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Website Evaluation

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10

Since the beginning of the Internet in the early 1990s, the patterns of product sales and customer relationships have undergone significant changes. To achieve their goals, organizations and companies have adopted technological advantages, such as maximizing the use of websites. Websites enable organizations and businesses to build images online and increase revenue by bringing in more customers. In the tourism context, a website acts as a medium for communicating and delivering information, establishing relationships with stakeholders, and marketing products and services to customers (Law & Bai, 2006). Consumer behaviors have also changed dramatically with the advancement of information and communications technology (ICT) activities. Information seeking, transaction processing, and sharing of experiences online have necessities for travelers. Therefore, practitioners in the tourism industry should maximize the role of their websites in marketing their products and services. Moreover, measuring website performance by referring to industry standards and competitive sites is imperative because of the prominent role of Internet marketing (Morrison et al., 2004) and to maintain service performance and website usability. Therefore, continuous evaluation of a website will certainly affect customers' online decision-making and experiences, and that development will, in turn, help organizations reach their goals (Qi et al., 2015).

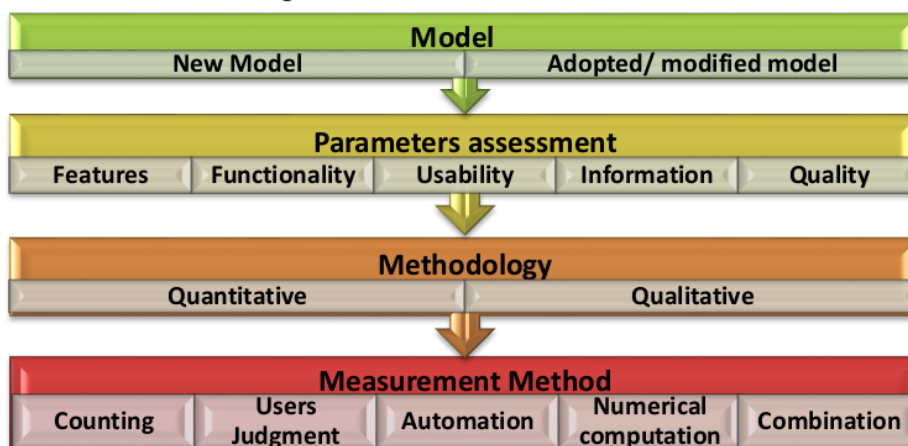
6

Website evaluation is defined as “the act of determining a correct and comprehensive set of user requirements, ensuring that a website provides useful content that meets user expectations, and setting usability goals” (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2006 cited in Law, 2019, p. 3). To ensure that all objectives are met, website evaluation is needed, with the customer, internal, marketing, and technical aspects as parameters (Morrison et al., 2004; Sun et al., 2017). In the tourism and hospitality industries, websites are intended for specific businesses, such as hospitality, destinations, travel websites, travel suppliers, airlines, online travel guides, online travel magazines, travel search engines, and travel blogs (Law et al., 2010). Given the variations in existing websites, a systematic evaluation of the criteria according to a tested theoretical basis is necessary. The evaluation should also be complementary with the objectives of the organization. Organizations require a standardized, measurable approach that can be used repeatedly to achieve their long-term strategy. Website evaluation involves several models, such as the new model and the adopted or modified model, which evaluate the methodology adopted and the specific method used in relation to time (Law, 2019).

The development of website evaluation models in tourism and hospitality began in the 1990s, when the balance score card (BSC) and the modified BSC were first used. In the 2000s, modified frameworks, such as the adoption model of Internet commerce adoption (MICA) or the extended version (eMICA), were utilized. Several other modified models came into use, including the modified service quality model (which became the online travel service quality counterpart) and the information system e-commerce success model (Law et al., 2010; Morrison et al., 2004). Novel conceptual models were also developed during this period, such as the 2QCV3Q meta model (which is related to tourism identity, content, service, location, management, usability, and feasibility) and the AIDA concept (which consists of attention, interest, desire, and action and emphasizes information structure and the attractiveness of tourism sites) (World Tourism Organization, 2005). Other models are used in specific industries, such as the e-relationship marketing model and the electronic customer relationship management model in the hotel industry.

Website evaluation process (Figure 1) must be in accordance with parameter assessments, including website features/characteristics, functionality, usability, website quality/service quality, and information quality (Law, 2019). The features/characteristics that are most used in website evaluation consist of information, interactivity, and customer relationship management, including customer service, contact details, visual appearance, and emotional appeal. The functionality dimension leans toward the availability of information and content aspects, whereas site management plays an important role in categorizing existing information to support the communication process. The usability aspect relates to a website's effectiveness, supportiveness, ease of navigation, and functioning as a media transaction related to specific factors (e.g., the booking system, the shopping system, as well as security and ease of login). The overall quality and service quality of a website are related to the user's evaluation and thus a website's features must meet the expectations and needs of its users (Law, 2019). The quality of information provided to users and the ability to conduct evaluations on the basis of features and effectiveness from the stakeholders' perspective (i.e., expert and customer evaluation) are crucial for websites (Ip et al., 2011).

Figure 1: Website Evaluation Process



Determining the appropriate methodology (quantitative or qualitative) and evaluation methods is the most important part of the evaluation process to support the application of models and parameters in evaluating websites. Specific measurement methods include counting, user judgment, automation, numerical computation, and a combination of these (Law et al., 2010). Website attributes are mainly appraised by counting the frequency of features and comparing the value obtained to analyze the quality of related features. The use of calculation methods, among others, relates to performance measurement techniques, content richness, and design quality through a quantitative approach. The assessment methods can be categorized according to the people involved in the evaluation process, including academic researchers, industrial practitioners, marketers, suppliers, policymakers, and consumers. Data should come from the most widely used customer and supplier perspectives (Sun et al., 2017). In terms of the consumer's perspective, several methods assess user acceptance and user satisfaction and also contain information related to travelers' suggestions or recommendations. For website features and functionality, experiential value and user preferences are crucial measurements and are in accordance with perceived usefulness, ease of use, accessibility, and user attitude (Law et al., 2010; Sun et al., 2017). Furthermore, website evaluation through consumer decision making can be assessed in terms of need recognition, information search behavior patterns (which are also related to evaluating alternatives sites), purchase decisions related to online booking, perceived effectiveness, and post-purchase behavior. Conversely, the use of more advanced methods (such as software systems) involves automated techniques. This approach was primarily utilized by researchers in the mid-2010s by developing their own evaluation mining tools or using available online tools. This analysis process was faster and more consistent than the manual method. Since 2015, the trend involves a combination of methods from theories and models from other disciplines. The use of a numerical computation approach is a measurable scheme that is readily replicated and suitable for application in long-term strategies. Furthermore, changes in assessment standards have moved from a narrow focus toward the evaluation of website features that reflect the overall user experience in terms of customer satisfaction, functionality, usability, intention to purchase, and an understanding of the psychological aspects of using websites to encourage consumers' favorable behavior (Law, 2019).

Website evaluation in relation to marketing has increased in recent years because websites have become integral to an organization's marketing strategy and its subsequent growth and competitiveness. In the tourism and hospitality industries, a website is often the mechanism by which customers first meet an organization/service provider. Therefore, ensuring good service through website media is crucial. Website service quality is a major determinant of the success of services carried out online. In addition, user experience is the key to an efficient website. Feedback from users will support improvements and continuous development of the website itself. In the context of tourism and hospitality, the quality of online service can create a positive attitude, trust, and satisfaction to provide better solutions and experiences for website visitors. Ultimately, high-quality websites will ensure a higher intention rate for visiting/revisiting users and the achievement of organizational goals. Therefore, tourism and hospitality organizations should conduct systematic and measurable website evaluations according to the characteristics of their sectors. Another consideration is the development of the ICT trend. For example, mobile web browsing challenges web designers to provide a more responsive experience on mobile devices with smaller screen sizes. Furthermore, the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and big

data has changed the productivity and efficiency of the tourism and hospitality industry. These new trends will reconstruct models, parameters, methods, and users' involvement for future website evaluation processes.

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PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4
