Predicting tourist's behavior for acceptance and intention toward using e-Tourist

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the major sources of income for most countries and using the internet as a new channel for providing different services of tourism is growing rapidly. Clearly, focusing on technology alone can't lead the business to success. The key point of successful business in e-tourism is to concentrate on the customers and their behavior. This study aimed to evaluate and validate influential factors responsible for predicting intention of tourists and travelers in e-tourism in Iran, based on a modified model designed according to the principle of Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). For this purpose, the specific features of the model such as "attitude", "subjective norm" as well as "perceived behavior of control" were investigated through a survey involving 259 respondents. The survey data were analyzed by the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to fathom out to what extent the specific factors defined by modified model are influential for motivating people to use e-tourism websites. In this research we not only worked on evaluating a model and the relationship between constructs, but also tried to find specific factors that drive people to use e-tourism. This study investigated the relationships among beliefs about Internet privacy and trustworthiness; in short its shown respondents who believed in the trustworthiness of the tourism websites were more likely to use e-tourism.

Introduction

A revolutionary transformation accelerated by technological advances formed the world-wide economy of 20th century. The quick development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the global expansion of Internet changed industrial structures all over the world[1]. Hence, its influence on daily operations is pervasive such as searching, learning, health, working, shopping and so on. Among industries tourism is not exempt; particularly when tourism has emerged as an industry even more robust than black gold industry. The Internet has also changed the entire value chain of tourism, i.e., creation, marketing, distribution and consumption [2]. Thus several firms have offered online tourism services and claimed that these services are far better than those of travel agencies. Since e-tourism is a new technology, to flourish it needs the support of travel agencies, the government and people, especially in a country such as Iran. According to the Internet Word State reports issued in December 2011, number of Iranian Internet users was 35,000,000 (46/9 % of Population), which indicates a leap in internet usage. However our research has shown that Iranian internet users are not inclined to utilize e-tourism[3].

It is noteworthy that is impossible to acquire the success of e-tourism by only emphasizing on the improvement of the technology. It is indeed the understanding of the consumer behavior which marks the success of e-tourism. And hence, we set to identify and study the important factors that affect the tourist's intention toward the use of online tourism in Iran. For this purpose there are several theoretical and behavioral models.

One of the most usual consumer behavior models is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), proposed by Davis [4]. The other model is Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which, proposed to explain and predict behavior and intention toward use of technology.

In this paper we propose a model about intention toward to use E-tourism by combining the classical TAM model and TPB model, also we added Trust as a secure factor that drive people to use e-tourism.

The result of this study is useful since it will offer guidelines for companies that are related to tourism industry in Iran in understanding behavioral factors for predicting tourist's behavior and intention toward e-tourism and also provide strategies on how to improve Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Customer Relationship Management is a crucial topic to which firms take specific attention.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: section 2 describes the theoretical models and our hypotheses. We explain our research methodology and data analysis in sections 3 and 4 respectively. Section 5 is devoted to the discussions that we conduct based on our empirical data. Finally we draw our conclusions and talk about the future research in section 6.

Literature Review

Acceptance models

Various theoretical approaches have been used to evaluate the determining factors of acceptance and intention toward use of new information technology. These models are based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [5].

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In the following we look into the main features of the theoretical models which are used in the studies intention toward new technologies and acceptance them, this models include TAM and TPB. The efficacy of TAM in predicting and explaining consumer acceptance of e-commerce applications is well established by previous research [6-8]. Despite of several attempts to replicate TAM in understanding user acceptance in e-commerce, a few of them applied it to predict and explain users' acceptance of e-tourism websites. In several studies TPB used for predicting the intention toward to use new technologies, the intention determinants are based on beliefs, Attitudes, Subjective Norm, and perceptions of behavioral control. In addition we define a secure factor which is related to accept and intention toward using e-tourism in particular. Definitions of this model and additional factors are given below.

Tecgnology Acceptance Model

One of the well known models that is used in adoption of information system research is the Technology Acceptance Model, which was extensively applied in order to predict and explain users' acceptance of technological innovation [4]. TAM is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action[9]. According to TAM an individual's behavioral intention to use a technology is determined by two beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness was defined by Davis as "the degree to which a person believes that the use of a particular system would enhance his or her job performance". Davis defines the perceived ease of use as "the degree to which a person believes that the use of a particular system would be free of effort" [4]. TAM proposed that actual use is determined by behavioral intention and subsequently behavioral intention is determined by person's attitude towards using the system and the perceived usefulness. Also, both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use identify attitude. Attitude means the aggregation of weighed beliefs about a particular behavior. The weighs represent favorable or unfavorable evaluation of performing the behavior [10]. So a person's attitude towards a behavior is determined by her salient beliefs and their evaluations. Perceived ease of use has been suggested to positively affect the perceived usefulness [11].TAM model is shown in Fig. 1.

Based on the above explanation and TAM constructs relation, the following hypotheses have been supposed:

H1: Attitude towards using e-tourism will be positively related to intention to use.

H2: Perceived Usefulness will be positively related to Attitude towards using e-tourism.

H3: Perceived ease of use will be positively related to Attitude towards using e-tourism.

H4: Perceived ease of use will be positively related to Perceived Usefulness to use of e-tourism.

Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model
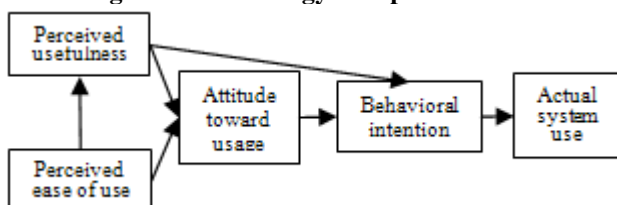
Theory of Planned Behavior

In social psychology, TPB is the common model that has been used in many diverse fields. It has been greatly used to describe human behaviors[12], and the intention to perform some actions or intentions to use a particular technology.

Recently the TPB has been used to predict online behavior such as the use of electronic services through the Internet[13].

According to this theory, the behavior intention of performing a special behavior is identified by a personal factor, a social factor and a controlled factor[12]. The personal factor is represented by Attitude towards the behavior and the social factor is represented by Subjective Norm [10]and the controlled factor is represented by Perceived Behavioral Control. A person's Attitude combined with Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control forms her behavioral intention. TPB model is shown in Fig. 2.

Attitude factor was defined in last section so in continue we describe the other factors of this model. According to Fishbein and Ajzen, Subjective Norms relate to "perceived pressures on a person to perform a given behavior and the person's motivation to comply with those pressures" [10]. [14]. Social pressure can lead to perform (not perform) a behavior [15]. Several studies pointed out that subjective norms influence behavioral intention of consumers [9, 16, 17].

Perceived Behavioral Control refers to the perception of internal and external opportunities, resources, and power to control constraints on performing the behavior. The PBC was joined the model to account for situations where individuals lack complete control over their behaviors[5, 15]

Based on the above explanation and TPB construct relations, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H5: Subjective Norms towards using e-tourism will be positively related to intention to use.

H6: Perceived Behavioral Control will positively influence intention to use e-tourism web sites.

Figure 2: Theory of Planned Behavior
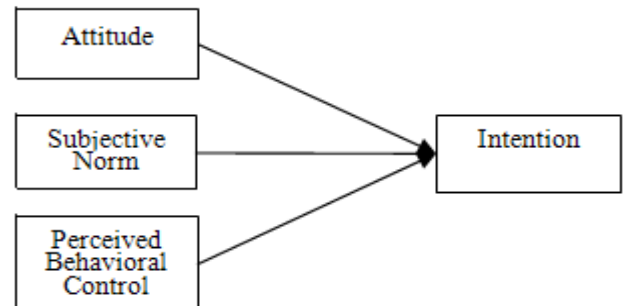
Trust

Depending on different context, there are different definitions of trust. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, trust is defined as "confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing, or the truth of a statement". Trust is a key factor to predict e-service adoptions[18, 19]. Trust in e-commerce has been the center of attention in many studies[11, 20, 21]. E-trust was defined by Gefen as "a general belief in an online seller that results in behavioral intention". Moon divided the determinants of online trust into six dimensions, namely information content, product, transaction, technology, institutional, and consumer-behavioral dimensions[22].

People with different experiences, personality types and cultural backgrounds vary in their propensity to trust. As stated by Ang and Lee, "If the website does not lead the consumer to believe that the merchant is trustworthy, no purchase decision will result" [23]. Therefore trust is a critical factor in stimulating consumer to use the portal website. Based on the aforementioned literature we propose the following hypothesis:

H7: Trust will positively influence intention to use of e-tourism web sites.

Figure.3: The estimated structural model
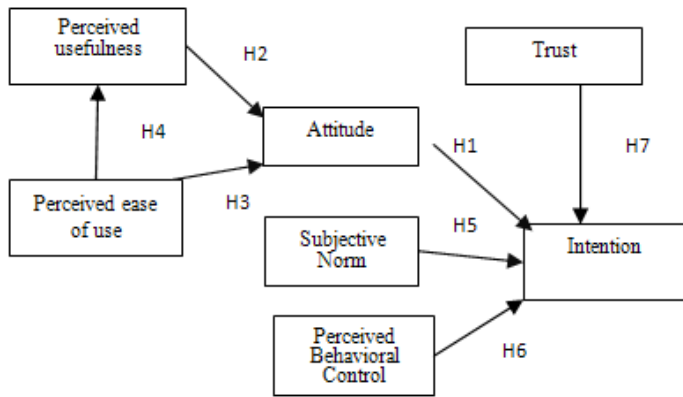
Research Methodology

We examined research hypotheses in the context of e-tourism websites. To investigate the effects of factors on intention to use e-tourism website, we used a questionnaire survey.

Questionnaire design

In this study we used a questionnaire survey to test our theoretical model. The questionnaire was prepared in two languages, English and Persian with two parts. The first part had questions related constructs of our research model and second part indicated demographic questions about the respondent that participate in our survey. For measuring the constructs, and to maintain the consistency with prior study, we used previous research in the context of intention toward using e-commerce and online shopping[6, 8]. Also we had little changes to reflect the e-tourism environment that we found according to our interview with tourists and e-tourism experts. For all items in this part of questionnaire we used 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". The demographic part contains seven questions about sex, education, occupation, using internet and e-tourism. Items used for constructs and demographics shown in Appendix A.

Pilot test

A pilot test was conducted to recognize ambiguous questions. Then, a pre-test was done with 30 respondents for which we used Cronbach's alpha to measure the reliability. Cronbach's alpha for all constructs displayed in TABLE I (values above 0.7 are accepted [3]).

Data collection

The population of this study was the potential travelers in Iran, and data collection was done physically. The purpose of this research is to explain and predict user intention and utilization of e-tourism websites. The respondents were asked to analyze any tourism related website of their own choice. Surveys distributed between 420 people in hotels, airline, entertainment places, etc. From the collected responses this numbers Returned questionnaires with incomplete or invalid answers were eliminate, and 259(61.6 %) valid and complete responses were received.(note that A sample size of 150 and above is deemed sufficient for scale development[8].) In terms of demographics, 56.8% of the respondents were male, about 37.8% of them were between 18 and 24 and 34% were between 25 and 34 years of age. About 57.5% of the sample population had a Bachelor's degree, 34.1% were unemployed and 24.3% were student. About 95.4% had experience of using internet more than one hour in a week. Approximately 45% of them used e-tourism websites. Detailed description of demographics related to the respondents is shown in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

Analyzing the collected data was done in two-step. First, we apply measurement model to measure convergent and discriminate validities. Then, we tested the causal structure of the proposed model using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique supported by linear structural relation (LISREL 8.54).

Measurement Model

Convergent validity is used to evaluate the extent to which some measures that theoretically should be related to each other are actually observed to relate to each other. To remain consistent with prior studies, we used factor loading, Composite Reliability (CR), and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures to examine the convergent validity of the measurement items. The results are shown in TABLE I. All items have factor loadings above 0.5; they ranged from 0.57 to 0.89.

The CR of potential variables in this study model indicates the inner consistency of facet indicators. High reliability stands for high-inner consistency of these indicators. Fornell and Larcker suggest a CR value of more than 0.7 [19]. The average variance extracted (AVE) of potential variables reflects the average variance explain ability of each measuring variable for the potential variables. The higher the AVE, the higher the benefit of potential variables will be. As shown in Table II, the AVE values of this study model are higher than 0.5, the standard value suggested by Fornell and Larcker. Besides, the discriminate validity is determined by verifying that the average variance of each variable is greater than the relationship value of each pair of variables by 0.5 [24, 25]. The average variance of the variables in this study is greater than the relationship value of each pair of variables, indicating sufficient discriminate validity.

Therefore, all three requirements for convergent validity (factor loading, Composite Reliability, and the Average Variance Extracted) were demonstrated. We also used Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistent reliability of each construct. The Cronbach's alpha for all constructs of proposed model presented in Table I.

Discriminate validity describes the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs. Regarding to discriminate validity, the square root AVE estimates in each construct should be larger than correlation coefficients between the construct and any other constructs. In TABLE II diagonal values indicate square root AVE of each construct and other values are correlation significance between two constructs. All diagonal values are greater than other values. Therefore, discriminate validity is demonstrated.

We assessed the overall goodness-of-fit using the chi-square test. Other fit indices (namely GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, and RFI) were considered in conjunction with the chi-square. These statistics, which are shown in TABLE III, proposed that our research model has obtained an adequate model fit. The other fit indices, except AGFI, indicated that our proposed model obtained an adequate model fit. The low AGFI values may have been due to the small sample size used[26].

Hypotheses testing and Path analysis

All hypotheses presented in the research were tested using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. Hypothesized relationships were also simultaneously tested via path analysis. Fig. 5 and TABLE IV show the path coefficients in the research model.

use with perceived usefulness ($\beta=0.36$, $p<0.001$) were significant and positive; these variable explained 23% of the

variance of Curiosity (In this research, the Intention to use e-tourism website was predicted by Attitude (β=0.87, p<0.001), Subjective Norm (β=0.35, p<0.001), Perceived Behavioral Control (β=0.32, p<0.01) and Trust (β=0.13, p<0.05); these variables with each other explained 89% of the variance of Intention (R^2=0.89). Attitude was predicted by Perceived Usefulness (β=0.42, p<0.001), Perceived Ease of Used (β=0.28, p<0.01) these variables together explained 53% of the variance of Attitude (R^2=0.53). Finally, relationships between perceiver ease of R^2=0.23). Therefore, all of hypotheses were supported.

Figure 4: research model (* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p<0.001)
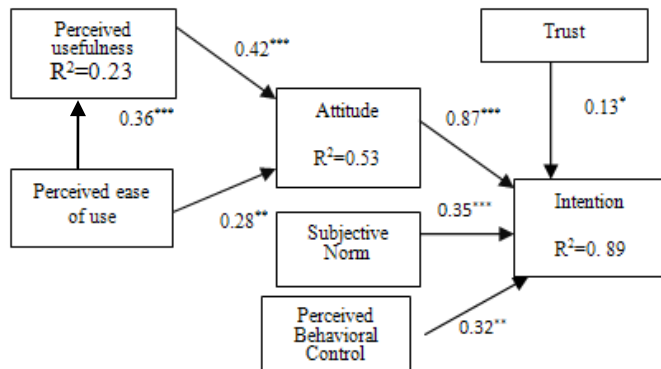
For obtain close examination, we estimate direct, indirect and total effects of variable on attitude toward use and intention to use e-tourism websites. According to the indirect effects of variable, It is significant that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use have high indirect effect (via attitude) on intention to use e-tourism websites. This implies that attitude toward use can be an important mediator between these factors and intention to use e-tourism websites.

Discussion

This study explores the subject of customer's intention to use e-tourism websites. We proposed a model based on combining the TPB and TAM model for the e-tourism context. The outcomes of this research help the professionals and marketing managers for making strategic plans and design effective websites to convince customers to use e-tourism. Our results show that Attitude towards behavior, Subjective Norm, PBC and Trust has direct significant positive relationship with behavioral intention to use e-tourism. The direct positive relationship of Attitude, Subjective Norm and PBC is in line with the results of other researches [15, 27-31].

Our findings also indicate that perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use are predictors of Attitude. All of hypothesis shown in this research, were found to be significant. The R-square of 89% for Intention to use e-tourism and R-square of 53% for Attitude toward use e-tourism, indicate the total explanatory power of our research model and imply that TPB model with TAM model is competent to describing a relatively high proportion of variation of Intention to use e-tourism.

According to our results Trust has influence on customer's Intention to use e-tourism websites. Hence e-tourism agencies should ensure consumers that their personal information will be kept private and their credit card numbers will be secure. The information provided by e-tourism websites should also be trustworthy and authentic.

Our results state that Attitude has the most influence on customer's intention to use e-tourism websites. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the predictor of consumer's attitude toward the use of e-tourism website. Our findings exhibit that Perceived Usefulness has the most impact on Attitude toward

use of e-tourism websites. It implies that consumers were more likely to use e-tourism websites when they view that it is useful. Therefore e-tourism agencies should offer more effective information and product, and they should also provide comparison facilities. Also our findings indicate that Perceived Ease of Use has a significant relationship with Perceived Usefulness and Attitude. This implies that tourism operators and web developers should pay attention to making clear and understandable websites; customers should learn the websites easily.

This study indicates the importance of the Subjective Norms on potential users with no prior experience. Accordingly, it is concluded that the use of e-tourism could be increased if the tourist perceive that the majority of influential relatives and friends expect her to use e-tourism. Even though information about e-tourism is available, yet it is incomplete in some aspect and consequently most Iranians do not use e-tourism in regular bases. With the incomplete information, potential consumers would tend to rely on information from referent group or individuals as a trusted information source about e-tourism. With positive information and social pressure potential consumers could be influenced by the referent group or individuals, and they are more likely to have behavioral intention to use e-tourism.

Perceived Behavioral Control was found to be another important antecedent of the e-tourism intention. This result was expected since tourists cannot use the e-tourism website if they do not have the resources and the knowledge necessary for using the website. Nowadays many Iranians use Internet and most of them have confidence to use new internet technologies. In addition they should have access to computer, internet and payment cards in every situation that can be used for internet purchase. Correspondingly, the government and travel agencies can develop these resources and have a leader ship role in the improvement of e-tourism industry.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This study explain acceptance of tourism website and intention towards using them with identifies affecting factors from a sample of Iranian tourists. There exist several studies that use TPB and TAM model to discuss the acceptance and intention towards E-tourism. The results of this research show that combining the TPB and TAM model is a good predictor of behavior for inexperienced users of the e-tourism. The features that cause tourists accept e-tourism and incline them towards e-tourism and build, maintain, and improve customer relationships is a significant subject in a country. We add Trust as factor which affective on acceptance and intention towards using tourism websites, in addition to the TPB and TAM model's factors. The study showed that predicting the tourists' behavior for acceptance and intention to use e-tourism depends on Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavior Control and Trust (Respectively).

There are some limitations in this study. First, e-tourism is a new technology in Iran; so, we evaluated the predictor of intention to use e-tourism and not the real use. Although prior studies states that intention to use is the most important predictor of real use, but we think the other factors may also influence the actual use. Therefore, we suggest that in further study one should consider the actual use of e-tourism websites. Future research should use decomposing the belief structures into multi-dimensional structures improve intellect of these relationships. In other hand the respondents were selected randomly from tourists who had never experienced or experienced using e-tourism websites.

Table 1. Convergent validity and Construct reliability

Construct	Questionnaire items	Factor loading	t-Value	Composite reliability (CR)	Average extracted	Cronbach alpha
Attitude	ATT1	0.78	-	0.81	0.60	0.81
	ATT2	0.79	11.08			
	ATT3	0.75	10.51			
Subjective Norm	SN1	0.67	5.03	0.8343	0.5594	0.821
	SN2	0.82	5.20			
	SN 3	0.80	5.20			
	SN 4	0.69	5.00			
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC 1	0.81	5.27	0.7918	0.5317	0.720
	PBC 2	0.70	4.82			
	PBC 3	0.67	5.85			
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU1	0.70	-	0.53	0.85	0.85
	PU2	0.68	8.61			
	PU3	0.77	9.54			
	PU4	0.72	9.03			
	PU5	0.77	9.51			
Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU)	PEOU1	0.70	-	0.88	0.67	0.88
	PEOU 2	0.76	9.22			
	PEOU 3	0.74	9.04			
	PEOU4	0.78	9.46			
Trust	T1	0.77	10.99	0.81	0.52	0.81
	T2	0.69	10.27			
	T3	0.75	10.51			
	T4	0.68	-			
Intention	INT1	0.81	-	0.80	0.67	0.81
	INT2	0.83	11.47			

TABLE 2: DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

Construct	ATT	SN	PBC	PU	PEOU	T	INT
ATT	0.77						
SN	0.262	0.74					
PBC	0.132	0.29	0.72				
PU	0.52	0.33	0.23	0.72			
PEOU	0.47	0.28	0.21	0.35	0.75		
T	0.53	0.122	0.128	0.38	0.42	0.72	
INT	0.73	0.424	0.195	0.45	029	0.50	0.82

TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF FIT INDICES.

Fit indices	Structural model	recommended value
RMSEA	0.054	< 0.08
X^2	998	
Df	543	
X^2/Df	1.8	<2.5
CFI	0.91	> 0.9
GFI	0.82	> 0.8
AGFI	0.77	> 0.8
RMR	0.041	< 0.05

TABLE 4: PATH COEFFICIENTS AND SIGNIFICANCES OF HYPOTHESES

	Hypotheses	Path coefficient	T-Value	Support
H1	Attitude→ Intention	0.87	7.80	Yes
H2	Perceived usefulness →Attitude	0.42	4.79	Yes
H3	Perceived ease of used→Attitude	0.28	3.28	Yes
H4	Perceived ease of used →Perceived usefulness	0.36	3.91	Yes
H5	Subjective Norm→ Intention	0.35	3.30	Yes
H6	Perceived Behavioral Control → Intention	0.32	2.97	Yes
H7	Trust → Intention	0.13	2.07	Yes

Appendix A: constructs items

Constructs	Questionnaire items
Attitude	In my opinion, it is desirable to use e-tourism websites
	Using e-tourism websites is a pleasant experience
	Using e-tourism websites is a wise idea
Subjective Norm	Most people who are important to me think it is a good idea to use e-Tourism.
	Most of my acquaintances expect me to use e-tourism.
	My friends and family are approved of using e-Tourism
	Most people recommend I should use e-Tourism portals in arranging my travel plans.
Perceived behavioral control	I would not have any difficulties using the Internet for interacting (e.g., on-line purchase orders) with Tourism companies
	I have knowledge, ability and resources required to use e-Tourism website.
	I can use e-Tourism website in a good way
Usefullness	Using e-tourism websites enables me to accomplish my tasks more quickly
	Using e-tourism websites can increase my productivity in shopping or information seeking (e.g., save money).
	With using E-tourism websites, I can compare information
	With using E-tourism websites, I can gather information.
Ease of Use	Learning to use e-tourism websites is easy for me.
	e-tourism websites are clear and understandable to use
	It is easy for me to become skillful in using e-tourism websites. I find e-tourism websites easy to use
Trust	While using e-tourism websites, I believe my personal information will be kept private
	While using e-tourism websites, I believe my credit card numbers will be secure
	I trust the information provided by e-tourism websites The chance of having a technical failure in online transaction of e- tourism websites is decreasing.
Intention	For using e-Tourism in future I'll plan.
	I will strongly recommend others to use e-tourism websites.

Demographic data for respondents

Characteristics	Item	subject frequency	Percentage
Gender	male	146	**56.4**
	female	**112**	**43.2**
Age	18-24	98	37.8
	25-34	88	34
	35-44	45	17.4
	Over 45	**15**	**5.8**
Education level	Diploma	39	15.1
	Bachelor	149	57.5
	Master	47	18.1
	PHD	**20**	**7.7**
Use of internet (hours a week)	Under 1 hour	12	4.6
	1-5 hours	91	35.1
	5-10 hours	48	18.5
	Over 10 hours	**108**	**41.7**
Use of tourism website	never	**82**	**24.4**
	Once a year	**40**	**11.9**
	Twice a year	**35**	**10.4**
	Three time a year	**16**	**4.8**
	Four times a year	**15**	**4.5**
	Five time and more	**42**	**12.5**

So in future we can conduct studies to compare the adoption factors between the experienced and inexperienced users of the e-tourism websites.

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