

Factors That Influence Online Behaviour In Purchasing Hotel Room Via Website Among Tourists

Raja Norliana Raja Omar¹, Nik Alif Amri Nik Hashim², Eni Noreni Mohamad Zain³, Shah Iskandar Fahmie Ramlee⁴, Ahmad Faiz Abdul Halim⁵, Amer Firdaus Mohd Rohzi⁶, Mohd Hadi Asyraf Nor Azlin⁷, Wan Muhammad Nuriman Wan Mat⁸

^{1,2,5,6,7,8}*Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan*

^{3,4}*Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan*

Email: norliana.ro@umk.edu.my

Abstract: One of the fastest-growing industries in the world is the tourism industry, which is one of the major contributors to the services sector including Malaysia's economy. In essence, the Tourism and Hospitality industry plays a major role in supporting Malaysian tourism. This paper investigated the factors that influence online booking behaviour by employing a quantitative research approach through descriptive research. These factors include independent variables such as location, price, safety, and facilities that may affect the online reviews and valence reviews towards the dependent variable, which is the hotel choice. Furthermore, the aim of this study is to discover or describe the behaviour in the usage of hotel booking systems. With the fast-growing tourism and hospitality industry, the pattern of hotel booking has also changed from the conventional booking system to online and paperless booking. This study has contributed to the literature on Tourism and Hospitality area that requires more research.

Keywords: Tourism Industry, Reliability, Booking.com, Online Booking, Technology

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality industry is an important sector in our country. Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of people to countries or places out from their usual environment. The purpose of their movement could be personal or business/professional (Cooper, et al., 2008). In their travel, the accommodation provides the base from which tourists can engage in any activities at a destination; thus, travelling will be incomplete in absence of accommodation (Poudel, 2013; Nawi et al, 2019).

Accommodation is one of the most important hospitality products that tourists need while traveling in a country. Accommodation or lodging is, by a long way, the largest and most ubiquitous sub-sector within the tourism economy. With few exceptions, tourists require a location where they can rest and revive during their travel through, or stay within, a tourism destination (Poudel, 2013). While traveling in a country, certain factors may affect tourists' hotel selection to ensure that their accommodation is suitable for their purpose of traveling in the country. In order to search for the hotel criteria, they may need to walk-in to the hotel to gather information about its accommodation; however, it is very impossible for the tourists to gather information thusly, especially for outbound tourists. As such, the easier way to gather information and make a reservation is through an online booking system. According to Rayman-Bacchus and Molina (2001), information and computer technology, especially the

Internet, has changed the socioeconomic context of tourism and stimulated further changes (Hashim et al., 2020; Nik Hashim, 2019). There are many online booking systems that are easy and convenient to use such as booking.com.

Problem Statement

Every hotel has a problem to sustain the number of guests every year; hence, one of the solutions that the hotel organisation should consider is by enabling reservations through an online booking system and ensuring that the system is functioning well (Samengon et al., 2020). However, customers have been experiencing circumstances below their expectations than what is offered and published in the hotel booking system, for example, the services and facilities did not meet customer satisfaction and the standards of quality. Moreover, the hotel organisation has also experienced fake bookings that may lead to insufficient hotel rooms to the real customers who intend to reserve the hotel rooms (Nawi et al., 2019). Another arising problem also involves inaccurate information about the establishment location by which the location description in the hotel booking system is not accurate. Last but not least, the booking system price has slightly increased from the standard price as additional service charges have been implemented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Investments from the public and private sectors are vital for the general economic growth as well as sectoral growth such as the tourism sector, and tourism has been considered as a medium for promoting better understanding and peace among nations. According to the World Tourism Organization (2020), tourism refers to travelling for pleasure or business, the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours. Generally, the UNWTO defines tourism in terms that go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only", as people "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure and not less than 24 hours for business and other purposes" (Frangialli, Habermann, Franchet, & Kincannon, 2001). Accommodation is only one component of the hospitality sector per the typology of establishments providing hospitality services (Page, 2009, p.255) such as hotels, restaurants, cafes and catering places, night clubs and licensed clubs, takeaway food bars, public houses, canteens, camping and caravanning sites, holiday camps, and short-stay tourist accommodation.

The use of technology in service is undeniably useful to improve service levels and hotel operations in many ways (Aziz et al., 2019; Hashim et al., 2020). Being adaptable with fast-growing technologies, online booking keeps the reservation system periodically, for example, 20% of the reservations in the United States are made through the internet (Jin-Zhao & Jing, 2009). Innovations should also take place inside the guest rooms with WiFi, portable tablet for lights and aircond switch, auto-sleep televisions, and auto-lock door for safety. Most of these technological innovations will cost greatly but they will also increase guests' safety and boost their satisfaction.

Buhalis (2003) in his book entitled "E-tourism: Information Technology for Strategic Tourism Management" defines e-tourism as "the digitisation of all the processes and value chains in the tourism, travel, hospitality, and catering industries that enable organisations to maximise their efficiency and effectiveness" (Buhalis, 2003). E-tourism is also defined as "the application of ICTs (information and communication technologies) on the tourism industry" (Buhalis, 2011). Furthermore, e-tourism can offer "a possibility to create added value for tourist products" (Buhalis, 2011). The evolution of the Internet has implications in all fields of activities,

especially in tourism and it has changed the strategic and operational management of businesses in the tourism sector. The internet supports all business functions (e-commerce, e-marketing, e-human resources, e-management, etc.) and all sectors in the tourism industry such as e-airlines, e-hospitality, e-tour operators, e-destinations, and e-travel agencies (Buhalis, 2008). An online booking system is a software that users can use for reservation management, which allows tour and activity operators to accept bookings online and manage their phone and in-person bookings. However, they also do so much more than that as they are basically a huge step-up from the spreadsheet booking system.

The Internet has a significant impact on the tourism sector as reflected in numerous studies on the issues related to the topic (Craig Standing, Jean-Pierre Tang-Taye & Michel Boyer, 2014). Nowadays, with the availability of a new distribution channel through the Internet, travel product suppliers such as airlines, car rental companies, and hotels have taken the opportunity to revolutionise their traditional distribution methods by launching their products on the Internet (Law, Law & Wai, 2001). Consumer access and web usage, thus, present a challenge to businesses as 'technology reach' continues to grow (Ghoreishii et al., 2020; Rus & Negrusa, 2014).

These outcomes are rather confusing as most studies have recognised more elements of perceived service quality to be more significant to website users. Law and Hsu (2006), for instance, evaluated the components of lodging sites (reservation information, hotel facilities, property contact details, surrounding area, and website management) and the characteristics of each measurement esteemed by online users. Evidently, the most significant website attributes are the room rates, payment availability and security (reservation information), location in maps, hotel and room amenities (facilities information), hotel address and e-mail (contact information), telephone, transportation to the hotel, airports and sights (surrounding area information), up-to-date information, multilingual site, and short download time (website management). Sparks & Browning (2010) had also applied comparable criteria for website evaluation similar to the previous study where the criteria are divided into technical, marketing, consumer perspective, and destination information perspective.

Named geographical place (such as an airport, hotel, container freight station, or terminal) that provides permanent facilities for the movement of goods (such as customs, storage, and other support services) is designated for a stated purpose. The processes of new construction as well as the theming and standard of brands highlight the importance of location, which is presumed to be the most distinctive factor in shaping the market for hotels, although the location is only considered in interurban terms. Hotels, however, are classier according to the following locations: London; seaside resorts; urban locations outside London; transport routes and rural locations. Apparently, there is little research on the significance of the intraurban location, although our findings suggest that it is an important factor (Egan, 2000).

Accommodation location is very important for tourists as it plays a major role in the convenience of their travel. This aspect will always be selected based on the location that is close to the city they are visiting to make it easier for them to continue their vacation and explore the area. At this rate, there is a 3- to 5-star hotel for those who are attracted to this area or interested in something of luxury and style close to the downtown area (Samengon, et al., 2020).

Locations near a monument are also great tourist attractions that symbolise a country. The selected location is near a frequently visited area such as the monument as one of the important options for all tourists to stay in the area. For example, some people understand that the monument is located at a historical place, which attracts tourists to learn more about the

monument. There are hotels with a classical concept that portrays a historical character surrounding the area. For example, they will also play a role in narrating the history of the monument, especially to those who are curious and passionate about history and its origin. Meanwhile, backpackers who prefer to use public transport will choose a hotel near the metro and bus. Some visitors find it easier to change the area they are visiting using public transport because it is easy to tell their destinations to the bus drivers. Besides, this area often faces traffic congestion. Additionally, hotels located in this area are budget hotels with only 2-3 stars.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative research method was applied. As the booking system on the internet is relatively a new in the tourism and hospitality industry, customer behaviour in this industry is always changing day-by-day due to several factors and surrounding as well as the latest trends and technology that are available or applied by the hotels in this industry. Some hotels in the tourism and hospitality industry apply different booking systems and technology in their organisations, and some of the organisations that are new to this system sometimes have different actions and theoretical regulations.

The population of this study includes the tourist's users of the selected hotel booking system (booking.com) in Kelantan, Malaysia. The hotels that we choose represent the entire hotels in Kelantan to ensure that the online booking system is reliable for the tourists to use. As secondary data are required, this study targeted at least 400 online reviews from the guests who had stayed in the 4 hotels selected in this study. However, interviews with the 4 hotels could not be conducted due to the Covid-19 pandemic; hence, the total participants of this study are stated in table 1.

No.	HOTEL
1.	PERDANA HOTEL
2.	GRAND RIVERVIEW HOTEL
3.	GRAND RENAI HOTEL
4.	HOLIDAY VILLA

Table 1. Hotels in Kelantan

The hotel online reviews give advantages and real situations to the users of the online booking system as they can view the comments and reviews from the hotels' previous guests before choosing and deciding which hotel to book and stay at.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Thematic analysis was used to obtain the data for this study. Thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data, which involves several steps that should be made to obtain the data and ensure that the data can be used properly. The first step is familiarisation, where the required data were obtained from Booking.com comprising four hotels: Perdana Hotel, Grand Riverview Hotel, Grand Renai Hotel, and Holiday Villa Hotel. Subsequently, 100 reviews were collected from the previous guests of each hotel and the reviews were taken per the latest date. The second step is coding, by which after collecting 100 reviews from each hotel, the reviews were then coded to describe their content where the codes represent every 100 respondents who reviewed their stay at the hotel. The third step is generating the themes, whereby each coded review was read and categorised into different themes. The themes were created using the same review content as the other review codes, and each created theme gives information and helps obtain the data for the study. The fourth step is theme reviews, where the data were categorised into the created themes, which should be useful and accurately represent the data, and placed in the correct content segment. If there were any misplacements, the themes would be removed

or new themes would be created or placed in the existing themes. The fifth step is defining and naming themes, by which after finalising the list of themes, the themes were then defined and named. Defining themes involves formulating exactly what each theme means and how it helps in understanding the data, while naming themes involves coming up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme.

The last step is writing the analysis of data. As each hotel has its own theme, the theme was then categorised into positive reviews and negative reviews. The positive and negative reviews were further combined with the four hotels and categorised according to the same themes, also into both positive and negative reviews. From the combined reviews, the data were taken to identify the factors that influence online behaviour in purchasing hotel rooms via Booking.com among tourists in Kelantan. Based on the collected reviews, a few themes were identified from the previous guests at the four selected hotels. The reviews consist of positive and negative reviews, ratings, and details from both customers and servers. The first theme of the review is about the facilities, which were reviewed the most by the customers. To the customers, the facilities are the main features that need to be emphasised when booking a hotel room such as room size, furniture, bathroom, and comfort level. If these criteria are not fulfilled, the customers will not be satisfied with the hotel service. Besides, easy access of facilities such as the gymnasium, swimming pool, sauna, and Jacuzzi are also needed as the main attention of the hotel or the service provider and they need to be well-maintained. Furthermore, air ventilation must also be in a good condition and suitable for the surrounding. To increase customer satisfaction, the service provider must adequately prepare the facilities, such as an adequate and safe parking area for the in-house occupancy.

The hotel facilities should suit the hotel price and rating. While some facilities such as television channels and internet connection may not be important to the service provider, they are very important to the customers and these facilities need to be repaired if they are not functioning well. Moreover, the hotel lobby and cleanliness should be maintained to sustain the hotel image and standard, apart from considering the decoration of the hotel. The hotel should also advertise frequently and utilise internet marketing technology. However, it is noteworthy to address that advertising mediums such as banners and brochures may not be effective to the customers. The advertised services must also be in line with the hotel provider.

The next theme from the customer reviews is regarding the food provided by the hotel, which is one of its essential services that include the morning breakfast, lunch, dinner, and food room service. The food prepared must be fresh and delicious with a wide variety of food menu, especially the food in the buffet line. When providing traditional food, the food must have an authentic taste that fulfil the taste of the local community instead of “delicious” only. This will attract customers whilst promoting the local culture. Furthermore, the food also needs to be adequate for the in-house occupancy. Besides, the food price must be the same as its quality, besides suitable for the customers of every age group. The hotel kitchen team should also improvise the food rotation menu to ensure its variety upon being served to the customers, especially the long-staying ones. The foodservice team plays a big role in ensuring that the customers enjoy their food with high-quality service and a perfect taste of cooking.

The next theme of attention by the customers is regarding the hygiene of the hotel, which is important to attract customers to stay at the hotel besides increasing the number of repeat customers, hotel rating, image, and the standard. The quality of hygiene should be maximised to ensure the health of the hotel staff and hotel visitors. As for this theme, some of the customers based on the reviews were not very satisfied with the bathroom condition. Some of the bathrooms were cleaned properly and some of the customers were also complaining about ants in the bathroom. As for the hotel room, the customers complained about the stains and dullness

in the hotel room, window, and carpet. Some of the rooms also had a bad odour, which was possibly due to previous guests who smoked in the room, and the room was not cleaned using air fresheners. The customers further complained that the swimming pool hygiene is not satisfactory because the pool maintenance job was poorly done. Hence, each hotel must ensure that the housekeeping department and all staff perform their job well.

Despite the negative reviews, there are also positive reviews from the customers where some of the customers stated that the hotel area and rooms are clean, nice, well-maintained, neat, and excellent. Furthermore, most of the positive reviews also rated good food quality, strategic hotel location, and stable internet connection on the Booking.com server. In terms of location, most of the reviewers agreed that the hotel location is the factor influencing their hotel choice. Indeed, hotels that are located in the centre of the city and near to state attractions such as the shopping mall, airport, and other amenities amaze the customers. The location is highly accessible to the customers, especially for them to explore tourist attractions and use public transport. However, some of the customers did not agree that the location near to the city centre is good for them due to noises from the main road, dusty environment, and farther from the mosque; hence lowering customer expectations.

From the perspective of price, Booking.com has clearly stated all information about price, location, and facilities; hence, price should not be an issue. All of the categories of room, price, and others were chosen per the price range that the customers could afford. Most of the customers based on their reviews were satisfied with the price offered by the service provider. Through the hotel booking system, they could get a reasonable price and value for money. However, some of the customers complained that the room quality did not meet their expectations and there were also some issues on additional charges that were rather high.

The aspect of hotel safety met the expectations of customers who stayed at the hotel. Although an open parking space is provided to the customers, the parking space is always guarded by the security personnel at the hotel area. However, one customer stated that the carpark at Hotel Grand Renai has no security and shares with a supermarket. This is concerning to anyone who intends to book a stay at the hotel. Some customers were also complaining that the hotel room has no security officer. Besides, as stated by some customers, the window and toilet doorknob in some hotel rooms also did meet the standards of security.

Most of the customers were satisfied with the service from the hotel staff who were extremely helpful, friendly, courteous, and efficiently satisfy the customers. Sometimes, hotels may experience a lack of staff to cover the hotel operations and the problems might interfere with the service quality of the hotel staff. Inexperienced staff such as new trainees and new staff members were slow and incompetent as complained by the customers. Other than the stated themes, most of the customers also gave general reviews. Overall, they are positively satisfied with the overall services and the hotel was rated excellent, exceptional, and wonderful. Figure 1 shows a pie chart of the guests who stayed at the four hotels selected in this study. Most of the reviews were posted by hotel guests from Malaysia with 90%, followed by Singapore and Thailand with 3% and 2%, respectively, while the rest of the countries were the minority.

Table 1 shows the number of reviews taken in this study. The total number of reviews is 401, which involves a total of 16 countries. There are 361 reviews from Malaysia and followed by Singapore with 11 reviews and Thailand with 8 reviews. There are also 2 reviews from Poland, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Canada, respectively, and only one review from the other countries. Figure 2 shows the themes of the reviews after they were categorised into the same theme with 650 reviews after a total of 401 reviews were categorised into the themes

based on customer reviews. Specifically, there are 413 positive reviews and 237 negative reviews, whereby the reviews are mainly about the facilities.

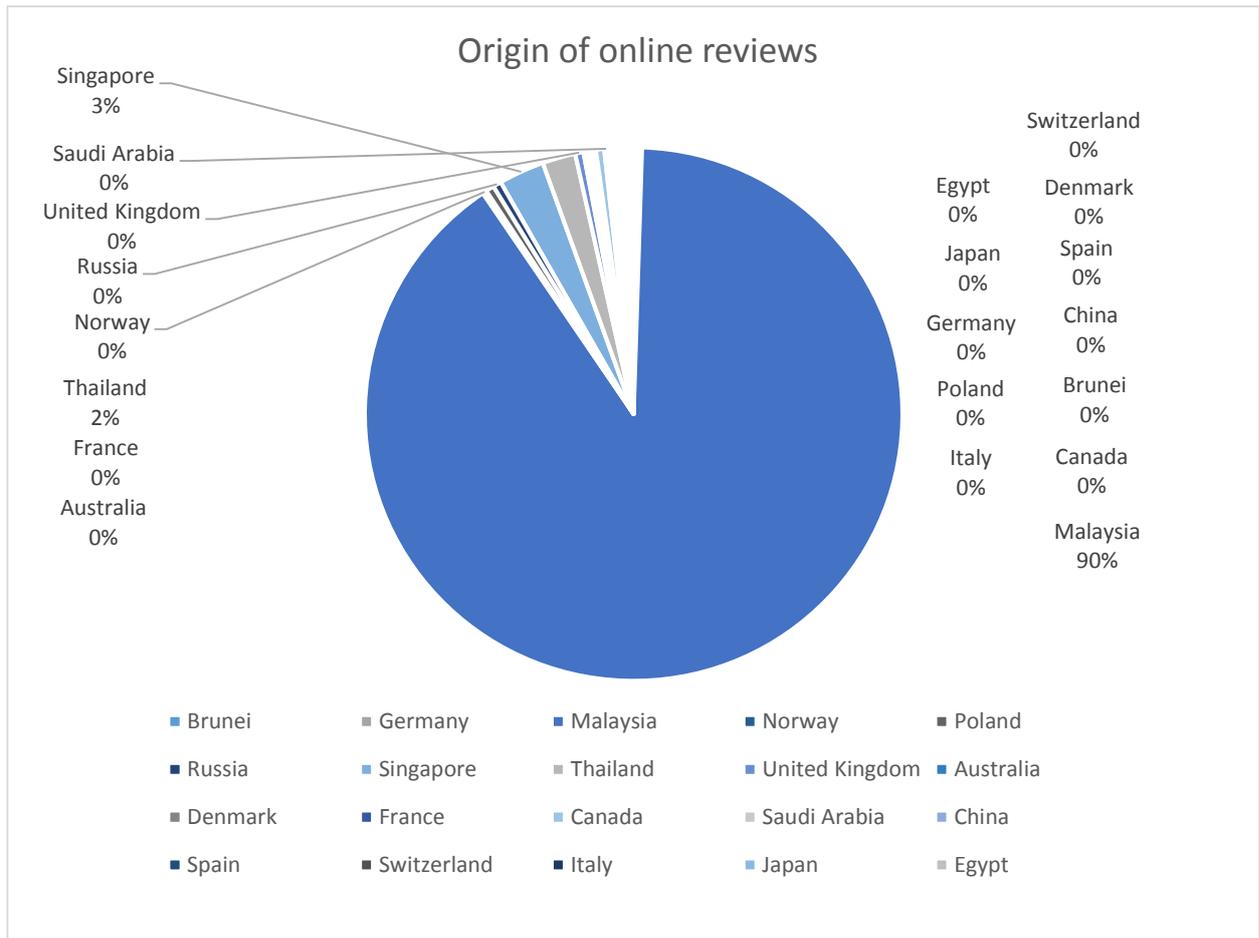


Figure 1. The origin of the online reviewers

Brunei	1
Germany	1
Malaysia	361
Norway	1
Poland	2
Russia	2
Singapore	11
Thailand	8
United Kingdom	2
Australia	1
Denmark	1
France	1
Canada	2
Saudi Arabia	1
China	1
Spain	1
Switzerland	1
Italy	1
Japan	1

Egypt	1
TOTAL	401

Table 2. The origin of the online reviewers

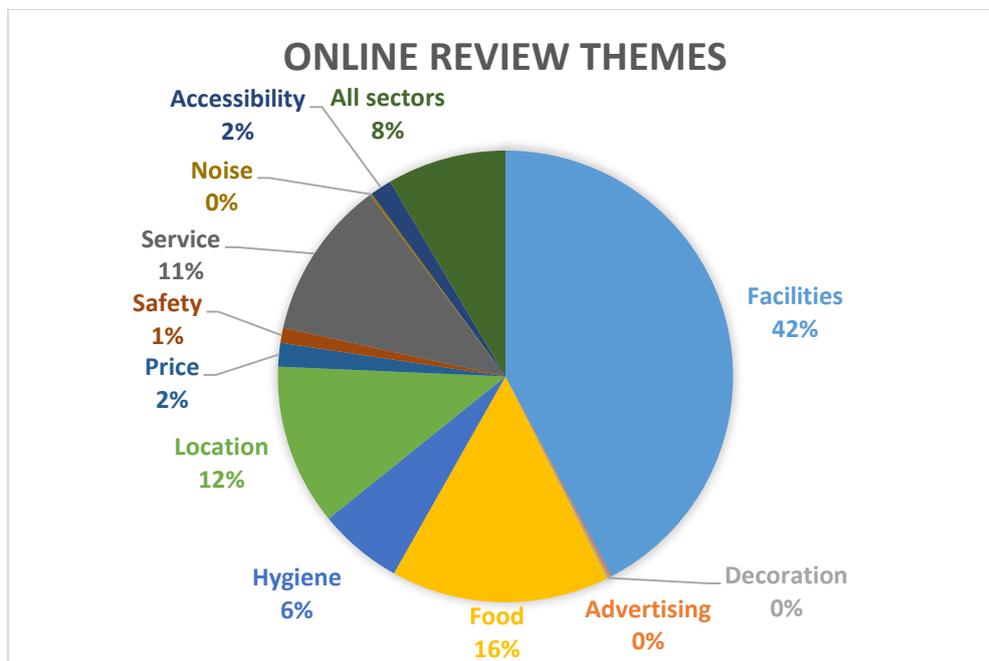


Figure 2. The themes in the online reviews

The results from both collections revealed that the key theme findings mostly involve internal and external factors of the hotel establishment. The most highlighted themes of the study are customer service, facilities, amenities, safety, and price, which grant the profits gained by each establishment. The online platform was organised by the Booking.com company, a mobile application via a travel metasearch engine for online lodging reservations. The Booking.com application also contains information that includes lodging establishment details such as room occupancy, room type, room price, hotel location, and hotel facilities. Through online booking, customers can compare the pros and cons of each listed accommodation based on the information provided by each hotel based on the location and other details on the Booking.com application. Evidently, the most highlighted themes are facilities, food, location, security, price, and services. There are also several unidentified themes that are not related to the increase in the lodging establishment rating.

Internet technology has totally influenced the increase in the development of the online hotel reservation system. In addition, the internet makes it easy to transmit and spread information as quickly and transparently as the marketing objective. Most hoteliers and businesses have experienced a huge impact following the trending era of modern technology. Besides working as the marketing and communication tools, technology is also one of the biggest challenges to be faced by the hotel industry in Malaysia, especially in Kelantan. The Booking.com application objectively attracts customers with promotions through various social sites and digital marketing methods. As all systems use the internet, they would not be operational if there is no internet. As such, the internet helps expand and spread information for marketing purposes such as promotions, deals, and vouchers.

Online hotel reservation system like Booking.com relies tremendously on reviews from previous customers through their experiences with the hotel booking of their choice. Reviews, either positive or negative, build up hotel establishment ratings based on the stars rated by the customers. Nowadays, hotel lodging establishment mostly uses the internet technology to run businesses; hence, if the internet or the computers are not working or known as “server down”, the server assigned for a process may not respond due to power failure, network problem, operating system crashes, or server hardware problem. In such a case, it would be really hard for the hotel staff to do any work and run the hotel business. Indeed, technology can improve everything, but at the same time, it will also cause problems in time. Further analysis also showed many benefits the internet technology that assists in the online hotel reservation system by enabling customers to make reservations with only a few clicks and decide their payment methods, for example, upon checking-in or online. Besides, the online hotel reservations system helps increase the productivity of the hotel employees from time to time as the Booking.com application has simplified the workload of the front desk staff.

As for recommendations, the online hotel reservation system should consider following the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) for future business in the hotel lodging industry. Industry 4.0 is the subset of the fourth phase in which we are slowly moving past the third industrial revolution and are eventually advancing into IR 4.0. IR 4.0 includes the use of computers and automation, thereby creating more efficiency in the hotel industry. Besides, it comes into the picture with the production of connectivity between these types of machinery. The “smart” hotel industry can operate efficiently with less human-error in operation and the use of a smart system in the online hotel reservation system works faster as it only requires a few clicks to make reservations. Industry 4.0 is also the trend in processes that include internal operation, cyber-physical operation, the internet of things, industrial internet of things, cloud computing, cognitive computing, and artificial intelligence.

This modern technology will help in the early detection of hotel occupancy capacity as the Booking.com application is connected to the property management system of the hotel, which contributes to the management of the hotel. Furthermore, this will increase the productivity, quality, and agility benefits that have a significant competitive value within the hotel market whilst helping the hotel generate the data on product use or service to refine products and services that best meet customer needs. Just like every business, customer satisfaction is very important and it is a never-ending process that requires current modifications as customers tend to change according to the current market, demand, socio-cultural factors, and government regulations. Therefore, this revolution offers disruptive digital business models to provide digital solutions to customers that best meets their needs.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are positive and negative sides to reserving hotel rooms via Booking.com among tourists in Kelantan. The theme was then categorised into positive reviews and negative reviews, which were further combined with the four hotels selected in this study and categorised according to the same themes where the combined themes were also categorised into both positive and negative reviews. From the combined reviews, the data were collected to identify the factors that influence the online behavior towards reserving hotel rooms via Booking.com among tourists in Kelantan. To the customers, the facilities are deemed an important factor. The Booking.com online application also contains information that includes lodging establishment details such as room occupancy, room type, room price, hotel location, and hotel facilities. Through online booking, customers can compare the pros and cons of each listed accommodation from the information provided by each hotel based on their location and details on the Booking.com application. Based on the collected reviews, several themes could

be identified from the customers who stayed at the four hotels selected in this study. The reviews are both positive and negative. The first theme of the review emphasises the facilities, which are reviewed and highlighted the most by the customers. Indeed, internet technology has totally influenced the increase in the development of an online hotel reservation system as most hoteliers and businesses have experienced a huge impact following the trending era of modern technology. Additionally, the hotel facilities should suit the price and hotel rating. As the online hotel reservation system like Booking.com relies tremendously on the reviews and experiences from previous customers on the hotel booking of their choice, this modern technology will assist in the early detection of hotel occupancy capacity since the Booking.com application is connected to the property management system of the hotel that, in turn, contributes to the management of the hotel. The results showed that the reviewers were concerned about the facilities and the services provided by the hotel, thereby influencing tourist behaviour in reserving hotel rooms via Booking.com among tourists in Kelantan as in the context of this study. The trend in the online booking system is leading and has become mainstream especially in the era of IR 4.0. Hence, the online booking system such as Booking.com makes it easier for guests to book rooms and lodging accommodation.

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