

E-marketing and customer perceived value in travel and tourism

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Abstract

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Businesses and organizations increasingly use information technology for marketing purposes. Customers also increasingly use information technology (such as the Internet) to search for and purchase products. Information technology hence acts as a facilitator in the marketing exchange process and customers are empowered by the use of technology. In order to understand how businesses can benefit from e-marketing we need to learn more about customers' perceptions of e-marketing and specifically their perceived value since it may have an impact on their behavior.

The theoretical frame of reference for the concept of customer perceived value is based on marketing and customer behavior literature. Customer perceived value is a trade-off between what is given and what is received in terms of consequences of a process, or of using a product or service, or of possessing a product or service. It is seen as an inclusive concept in that it is not just one but many types of value and it is dependent on use situation. The studies in the thesis describe e-marketing in travel and tourism. Customers value creation processes and factors influencing the use and adoption of information technology are explored. The studies also explain how and what influences customer perceived value and the effects on behavior is explained. Five individual studies have been carried out, represented as a collection of articles. These apply both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Results show that customers mostly perceive only one category of value, namely utilitarian types of value. This is believed to be mainly connected to the use of technology as such rather than to the interaction with marketing content. Customers do also not perceive that a majority of the value perceived is connected to higher held values and goals in life. This may be an indication of failure on the business part to be relevant to customers' main wants. Results also show that customer perceived value on travel and tourism web sites have an effect on customers' likelihood to use a web site and purchase the products.

This thesis contributes to a broader empirical base for understanding the concept of customer perceived value since it is explored in a new context. Moreover, the theoretical models used in the different studies are advanced from the perspective of how different factors behave and affect customers in an e-marketing context. Therefore, knowledge on the nature and effect of customer perceived value has increased. Specifically, research on customer perceived value in e-marketing has now moved from being focused on which value is perceived to include factors which explain how and why this perception occurs.

Keywords: e-marketing, Internet, customer perceived value, travel, tourism, Internet customer, marketing.

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