



UNDERSTANDING CONSUMERS' INTENTION TO USE ONLINE PROPERTY WEBSITES: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The property industry has played a significant part in the growth of the national economy. However, minimal research has been accomplished regarding the study of consumers' intention to use online property websites, particularly in developing countries. Furthermore, little is known about the underlying factors that influence the consumers in the property industry's intention to use online property websites. Therefore, it is the aim of the study to understand the elements that induce consumers' intention to use the online property websites by employing the technology acceptance model (TAM) as the theoretical model (Mardikyan et al., 2012). The model comprises three independent variables, namely the perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived trustworthiness, while a consumers' intention to use the online property websites is chosen as the dependent variable. These variables and their association with each other are not only explored, but in future research, they will be empirically tested.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The property industry has played a significant role in the national economic system. The need for the property industry to utilize social media in order to become connected with all of their current and potential customers, members within the industry and other organizations cannot be underestimated (Siamagka et al., 2011; Sohn et al., 2011). In the context of Malaysia, the economic development system has driven improvement in the real estate industry. The Rehda Institute reported that 376,583 transactions had been recorded in the year 2010 worth RM107.44

billion. Moreover, the compound annual growth reported growth rate is 50.7% in the median cost (PropertyGuru, 2016).

Online property websites are an important medium in social media advertising. In recent years, it has created more financial returns compared to those generated by advertisements run by national newspapers. Classified advertising aids the sustainability of press freedom. It cannot be denied that a large number of employees are hired by the classified advertising industry. Nevertheless, compared to the advertising in the main printed mass media, classified advertising is less censored. However, academia perceives the classified advertisements with condescension, and they have been largely neglected (Lorimor, 1977). This article examines the elements that induce consumers' intention to use the online property websites by employing the technology acceptance model (TAM) as the theoretical model classified advertising is defined and managed. It takes into consideration the irony of the classified industry, its viewpoints as well as the employment prospects that it offers. Despite obtaining benefits from its full utilization of social media, many governing bodies were able to perform more effectively and more upright against their competitors (Parveen et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2014). This is because these companies managed to reach out extensively to their consumers and had the chance to build a relationship with their potential consumers using online classified ads-websites.

The value chain in the property brokerage industry is bound to be integrated and recognized, as people are now relying on the internet to use online property websites. It will be more extensive if the property industry engages more online networks rather than operating offline. Prior research indicated that the scale existence of the economies provided through the information on the websites of real estates is valuable in searching for holiday leasing (Bond et al., 2001; Jaffee et al., 2000; Muhanna, 2000). Most property site on the internet websites presented distinct properties across different countries using features such as graphics, search tool, geographic reach, and virtual tours because those countries known for their tourism will have more information about vacation rentals compared to the listings of non-vacation countries (Bardhan et al., 2000).

Minimal studies have been conducted pertaining to the consumers' intention to use online property websites, particularly in a developing country. Furthermore, there is scant understanding of the underlying factors that influence consumers' intention to use the online property websites. Limited information provided on property websites run by individual brokers disadvantage the broker in the sale of a property. This is because the search cost is often narrowed by the use of the Internet (Gwin, 2004). The fact that the search cost will be disbursed by the buyer is an important factor in determining how the internet will affect the broker's income and the request for the brokerage services (Johnson et al., 2009). Therefore, this research aims to understand the elements that can effect the consumers' intention to use online property websites. The technology acceptance model (TAM) will be employed as the guiding principle in this study. This research generates new insights in understanding the use of online property advertisement and factors that influence the consumer's intention to utilize them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research proposes a conceptual model of the consumers' intention to use an online property website based on the selected Technology Acceptance model (TAM) predictors by including the factor of perceived trustworthiness. TAM has been widely used in numerous situations such as the intention to purchase travel arrangements online (Amaro et al., 2015), the intention to execute software piracy (Wagner et al., and the intention to use a flight ticket booking app on mobile devices (Suki et al., 2017). In the present study, TAM is utilised to establish an individual's intention to use an online property website in order to advertise or to search for information about property, using the filtering system through various unified aspects like perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived trustworthiness (Suki et al., 2017).

2.1 The technology acceptance model

The theory acceptance model (TAM) was proposed by Davis et al. (1989) and it is one of the most important theories in predicting and explaining end-user behaviour and system use such as internet related technologies including e-mail, and the World Wide Web (WWW) (Fenech, 1998). Behavioural intention is related to the prediction about the inclination of individuals to execute particular conduct. Since its establishment in the 1980's, TAM has been used in relation to numerous technologies and several applications and replications (Davis et al. 2007). The system has also been utilised as the platform to investigate consumers' acceptance of virtual stores, and it has been recognised as a valid approach (Gillenson et al., 2002). However, in a study conducted by Pallister et al. (2005) the association between attitude and intention has been questioned due to the limited effect between attitude and intention. In addition, Pallister et al. (2005) pointed out that as a conclusion, attitude has not been included in this study to limit the focus (Chandio et al. 2014).

2.2 Perceived ease of use

The term 'perceived ease of use' can be defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (Davis et al., 1989, p. 320). In the context of this research, 'perceived ease of use' is considered as the consumers' perception that minimal effort is required to use the online property websites. There are many technical and interactive features in property databases which necessitate the consumers to engage in in-depth cognitive efforts, in comparison to other users. According to Chandio et al., (2014), property agents or clients require access to the information systems to find information related to the property via the Internet. This allows them to reduce the decision-making time and allows them to make an informed decision about purchasing or selling property online. If they perceive that using the online resources is easier, they are more likely to engage these systems in their decision-making process (Davis et al. 1989, Venkatesh et al., 2000). The consumers' perception about the ease of use influences people's attitudes regarding the use or their usage intent about the information systems (Capo et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2013). Prior researchers also uncovered that the link between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness is significant (Davis et al., 1989). Based on the above discussion, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Perceived ease of use will have a significant positive relationship with consumers' behavioural intention to use online property websites.

2.3 Perceived usefulness

The term "perceived usefulness" can be defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his/her job performance" (Davis et al., 1989, p. 453). This study deliberates the perception of the consumers that the use of the property websites would amplify consumers' performance in terms of information retrieval. Earlier scholars noted that the concept of perceived usefulness is a crucial element that influences the user's acceptance, intention, satisfaction, and usage behaviour (Davis et al., 1989, Sun et al., 2013). Likewise, a study related to e-information resources found a positive correlation between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in the context of Evidence Based Medicine (EBM). The findings indicate that the respondents, in this case the physicians, agreed that the system is suitable and adequate for their workplace (Chen et al., 2004; Seddon, 1997). In relation to this literature, this study posits the subsequent hypothesis:

H2: Perceived usefulness will have a significant positive relation on consumers' behavioural intention to use online property websites.

2.4 Perceived trustworthiness

Trust is related to an individual's anticipation and tendency to experience vulnerability similar to the findings by Sitkin et al. (1998). Trust involves two parties - the one who places trusts on another person and the one who is being trusted. In the context of this study, trust is "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable from the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Davis et al. 1995). Trust has previously been investigated in relation to systems and operations that involve web-based purchases and sales of services and goods as well as online investment (Carter et al., 2005; García et al., 2009; Gutman et al., 2016). In the current context, property investors and consumers fundamentally rely on the performance of the online property website because these websites enable consumers to use them when necessary; the success of the system and the reliability of the websites in term of security information depends heavily on the element of trust (McKnight et al., 2002). Earlier studies discovered that trust is a key contributing factor that influences the consumer's intentions to make a purchase and positively influence customers' purchase intentions (Gutman et al., 2016; White et al., 2006). Furthermore, the presence of the element of trust in TAM is key as it adds to a better rate of adoption of the online system (Wu et al., 2005). In line with this literature, it is posited that:

H3: Trust will have a significant positive relation on the consumers' behavioural intention to use online property websites.

Based on the abovementioned literature, this study proposes a conceptual model as illustrated in Figure 1.

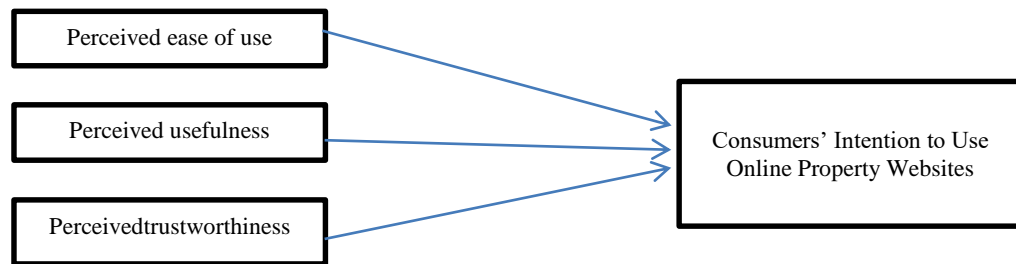


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model.

3. CONCLUSION

This conceptual research explored various elements that influence consumers' intention to use online property websites by using the Technology Acceptance model (TAM) as the guiding principles. The conceptual model proposed in this study was provided by an earlier study in order to understand the consumers' intention to utilise online property websites in Malaysia. This study contributes towards new global challenges thus call for greater focus on property industry outlook in Malaysia with the advancement of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), online ad-website has emerged as one of the fastest platforms to access and recover information about variety property information on the property industry in Malaysia.

Three main concepts and significance have been recommended by this example. A qualitative research methodology has been recommended as a model to study the proposed model. It is hoped that the model proposed in this study can provide new insights in comprehending consumers' intention to use an online property website to purchase or rent a property.

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