

Preferred E-Marketing Methods in Travel Bureau Operation: In Support to Community-Based Tourism

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Preferred E-Marketing Methods in Travel Bureau Operation: In Support to Community-Based Tourism

This research aims at identifying the preferred e-Marketing techniques used in the operation of travel bureau using a mix methods. Study Phase 1 – Qualitative used in-depth interview as data collection method and Phase 2 – quantitative used survey. The results show the intensity of internet usage and the type of media used varied depend on the characteristics of business operations. In general, the companies having a direct access to customers is the most creative in utilising internet; followed by business to business operation; travel bureaus branches use the media the least creative. This indicates e-Marketing could greatly support the operation of travel services providers and community based tourism, wherein managers could access potential customers directly by the creative use of internet. The Qualitative study identifies 4 internet mediums being used in the operation of travel bureau namely: website, e-mail, social media and skype; and there are 24 e-Marketing activities practiced. Five factors were extracted during Research Phase 2 that underpin e-Marketing activities, with ranking that reflects the level of ‘reach’ to the audience and the ‘richness’ of the communication content. These study results could be used as a practical reference by travel bureau marketers and management of community based tourism in selecting e-Marketing methods; and enrich the knowledge on the internet usage for businesses, especially in Tourism Industry.

Keywords: E-Marketing, Travel bureau, Marketing Mix, Internet, Community based tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Travel agencies that do not adopt e-Marketing experience difficulties in maintaining the sustainability of the company. The advancement of information technology (IT) affects business operations significantly; Brodie, Winklhofer, Coviello, and Johnston¹ stated that the adoption of e-Marketing is closely related to improvement of performance. Companies that integrate e-Marketing utilize internet media to enhance business competitiveness. It also occurs in the Tourism Industry which has a global operational scope in terms of business network and consumers; as presented by Hsu², the hospitality industry in Taiwan using e-Marketing in dealing with international customers. IT is vital for companies that provide services of ‘organizing travels’ that need to associate with partners within the region and overseas, as well as to deal with tourists from different places. Information Technology could immensely support tourism businesses in provide accessibility to consumers of their products.

Related to the important role of information

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technology, especially the internet in business operations, specifically in the field of marketing; thus, a need is identified to conduct a study on the use of internet as a medium of e-Marketing the latest IT trend, in the tourism industry which has a global operational scope, particularly in travel bureau which is a hub of tourism products and an intermediary between services providers (suppliers) and tourists. This research was carried out to assess various forms of e-Marketing activities at travel bureau and identify and classify e-Marketing techniques that are preferred by travel bureau marketers in providing accessibility to the consumer of the products, and raised questions: Which e-Marketing techniques are preferred in travel bureau business operation? Could e-Marketing provide support for community based tourism marketing?

The expected outcomes of the study are the identification of various e-Marketing techniques employed in travel bureau business, as well as the clustering of the e-Marketing methods listed in rank. It is expected, the results of the study can be used as a reference in selecting e-

Marketing techniques for travel bureau and CBT, assisting in the formulation of e-Marketing strategies, and carrying out e-Marketing activities. The results also enrich the knowledge on e-Marketing which is the latest trend in business practice.

2. TRAVEL BUREAU

The Regulation of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4 Year 2014 about the Standard Service of Travel Business, stating that Travel Service Business consists of businesses of travel bureau and travel agent. It is further explained that the travel bureau (Biro Perjalanan Wisata [BPW]) is a business that provides services of travel and trip planning, travel arrangement including Haji pilgrimage³.

Nowadays with the advancement of information technology, the operations of travel bureau change very rapidly⁴. Information and communication technology are essential elements for a business process that has a global scope of operations associated with networks, consumers and market⁵. Braun⁵ in his study found which is stated in page one: 'Networks, knowledge, and relationships have become crucial assets to business survival in the new economy. ... network building is a major new source of competitive advantage and an essential regional and indeed global management requirement.' It is further explained that tourism business, especially small businesses engaged in the field of tourism will benefit from an increased flow of information and possible e-Marketing activities conducted in collaboration between the various parties within a business network.

The dependency of travel bureaus on communications technology is huge, not only in the field of business network establishment but also on the company's operations. Related to this notion, a study on e-marketing assessing how travel bureau manages marketing using the internet is deemed important to help travel bureau in developing e-Marketing strategy, devising an implementation plan and undertaking the day-to-day e-Marketing activities.

3. E-MARKETING

Marketing creates value and satisfaction for consumers and profits for the company⁶; while Middleton⁷ emphasizes the element of 4Ps in the marketing and defines marketing as an attempt made by companies to satisfy their customers by controlling the four elements of marketing (4P) that are called Marketing Mix, and make a profit. Marketing practices experienced growth; today, marketing is not merely finding consumers and selling the goods or services produced by the company, but it has integrated the principles of behavioral science into the company's marketing strategy.

The advances of information technology (IT) today, especially the internet that is used extensively by the community as a medium for networking; and when it is used for business purposes, the internet becomes a place

where consumers and providers meet virtually, collaborate, *Email address: madeernawati@pnb.ac.id

and conduct exchange⁸. Nelson⁹ in page one defines E-business (electronic business) as 'the conduct of business processes on the Internet'. The use of the internet in business for marketing related activities is referred to as e-Marketing. Kalyanam and McIntyre⁴ stated that the e-Marketing has a great similarity with traditional marketing; however, given the drastic changes brought about by integrating internet in marketing, these scholars consider it necessary to identify the elements of e-Marketing. With the integration of the internet into the traditional elements of marketing, both researchers formulate E-Marketing Mix.

4. COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM (CBT)

CBT is a form of alternative tourism which engages local community's participations during planning and operation of the tourism development, thus empowers host-community, aims for low impacts and the sustainability of the local culture and environment, while delivers satisfying CBT experiences to visitors¹⁰. It is further described that CBT becomes popular and is used as a means for community development^{11,12,13}; nevertheless, there are very few success stories of CBT developments¹⁴. Some causes of the failure were identified, these include: lack of support from the community members and/or local authorities¹⁵, limited human resource competencies in operating CBT^{16,17}, limited capital¹², not knowing the target customers^{18,19}. Not knowing the many aspects of target market could become a major cause of failure, studies on this issue need to be conducted to close this gap. This research, apart from examining the e-Marketing techniques, also aims to assess whether the usage of internet in travel services business could assist CBT management to reach their target customers.

5. METHODOLOGY

This research used a triangulation method using a mixed method which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research conducted in sequence²⁰. Research Phase I consisted of a qualitative study to explore various e-Marketing techniques practice in travel bureau operations, as Mar⁵ argued that a qualitative study gathers rich data. Data was collected using in-depth interview from travel bureau staff who undertook marketing with their managers' consent at their office.

Interviews were conducted following a semi-structured interview guideline enquiring the elements of Marketing Mix conducted on line which consists of: product (product concept or tourism services), price (the pricing strategy), promotion (Promotional Mix) and place (distribution channel of products). Samples were selected using the purposive-sampling to obtain representation of travel bureau handling clients originated from different countries. This research targets an adequate 30 samples²², which include travel bureaus that are located in Bali. The process of data management and analysis is as follows:

1. The data was recorded in a form for each respondent.
2. Data sorting, reduction and tabulation were carried out to identify e-Marketing activities.
3. Subsequently, the identified e-Marketing technics were used as variables in Research Phase 2 instrument.

Research Phase 2 aims to categorize and rank the e-Marketing techniques identified in Phase 1, thus, the e-Marketing characteristics and preference can be identified. Coakes, Steed and King²³ in page 134 stated that for a quantitative study 'A sample of 100 subjects is acceptable but sample sizes of 200+ are preferable.' This study used 150 samples, that consists of staff of travel bureaus located in Bali, who carry out the marketing activities. The questionnaire consists of 24 variables.

Allen and Bennett²⁴, and Field²⁵ stated factor analysis is used to classify variables into groups with a particular underpinning basis so that the phenomenon under study could be more meaningful. In this study, Factor analysis were run on SPSS obtaining the standard Eigen-value >1. According to Field²⁵, reliability and validity are vital issues that affect research findings, and argued that researchers should ensure the data collection instruments are reliable and valid, therefore, they were the first step of data analysis. Before the Exploratory Factors Analysis was applied, some tests were carried out to meet the assumptions of Factor analysis, these tests included: normality, correlation, KMO, Collinierity/Anty-image, and Commonality.

6. RESULTS PHASE 1 - QUALITATIVE

The qualitative method used in this study aims to explore e-Marketing techniques. The qualitative study identify 24 items of e-Marketing activities that carried out by marketers in travel bureaus (Table 1). The 24 items are used as variables in the Phase 2 study instrument.

Table 1: E-Marketing Activities in Travel Bureau

No.	E-Marketing activities
1	Internet is a source of information necessary to prepare/develop products
2	Website of Indonesian immigration authorities as a source to obtain information on immigration
3	Consumers request special tour/package tours via the Internet
4	Social media as a mode for marketing
5	On-line marketing activities
6	Off-line marketing activities
7	Email as a mode in the virtual marketing activities
8	Website as a marketing tool in the virtual world - Internet
9	Social media as a tool to introduce website
10	Social media as an interactive tool with consumers
11	Internet for getting feedback for marketing activities
12	The use of social media as a supplement to be trendy
13	Websites for displaying full feature of companies and products
14	Website as a medium for conveying new information fast
15	Finding information on the internet for the purposes of marketing activities
16	Website for a prospective customer to make reservation
17	Website for customers to make a payment
18	Communicating using e-mail as interactive media market
19	E-mail to supply the market with more detailed information that is not on the website
20	Use of e-mail blast for marketing activities
21	Direct mail (email sent to special name and address) for marketing activities
22	Social media to invite public to visit the website
23	Website as a medium to deliver information for the purpose of Public-Relation including emergency information
24	Skype to provide communications access to customers

7. RESULTS OF PHASE 2 - QUANTITATIVE

The quantitative research applied Factor Analysis *Email address: madeernawati@pnb.ac.id to classify a variety of e-marketing techniques that have been identified in the Study Phase 1. The study used 150 respondents whose profile are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondent Demographic

Criteria	Total (%)	Criteria	Total (%)
Gender		Age	
Male	55	18-25	13
Female	45	26-35	37
Education		36-45	44
High school	17	46-55	7
Diploma	47	56-65	0
Undergraduate	17		
Abstain	18		

There are some analyses undertaken prior to the application of Factor Analysis. First, validity, the limit value of 'r' used in this research is based on the number of respondents (N) = 150, the calculation results in the 'r' value of 0.135. The comparison between the Total Correlation value of each variable in the questionnaire with the 'r' calculation results are used as a reference. There are two variables that have Total correlation value under standard namely: variable 1 - 'Internet is the main source of information is needed to prepare/develop products', and Variables 24 - 'Skype is an effective way to give access to consumers'. Therefore, the two variables were excluded from the research instruments, and for all subsequent analyzes were performed based on 22 variables.

Reliability tests used a Cronbach's alpha standard of 0.70²⁵, all variables have a value above 0.70, while the Total Cronbach Alfa of the research instruments is 0.83, thus the measuring research instrument is 'Reliable'.

Normality, the Histograms shows a considerable normality, nevertheless, according to Allen and Bennett²⁴, Factor analysis is robust in anticipation to non-normality, thus the analysis is used as an analysis tool in this research.

The Factor analysis used is Principal Axis Factoring with Varimax Rotation within 0.3 suppress value, this technique is used to find the underlying characteristics of group of variables²⁴. Using the standard limit Eigen value 1²⁵, the analysis extracts five factors that can be viewed clearly in figure 1.

The correlation matrix table shows the bivariate correlation (Pearson's 'r') between each pair of variables in the analysis. According to Allan and Bennett²⁴, a correlation value above 0.3 is considered as suitable for Factor analysis. The correlation values of variables in this research show that most variables have a correlation value above the cut of point, therefore, Factor analysis is devised for this research.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), is a test for the adequacy of the sample which provides information about the appropriate use of factor analysis in research. The test results show the amount of variance in the data can be explained by factors, in which the greater the value the better. Allan and Bennett²⁴ stated that the KMO value of

0.6 and above is acceptable. KMO value in this study is 0.739, thus, it can be used.

The Anti-image Matrix shows the feasibility of data to be tested using factor analysis. The values are coded 'a', it is an individual KMO value of each variable. According to Allen and Bennett²⁴ Anti-image value below 0.5 indicates variables that do not have a strong relationship with other variables in the matrix. In this study, nearly all of the variables have a value above 0.5, only one that has a value below 0.5 which is variable '17 - Website as a place for payment of transactions' with a value of 0.42. Given the difference in λ^2 value is not significant, therefore, the variable is still used in the analysis.

Communalities table provides information about how much variance can be explained by each of the variables which is shown by the extracted factors. The test results show all variables have extraction values above 0.5 which indicate a substantial variance is explained by each variable, therefore are included in the analysis.

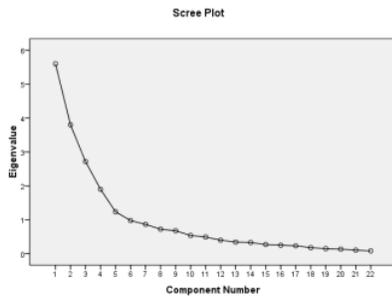


Figure 1: Scree Plot of Internet Usage by Travel Bureaus

Table 3 shows the five factors were extracted, the variables included in each factor and the magnitude of contribution in explaining the factor (factor loading).

Table 3: The Five Factors Extracted

No.	Variable	Factor loading
Factor 1 - Social media to attract the attention of potential customers		
1	4 Social media for marketing	.843
2	5 Online marketing	.807
3	6 Offline marketing	.472
4	9 Social media to introduce Website	.836
5	10 Social media to interactively with consumers	.862
6	11 Social media to be consumer feedback	.839
7	12 Social media to be trendy just	.769
8	22 Social media invite people visit the Website	.694
Factor 2 - Website to conduct business activities		
9	8 Website for marketing	.871
10	13 Websites shows a full-featured of business and products	.910
11	14 Website exposes new information quickly	.933
12	16 Website as a place for reservation	.797
13	23 Website conveys emergency information and public relations	.696
Factor 3 - Email as a medium for marketing communication		
14	7 Email for marketing	.690
15	15 Internet as marketing resources	.676
16	18 Email as interactive media market	.720
17	19 Email conveys more detailed info than Website	.755
18	20 Email blast for marketing	.615
Factor 4 - Communicate individually with consumers via the internet		
19	13 Consumers' request from the internet	-.641
20	21 Direct email marketing	-.726
Factor 5 - the Internet as a medium that can be trusted		
21	2 Immigration as source of info up to date	.410
22	17 Website as a place of payment of transactions	.815

8. DISCUSSION – QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The Qualitative research aims to identify the characteristics and preferences of e-Marketing activities used in the operational of travel bureau. Generally, there are four media communications via the internet discovered which are carried out either through off-line (conducted by someone over the internet) or on-line (automatically in the network), namely: website, email, social media, and skype. There are 24 e-Marketing methods identified that are used by travel bureaus marketers (Table 1). The methods are used by some or most of the respondents; however, the use of Skype is not a favorite method, as out of all respondents, there is only one company using it.

The e-Marketing data on Marketing Mix comprise: internet usage that affects products planning includes internet being used as a source of information in designing and developing products to meet the special demands of potential consumers. E-Marketing also applies pricing strategy to different market segments base on the origin of the customers, these such as Europe and Asia. For example, products with lower price components are offered to the Asian market, while products that have components which are exclusive and having a higher price are offered to the European market. E-promotion activities performed within the scope of Promotional mix include: Advertisement, e.g. pop-up advertisement; Sales promotion e. g. special offer; Public relations e.g reviews of special activities, new information and notice of emergency situation; however, Personal selling activities are very rare being carried out through the internet Skype. For the last elements of Marketing Mix - 'Place' that is by way of providing accessibility to customers on the products, the e-Marketing activities undertaken include: the provision of product information, reservations, sales and payments.

Respondents stated that the use of the internet is a must, although the intensity of usage is varied from one company to another. The reasons given to the important use of the internet in businesses include: faster, cheaper, convenience, easy, flexible, and trendy. The purpose of the use of the internet is as follows: provision of information, source of information, promotion, interactive, reservations, sales and payments.

There are some interesting phenomena found in the Study Phase 1. The use of the internet by the agency where customers are primarily sourced from business partners (business to business [B to B]) is less creative, they rely on conventional method of communication through email and website as hub of information. While travel bureaus having direct access to consumers (Business to Customers [B to C]) use the internet in a more creative way; in addition to the conventional methods stated above, they also use: social media, email blasts, direct mail, a pop-up advertisement. The travel bureau which is the least creative in e-Marketing activities, is the one that is a branch of company, the bureau's main business activities are limited communication between the main office and the company branch.

The website is a favorite media for all respondents because the website can display various information about the products and the company may deliver information instantaneously, practically with least cost. Email is used for a more serious and personal purposes that lead to transactions, answering the inquiries, special requests, negotiation, and finalizing payment. E-mail blast as a marketing method is controversial, many respondents like using it, but many respondents avoid using email blast because it is considered to be less stylish; they prefer using direct e-mail which shows appreciation to each individual. Some companies use a pop-up advertisement, but many companies regard it as a harsh method and disturbing which causes interruption for the internet users. Some respondents use social media to introduce the website and invite public to visit. The use of social media is also employed to build a positive image in the community, there is even travel bureau using social media merely as an extra as this medium is popular and used by many people.

9. DISCUSSION - QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Five underlying factors were identified that underpinned the 22 variables in the questionnaire, overall these five factors explain almost 70% of the total variance in the questionnaire. The five factors that are ranked from the highest to the lowest in factor loading include:

1. Factors 1 - 'The use of social media to attract the attention of potential customers', supported by eight variables and explains 23% of the variance in the questionnaire.
2. Factor 2 - 'The use of the website to conduct business activities', supported by five variables and explains 18% of the variance in the questionnaire.
3. Factor 3 - 'The use of email as a communication medium of marketing', supported by five variables and explains 13% of the variance in the questionnaire.
4. Factor 4 - 'Communicating individually via the internet', supported by two variables and explains 9% of the variance in the questionnaire. It is interesting to note that in Factor 4, there is negative score loading for the variable 'Consumer demand from the Internet'. This might show that the demand/booking did not come from consumers directly but through agents or working-partner in the areas of tourist origin, given that the majority of the company respondents are in partnership with tour operators at the tourist origins or are company branches, only a small number of respondents obtain customers directly from the internet.
5. Factor 5 - 'Internet as a medium that can be trusted as a source of information and banking activity', supported by two variables and explains 6% of the variance in the questionnaire.

Results (Figure 2) show social media is used as a preferred method to attract customers' attention and to direct the prospective customers to take a more serious step

such as visiting the business websites. The next in the rank *Email address: madeernawati@pnb.ac.id is using website that can be accessed by customers as a source of business information e.g. marketing, products, public relation. Third is the use of e-mail as a medium to deliver common information shared by a group of customers, at this level e-mail is used as a mass-media. The fourth Factor is the use of e-mail as an individual communication medium to interact with customer related to specific issue. The last Factor is the usage of internet for confidential matter which related to trust, accuracy of information and security. Comparing the Factors with the e-Marketing features pointed out by Kotler, Adam, Denize, and Armstrong⁶ which include 'Reach' (the number of people involved) and 'Richness' (the depth of the content), it shows that the First Factor has a wider 'Reach', however has less 'Richness'; and the lower the Factor the lower the 'Reach', however the higher the 'Richness'.

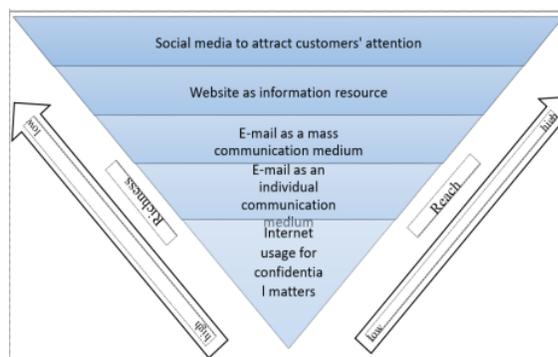


Figure 2: Internet Usage by Travel Bureaus

10. E-MARKETING FOR CBT

The research results suggest that, users especially travel bureau marketers need to be selective when using internet media depending on the purpose of the communication. Social media is suitable for reaching out a wider sphere of audience; however, the message content is general in nature. The lower the position in the graph the least audience could be engaged, nevertheless, the message content becomes more specific, detail and even confidential in nature, such as payment detail.

The research results also indicate the internet medium functions most within the B to C type of interaction. Internet is best used to reach the customers directly in travel services business. In the context of community based tourism and generally in tourism small businesses, which usually are lack in networking and access to customers⁵, internet could become a solution to close the gap between products and potential customers. CBT managers could communicate the products availability in the virtual world, and select the platform base on the communication purpose. The CBT profile with a strong product theme could be provided on a well-maintained website. This will

provide a direct access to potential visitors, and shorten the distribution channel.

11. CONCLUSION

The intensity of internet usage and the type of media used varies, depending on the characteristics of business operations. In general, companies that have a direct access to customers (B to C) utilize internet the most creative, this is followed by B to B type of companies, and travel bureau which is a branch of a company is the least creative. This indicates e-Marketing could greatly support the operation of CBT and tourism small businesses, in which managers are able to access potential customers directly. Access to customers has been an issue for CBT, managers nowadays should use the IT advancement and with the tendency of tourists to self-arrange the travels, the opportunity to directly reach the customers is opening up.

Research Phase 1 identifies 4 internet modes used in the operation of travel bureau namely: website, e-mail, social media and skype, which comprise 24 e-Marketing activities. The internet platform usage and the activities identified involve the four aspects of Marketing Mix: the internet usage for products planning purposes; e-Marketing applies for pricing strategy; e-Promotional Mix consists of advertisement, sales promotion, public relations, however, personal selling which usually carried out through Skype are very rare; 'Place' is a way of providing accessibility of products to customers includes: the provision of product information, reservations, sales and payments.

Research Phase 2 extracts 5 factors that underlie the e-Marketing activities. The five factors are in rank that show the level of 'Reach' and 'Richness' of the e-marketing methods used by the travel bureau marketers. The highest Factor has the highest 'Reach', and the lowest 'Richness'; and the lower the Factor the lower the 'Reach', however the higher the 'Richness'.

The results of this study are various e-marketing techniques and the characteristics of their usages, which could be utilized as a practical reference in selecting methods of e-Marketing by practitioners in the industry, especially in travel bureau and CBT. Scientifically the findings enrich the knowledge on the use of the internet in travel businesses.

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