, it is very important and interesting for this study to examine the relationship between hotel website quality and behavioural loyalty among this group of people. In other words, this study attempts to challenge the 'conventional wisdom' among people saying that baby boomers are insecure about the technologies around them.

In line with preceding notion, the main aim of this research study is to empirically investigate the effectiveness hotel website quality on customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers as well as to assess their level of behavioural loyalty. The use of quantitative research in this study is appropriate as the researcher plans to collect wide information of how Baby Boomer's visitors of hotels website in Malaysia perceived the required hotel's website quality attributes and how they translate their visit of the hotel's website into their behavioural loyalty.

Based on the report by Statista (2018), one of the most reputable statistic portals, the number of hotel online users in Malaysia is 2.7 million in 2018. The population consists of Millennials, Baby Boomers and Generation X. As highlighted in the introduction part, Baby Boomers is a sampling frame for this study and a screening question will be asked before the respondent can proceed to answer the survey to ensure that they are Baby Boomers. As stated by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), the minimum of 384 respondents is sufficient when the total population is about 2.7 million. Moreover, Roscoe (1975) also noted that the sample size larger than 30 and smaller than 500 are suitable for most quantitative research studies. The questionnaire will be designated and structured into four sections.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development
Hotel Website Quality

Previous studies have proposed various dimensions to measure website quality (Wang, Law, Guillet, Hung, and Fong, 2015). Meanwhile, Hahn, Sparks, Wilkins and Jin (2017) declared that website quality is a multifaceted multi-dimensional construct, proposed to evaluate websites' aesthetic. According to Moody and Galletta (2015), a website must distribute several crucial features to cultivate a better online experience and argued that "poor web design will result in a loss of 50% of possible sales due to users being unable to find what they want, and a loss of 40% of potential repeat visits due to early negative experience". In addition, Bilgihan and Bujisic (2015) proved that web design features are essential for online relationship marketing.

Based on what has been studied by Yeung and Law (2004), the website design should cover its usability and functionality. In line with this, the evaluation of website quality-associated literature from 1992 to 2007 conducted by Hernandez, Jimenez and Martin (2009) mentioned that; quality of information, system and ease of use are important aspects of website design.

In addition to that, Pavlou, Liang and Xue, (2007) highlighted that the importance of hotel websites are privacy and security to evade uncertainty in online transactions. This statement is also supported by Wang et al., (2015) and they proposed a three-dimensional structure consisting of hotel

website usability, hotel website functionality and hotel website security and privacy to appraise Chinese travellers' perception.

From the studies above, it has been proven that the hotel website must have some features to be powerful and effective for customers. Thus this study will focus on perceived values a hotel website's needs which are perceived ease-of-use, usefulness, information quality, security risk and website aesthetic. Therefore this study proposes:

H1: There is a relationship between perceived values of the hotel website quality and customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

Ease-of-Use

Hotel website must be easy to use and has a responsive plan because the culture of the travel industry and many visitors to the hotel's website are dynamic. The views of the site will be on smartphones, tablets, and other computer devices. An excellent website should be capable to resize and allow reservations on any of these devices. This will make it easier to use a website and it will allow quick confirmation procedure for reservation (Xu, 2017).

In line with this, an easy to use a direction-finding bar that extends across each top page of the website, understandable and present links that are easy to search straight to visitors to diverse sections of the webpage are among the characteristics of a good hotel website (Salem & Cavlek, 2016). Moreover, there should be a clearly visible call-to-action to show clients through the reservation process and find answers to the inquiry (Hsu et. al, 2012).

Previous studies showed that; as there are more difficulties felt when using the technology, the less probably they were to adopt it (Dai, Forsythe & Kwon, 2014). In the circumstance of a retail business, it was discovered that customers' satisfaction with the purchase experience and purchase intention was anticipated by website ease-of-use (Belanche, Casoló, & Guinalíu, 2012). Perceived ease of use has been proven to be a significant factor influencing customers' revisit intentions and purchase intentions (Ismail, Hemdi, Sumarjan, Hanafiah & Zulkifly, 2017; Jeong & Lambert, 2001; Jeong, Oh, & Gregoire, 2001; Kim & Kim, 2004). Hence, this is assumed:

H1a: There is a relationship between ease-of-use of the hotel website quality and customer's behavioral loyalty among baby boomers.

Usability

Perception of customers includes a website that is instructive, eye-catching and attractive. Meanwhile, Suna, Cárdenas and Harrill (2015) classified that the usability, security, personalization, usefulness, awareness and information content are the features of the web. Usability has gained consequence in information technology (Creswell, Bates, & Sheikh, 2017). Besides, usability narrates to the ease and simplicity with which consumers are to use a system and do the basic process. Efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction of customers conclude the usability levels of a technological system. Thus, the level of usability of a website figured the basis for business tangibility (Salem & Cavlek, 2016).

In the background of online reservations, perceived usefulness refers to the Internet users' feeling that using online booking is useful in making an online payment and booking. Perceived usefulness can be one of the dimensions to expect whether or not they will use online booking (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Kucukusta, Law, Besbes & Legoherel, 2015; Özbek et al., 2015). Interestingly, Pai & Yeh (2014) even argued that functionality, efficiency and effectiveness of the online booking technology are more important than perceived ease of use. Therefore, it is assumed:

H1b: There is a relationship between the usability of the hotel website quality and customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

Information Quality

Information search and acquirement have a great impact on tourists' travel assessments (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012) in the context of tourism. Information quality, commonly proposed in the MIS literature (DeLone and McLean, 1992; Wang and Strong, 1996), was considered as a criterion to evaluate website quality in the travel industry (Ho and Lee, 2007; Jeong and Lambert, 2001; Law and Leung, 2002). In making a website useful, it must provide exact, appropriate, and absolute information (Loiacono, 2000). Thus, information quality was proposed as a relevant dimension to perceive hotel website quality in this study. In addition, in the study by Wang and et. al., (2015) the most important issue on a hotel's website is information about the reservation that was found to be the most imperative.

In the previous IT and online retail studies, the importance of information quality has been highlighted as it can influence user satisfaction (Cantallops and Salvi, 2014), purchase results (Ponte, Trujillo, Rodríguez, 2015), business association building and information technologies use intent (Zhou, 2015).

Li, Peng, Jiang & Law (2017) proved in their study that information quality was an important indicator to be the success of a hotel's website and meanwhile, in other studies, information quality was the most effective factor motivating customer's intention to use and book rooms through hotel websites (Perdue, 2001; Jeong and Lambert, 2001; Wong and Law, 2005; Bilgihan and Bujisic, 2015).

Besides, in terms of information quality, hotel websites must provide image content: the majority of hotel websites contains a picture gallery of their services, facilities, exterior, interior and locations. The pictures should be ideal same as the actual one, so it can convince customers to purchase and customers will revisit the hotel again if they are satisfied with the service (Inversini, 2014).

According to Peng et. al,, (2013), the majority of hotels hardly provides customers with insights about the destination. Interface maps allow visitors to explore shops, restaurant, and others facilities nearby the hotel. This will increase the chances of a booking by the visitor. Therefore, this study will explore more about perceived information quality in hotel website quality and how it affects customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers. Hence, this study presumed:

H1c: There is a relationship between information quality of the hotel website quality and customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

Security Risk

The concept of perceived risk was first established by Baeur (1960) and he stated in his study that carrying out transactions on a website is the next step after accumulate information. Nevertheless, while carrying out the transaction, the customer's perceived risk was the main obstacle where customers stop from making an online purchase (Kim, Ferrin, & Rao, 2008).

Perceived risk was defined as a doubtful consequence effecting from risky consumer behaviour. Mostly, perceived security risk was mentioned in marketing literature and was divided into various types (Jacoby & Kaplan, 1972; Peter & Ryan, 1976). Along with that, financial risk related to the technological error, product risk, and information risk connected with security and privacy were the three predominant types of risk (Bhatnagar, Misra, & Rao, 2000). On the other hand, little consensus was attained regarding the influence of particular types of perceived risk on online purchase decisions (Dai, Forsythe, & Kwon, 2014).

Various studies examined that many customers were always hesitant to make a purchase because they feel doubtful about the product whether the value of the product or services fulfils their buying goals (Scott, 2015). In other words, customers feel a certain point of risk in most purchase decision-making processes (Chiu, Wang, Fang & Huang, 2014). Due to the rapid growth of e-commerce, perceived risk became one of the barriers preventing customers from purchasing online (Martin, Mortimer & Andrews, 2015).

In other studies, Cunningham, Gerlach, Haper and Young (2005) explored about customers where instead of booking at a brick and mortar store, using Internet airline reservation services make customers feel riskier when purchasing online. Among the characteristics of online purchasing are having distance, virtual identity and lack of regulation (Sam & Tahir, 2009). These characteristics showed why customers can feel at risk when purchasing online (Xu, 2017). In addition, customers were more likely to be careful to the privacy risk since they experienced credit card data violation which happened in 2013 involving 14 hotels including Marriott, the Westin, Hilton and Radisson (Sutton & Yan, 2014). Thus, in this study context, customers' awareness about the purchasing behaviour issues was activated from online transactions and it will be examined under the category of perceived security risk in hotel website quality. Hence, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1d: There is a relationship between website security risk of the hotel website quality and customer's purchasing behavioural loyalty.

Website Aesthetic

Due to the thriving of E-commerce, the website is the primary boundary between customers and online suppliers. Furthermore, the importance of the website aesthetic has also come out in the last decades (Xu, 2017). In fact, that aesthetic value improves user's perception on usability and credibility (Seckler, Opwis & Tuch, 2015; Robins & Holmes, 2008; Tuch, Roth, Hornbæk, Opwis, &

Bargas-Avila, 2012). Many companies started to develop the aesthetics in their online websites to perform and stay competitive (Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003; Wang et al., 2011).

In the context of hospitality, several studies used the terms "attractiveness" and "visual appearance" as identical with "aesthetics" (Douglas & Mills, 2005; Park and Gretzel, 2007; Perdue, 2001). Basically, the scope of hotel website aesthetics consists of layout, graphic, background paired with contrasting text, and multimedia (Yeung & Law, 2003; Chan & Law, 2006; Kline et al., 2004; Qi, Law, & Buhalis, 2014). It must be noted that a lot of focused study was placed on Hong Kong-based hotel websites, and for future, it is necessary for researchers to carry out more studies in other geographical areas (Xu, 2017). Hence, this study will explore more about the perceived aesthetic of hotel website quality in Malaysia.

Other than that, a prior study has also found that over 46.1% of consumers made opinions about the credibility of websites which depend on the design look of the site including layout, colour scheme, and font size (Seckler et al., 2015). Based on Lingaard, Fernandes, Dudek and Brown (2006), they demonstrated that websites took visitors 50 milliseconds to make the first thought on a web page. Meanwhile, Robin and Holmes (2008) found that it only took users 3.42 seconds to evaluate the integrity of the website content based on its appearance. In summary, the importance of the website aesthetics was proven by its positive impact on usability, credibility, as well as customer satisfaction and loyalty (Moshagen and Thielsch, 2010). Therefore, it is assumed:

H1e: There is a relationship between the website aesthetic of the hotel website quality and customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

Methodology

As this aim of the study proposed to examine the effectiveness of a perceived hotel's website quality towards behavioural loyalty among baby boomers, a quantitative approach will be used to collect the significant data for the earlier stated variable. The use of quantitative research in this study is appropriate as the researcher plans to collect wide information of how Baby Boomer's visitors of hotels website in Malaysia perceived the required hotel's website quality attributes and how they translate their visit of the hotel's website into their behavioural loyalty.

Based on the report by Statista (2018), one of the most reputable statistic portals, the number of hotel online users in Malaysia is 2.7 million in 2018. The population consists of Millennials, Baby Boomers and Generation X. As highlighted in the introduction part, Baby Boomers is a sampling frame for this study and a screening question will be asked before the respondent can proceed to answer the survey to ensure that they are Baby Boomers. As stated by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), the minimum of 384 respondents is sufficient when the total population is about 2.7 million. Moreover, Roscoe (1975) also noted that the sample size larger than 30 and smaller than 500 are suitable for most quantitative research studies.

The questionnaire will be designated and structured into four sections. The first section contains screening questions to distinguish respondent and individual characteristic questions such as 1) whether they booked any overnight accommodations online in the last 12 months, 2) whether

they ever booking using online hotel website, 3) online purchasing frequency to understand respondent's previous travel experience and online purchase experience. The second section which is on the independent variables consisted of five parts: 1) ease-of-use, 2) usability, 3) information quality, 4) privacy risk, and 5) website aesthetics. Then, in third section; it is on the dependent variables which are about customer's behavioural loyalty among baby boomers. The last section will be on the respondent's demographic profile such as age, gender, education level, household income, living area, and occupation. The level of website quality is determined by ease-of-use, usability, information quality, website privacy risk, and website aesthetics. Measurement items for all variables were developed based on prior studies and customized to fit the context of this study. Respondents are asked to rate each measurement item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Additionally, all attention check questions were designed to rule out participants who were not paying attention to the survey content. Each attention check question is necessary for participants to click on a certain response and was randomly detached throughout the questionnaire.

The data or information required will be collected among Malaysians from age 53- 72 years old. An online survey method was chosen due to its benefit in saving time, simple access to the particular population, and reasonably free cost compared to traditional paper and pencil survey (Wright, 2005). The survey will be done by using Google Form platform due to its large and unlimited access to create a form, relatively free cost, response speed, can get email notification of results, and forms are mobile friendly (Randall, 2013). Details about the researcher, the aim, and purpose of the study and how to fill out the questionnaires will be briefly explained and will be attached to the questionnaires. The participation is voluntarily and information will be kept private and anonymous. Due to having the online survey, the researcher will distribute the questionnaires using all the social media to reach the respondents such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The data from the respondents that are collected will appear automatically in the spreadsheet provided by the Google form platform.

As for data analysis, the researcher has narrowed some of the knowledge on the statistical analysis; SPSS which refers to Statistical Package for Social Sciences that will be used in data analysis. However, pilot test and pre-test using Cronbach Alpha to test validity and reliability as well as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) will be undertaken prior to perform the actual study. After that, the descriptive analysis for the mean score and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics of Multiple Regression looking at the connection between variables will be used whenever fit in order to answer the objectives, research questions, and hypotheses of this study.

Discussions and Implications of the Study
Drawing from the main purpose of the study and the proposed hypotheses developed from the literature searches, a conceptual framework for the study is illustrated (Figure 1).
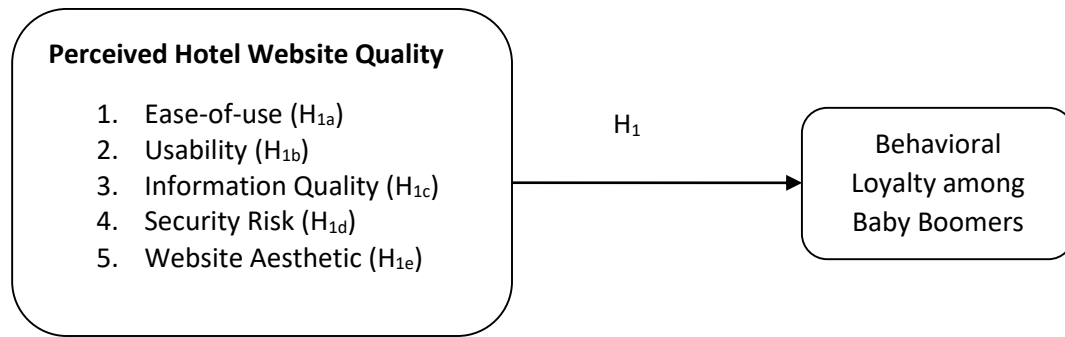
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

To recap, here are the hypotheses drawn out from the above framework.

H1: There is a relationship between perceived values of the hotel website quality and customer's behavioral loyalty among baby boomers.

   H1a: There is a relationship between ease-of-use and behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

   H1b: There is a relationship between usability and behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

   H1c: There is a relationship between information quality and behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

   H1d: There is a relationship between website security risk and behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

   H1e: There is a relationship between website aesthetic and behavioural loyalty among baby boomers.

It is believed that this study will be able to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on customer behavioural loyalty towards reservation hotel using hotels website among baby boomers; a population that has been underrepresented in research studies. Besides, there is a strong need for researchers in hospitality studies to gain more understanding on the attributes of the hotel websites that needed as the new market strategies and market segmentation in the hospitality industry in the future. After that, the purpose of this study is to find out the effectiveness attributes or values used in hotel websites that will impact on customer behavioral loyalty among baby boomers in Malaysia, specifically, the extent of importance given by the hotel towards the website quality and the ways how the features on the websites show their actions. The relevant data obtained from this study will significantly contribute to the extant body of literature whether it support or reject the previous literature and therefore useful for future studies.

On the practical level, it is important to understand customer behavioural loyalty in the online environment. From that, a website developer in hotels industry can develop strategies to increase customer loyalty toward the website in line with increasing the number of booking through the hotel website. This study result will provide insights and response for website developers, hosts, and hotel managers on how to build high customer loyalty to book the hotel's room by increasing website

quality. Potential improvements could be made such as improving data privacy, increasing ease-of-use, and enhancing the appearance of web pages.

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