E-Business Adoption among Homestay Businesses: The Sarawak Experience

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ABSTRACT

Information technology (IT) is now universally deemed by business organizations as an essential tool that they use to run their business activities and processes. The escalation of internet penetration in Sarawak has augmented new opportunities to the small medium enterprises (SMEs) to adopt e-business toward sustaining their businesses. The objectives of this study are to identify factors that influence e-business adoption among homestays in Kuching, Sarawak and to determine which factor has the most significant influence in its adoption. For the purpose of this study, the reviewed IT adoption model used is the technology-organization-environment (TOE) framework. This framework identifies three elements that drive the adoption of technology which are technological, organizational and environmental factors. A total of 150 homestay businesses within the city of Kuching were chosen to participate in the survey. Data were analysed using correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The findings indicated that organizational factor has the most significant influence on e-business adoption among the homestay owners in Kuching, Sarawak.

Key Words: E-Business, Homestay, SMEs, adoption.

1. INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become extremely important in our daily lives. In Sarawak, the escalation of internet penetration has augmented new opportunities to the small medium enterprises (SMEs) in sustaining their businesses over a prolonged period of time (Borneo, 2011). As the world witnesses an alarmingly rapid growth in its population, the internet technology (IT) makes it easy for most people to access information. As a result, businesses have found this to be beneficial, especially at the early stages of their business venture, as it allows them to explore every possible angle effectively in order to reach potential customers. With the availability of high-speed internet, many organizations have opted to incorporate technology in running their businesses, popularly known as e-business. Nevertheless, literature has postulated that there seems to be inconsistencies in opinions concerning the success and failure of e-business. So why do businesses opt to use the internet to manage their businesses? Do they regard the internet as just another IT tool? Is e-business a better option for a more lucrative business venture or should the business organizations go back to the traditional method of running businesses? The internet undoubtedly has created a digital environment and it acts as a tool for information and communication technologies (ICT). The internet helps to facilitate the basic business activities and processes such as financial transactions, customer service, internal communications and operations, marketing strategy, and business sustainability. Studies have found that the internet-based e-business systems have the most significant result among the various ICT applications in managing business activities and processes (Sulaiman, Shariff & Ahmad, 2008). Currently, the adoption of e-business is extensively implemented by SMEs in Malaysia (Kurnia et al., 2015; Poorangi et al., 2013; Nezakati et al., 2012; Alam et al., 2011). As such, it is safe to consider e-business as a contemporary strategy used to transform how businesses are managed, a dramatic shift from the old and traditional buying and selling processes to online-based processes.

With the development of new theories, factors that influence the adoption of e-business among the SMEs were identified (Parker & Castleman, 2009) and for the purpose of this study the IT adoption model used is the technology-organization-environment (TOE) framework (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). This framework identifies three elements that drive the adoption of technology which are technological, organizational and environmental factors. The focus of this research is the adoption of e-business among homestay owners in Kuching, Sarawak. The factors that influence its adoption are gauged using the TOE framework.

The focus of this study is the tourism sector and it is the second largest industry in Malaysia (Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2014). Homestay is one aspect of tourism. Lanier and Berman (1993) explained the concept of homestay as "private homes in which unused rooms are rented for the purposes of supplementing income and meeting people". A homestay experience in Sarawak ranges from an overall family experience to just renting rooms and thus the main intention of a homestay is for the tourists to embroil themselves in their host's culture (Oliveira & Martins, 2010). This study, however, seeks to address the gap in the already and currently limited topic of exploring e-business adoption among homestay businesses in Kuching, Sarawak. The objectives of this study are to identify factors that influence the adoption of e-business among homestay owners in Kuching, and to determine which factor has the most significant influence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

e-Business adoption

This study aims to investigate the factors influencing the adoption of e-business among Sarawak homestay owners. e-Business can be defined as the use of ICT resources to support all business activities in the organization. e-Business emphasizes on customer values and maximize organization's profit with the benefit of technology (Kalakota & Robinson, 1997). The adoption of e-Business in SMEs have increased the competitive environment among modern firms. Based on this situation, the capabilities of organizational and technological innovation are foremost challenges and essential for firms to be successful (Tornatzky, Fleischer & Chakrabarti, 1990; Veliyath & Fitzgerald, 2000). According to Damaskopoulos and Evgeniou (2003), e-business system will be successful when a key concept for technological innovation and investment is being recognized. Moodley (2003) defined e-business as a platform of information interchange or administrative transaction made available at remote sites known as the internet. It has contributed to several benefits. Some of the major benefits of adopting e-business in the organization are as follows; accurate information for decision making, improved coordination and communication with business partners, improved customer service, and assisting to decrease administrative costs (Zhuang & Lederer, 2003). Although e-business systems have technical components, management issues must be addressed regarding changes in organizational processes and interaction both within a firm and among firms (Ash & Burn, 2003).

TOE model

TOE model is based on adoption factors comprising technological, organizational and environmental factors. Technological factor includes perceived relative advantage, perceived compatibility, and perceived complexity (Pexin, 2012). Organizational factor includes organizational attributes such as its size, centralization, formalization, quality of human resources, amount of slack resources available internally and the complexity of the organization's managerial structure (Shen et al., 2004). Environmental context comprises buyer or supplier pressure, competitive pressure and supporting industries (Pexin, 2012). Studies that focused on SMEs' adoption of technologies such as EDI (Kuan & Chau, 2001; Iacovou et al., 1995), e- commerce (Mirchandani & Motwani, 2000; Scupola, 2003; Fillis et al., 2004), and web sites (Raymond, 2001) found that these adoption factors can be summarized into technological, organizational and environmental factors.

Technological factors

Technological factors refer to the aspects of perceived relative advantage, perceived compatibility and perceived complexity.

Perceived relative advantage

Rodgers (2003) defined the relative advantage of an innovation as the degree to which the innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes. Organizations especially in the SME sector should realize that the adoption of technology innovation will either solve the current

problem or bring new opportunities like improving process efficiency and increased productivity (Zhu & Kraemer, 2005). This will lead to the decision making among entrepreneurs to evaluate the potential advantages of the new technology for their business. Tornazkty and Klien (1982) stated that organizations consider to adopt a technology when they realize the need for technology, increase in competitive advantage and increase in internal operations performance.

Perceived compatibility

Rodgers (2003) defined compatibility as the degree to which a technological innovation is perceived as being consistent with existing operating practices, beliefs, values, past experiences and needs. The usefulness of technology can be based on different organizational viewpoints. For instance, the adoption of e-procurement technology (EPT) may be high risk because of lack of compatibility with current technology. For example, a centralized controlled organization might have greater or poorer awareness of the effect of EPT adoption on its performance. Azadegan and Teich (2010) summarized that if the decision-making style is unfair towards innovation, therefore adoption would be eliminated. Lee and Kim (2007) see compatibility as a key factor of the e-business adoption because an organization wants to avoid compatibility issues from becoming a drawback when implementing technology.

Perceived complexity

Rogers (2003) defined complexity as the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and use. Murilo (2004) stated that perceived complexity highly affects the decision to adopt technology into the organization. For some, in the earlier stages of implementing technology, complexity is negatively correlated with IT adoption and any evolution of technology will be rejected (Lin & Lin, 2008). It is also supported by previous research on the negative correlation between technology and complexity (Thong, 1999; Frambach et al., 1998). Therefore, it can be concluded that if the technology is easy to use, it will be positively adopted by the organization.

Organizational Factors

Organizational factors refer to the size of the firm and organizational readiness.

Size of firm

Organizational factors refer to the characteristics of the organization that influence the adoption of e-business. Mole et al. (2004) stated the importance of the firm size because it is part of the source and strength of the organization which is equal to both financial and human resources. The bigger the size of business means the greater the ability to provide certain resources, and therefore the tendency to adopt e-business is high due to its contribution. A study done by Premkumar and Roberts (1999) found that bigger organizations tend to have the intention to adopt communication technology compared to smaller organizations. Likewise, larger SMEs tend to adopt more advanced technology since they have extra resources in their organization (Thong, 1999).

Organizational readiness

Readiness is a key principle of an organization's internal operation capability in accepting to use a new technology (Iacovou et al., 1995; Mehrtens et al., 2001). A study done by Chwelos et al. (2001) implied that the availability of these resources; capital and human resources can also affect organizational readiness. Organizations can consider adopting new technology in capital funding used for purchasing new equipment, preparing budget for training and operational funding used for recruiting manpower.

Top management support

Top management support received strong empirical support as a factor affecting the adoption of innovations. Similarly, Bruque and Moyano (2007) found that top management support was among the factors that significantly affect the speed of adoption of information technology in SMEs. Similar results were found in many other empirical innovation adoption studies (Bharati & Chaudhury, 2006; Beatty, Shim & Jones, 2001; Premkumar & Roberts, 1999). Interestingly, Toe and Pian (2003), in their study on the factors affecting firm's level of adoption of the web represented in five levels ranging from simple email adoption to using the web to transform business operations, found that top management support does not affect the level of adoption of the web. They explained that there

is little difference in top management support for different levels of adoption. According to them, one possible reason for the findings is that management is already aware of the importance of the web as it has already been adopted in the first place.

Environmental factors

Environmental factors refer to buyer or supplier pressure, competitive pressure, and supporting industry.

Buyer/Supplier pressure

Several researchers believe that the adoption of e-business will lead to an outstanding purchasing process and therefore will give customer a unique consuming experience. According to Ching and Ellis (2004), Lee and Kim (2007) and Ure (2002), firms' behaviour on e-commerce adoption is based on customer pressure. However, Santosa and Peffers (1998) argued this study and found that customers are slow to accept e-commerce and will not gain the benefits of early adoption. Besides, Davila et al. (2003) agreed that supplier's adoption decision will also affect whether a firm adopts e-commerce or not.

Competitive pressure

Based on the view of the level of competitiveness in the market, Gibbs and Kraemer (2004), Forman (2005) and To and Ngai (2006) have proved that the more competitive the external market is, the higher the likelihood of e-commerce adoption will take place. The researchers believed that those who do not adopt e-commerce will find themselves at a disadvantaged situation. This matter is supported by Hsu et al. (2006) and Rodrı´guez-Ardura and Meseguer-Artola, (2010) who stated that competitive environment disincentives of e-commerce adoption happen because those who face excessive competitive pressure do not have enough resources left to try new things.

Supporting industry

Molla and Licker (2005) believed that lack of support-giving industries such as a well-developed financial sector and distribution facilities, also hinder firms' e-commerce adoption and it will impact a nation's economic structure whereby e-commerce will be less attractive to traditional economic sectors (Kshetri, 2007). Thus, the result showed that the sectors with the highest level of adoption were transport and equipment, and textiles and healthcare were the lowest. Hence, the purpose of this study is to determine the factors that influence e-business adoption among homestay owners in Kuching, Sarawak. This study will also determine the factors that influence the homestay owners to do the business using e-business. The factors of this e-business adoption can create awareness so that the homestay owners can do more advertising that can help generate more income. The findings of this study could provide useful insights to the homestay owners on how to promote their homestay business and finally it will provide recommendations to solve the problems faced by them.

Table 1: Summary of recent studies on e-business adoption among SMEs in Malaysia

Authors	Review Topic	Methodology	Key findings
Hashim (2007)	ICT Adoption Among SME Owners In Malaysia	Survey of 383 SME owners using survey instrument, establishes the relationship	The findings of this study show that SME owners in Malaysia possess below-average ICT skills
(Zailani, Dahlan & Jallalu, 2009)	E-Business Adoption Among SME In Malaysia	A survey of 200 Malaysian SMEs using survey instrument, factor analysis and regression analysis using survey data	The modified framework was applied after factor analysis have resulted five new variables
(Alam, Ali & Jani, 2011)	An empirical study of factors affecting Electronic commerce adoption Among SMEs in Malaysia	Sample of 200 Malaysian SMEs and test seven hypotheses on the factors that influence e-commerce adoption	Only five variables have a significant impact towards the e-commerce adoption
(Nezakati, Jofreh, Leong, Liong & Asgari, 2012)	Assessing E-Commerce Adoption by Small and Medium Enterprises in	This study has a geographical coverage of the center region of South East Asia covering Thailand,	Technical knowledge related to e-commerce is not significantly different between the countries

Authors	Review Topic	Methodology	Key findings
	Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand	Malaysia and Singapore.	
(Marimuthu, Ramayah, Omar & Mohamad, 2013)	Readiness To Adopt E-Business Among SME In Malaysia	Sample of 177 SMEs were analyzed using questionnaire	TOE influence e-business adoption and that the adoption of e-business has a direct influence on the business performance of the SMEs
(Poorangi, Khin, Nikoonejad & Kardevani, 2013)	E-Commerce Adoption In Malaysian Small And Medium Enterprises Practitioner Firms	A questionnaire was distributed to 1,200 managers and employees	Perceived Relative advantages influence the adoption of e-commerce
(Ahmad, Bakar, Faziharudean & Zaki, 2015)	An Empirical Study Of Factors Affecting E-Commerce Adoption Among Small- And Medium-Sized Enterprises In A Developing Country: Evidence From Malaysia	Survey instruments: an online questionnaire-based survey, mailed survey and questionnaire collected in-person from a sample of 307 SMEs in Malaysia.	E-commerce adoption within Malaysian SMEs is affected by perceived relative advantage, perceived compatibility, managers'/owners' knowledge and expertise, management characteristics

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was designed as an empirical quantitative study using primary data. The study framework, which was a strategic framework for determining e-commerce adoption was used to investigate the research objectives. The research sampling frame consists of homestay businesses that are based in Kuching, Sarawak and the sample of respondents consisted of 150 branch personnel including managers and floor employees. Cluster sampling technique was chosen because the target population is made up of heterogeneous groups. The data collected were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V.20 software. Descriptive Statistics, Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were also used to analyze the data. Three hypotheses were tested to indicate the relationship between variables.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Demographic of the respondents

Descriptive analysis was used to indicate the level of frequencies and the percentages involved among the demographic questions forwarded to the respondents. Majority of the respondents are female (60%) and male (40%). Malays represent the highest number of percentage of respondents (38.7%), followed by Chinese (30.7%), Indian (6.0%) and others such as Iban (24.7%). Among the 150 respondents, 77 (51.3%) of them were around the ages of 21 – 29 years old. Meanwhile, 63 (42%) were those between 30-39 years old and below, 6 (4%) of the respondents were between the ages of 40 – 49 years old, and 2 (1.3%) respondents were between the ages of 50-60 years and older. The respondents who were employees at the homestay had different educational levels whereby 4.7% were those with PMR, followed by 50.7% with SPM, 26% with professional qualifications, 8% with bachelor degree, and 10.7% with master's degree and above. A total of 52% of the respondents were single, 48% were married. With regards to the length of time the respondents had been involved with business operations, 62% of them had been involved for more than 3 years, 4.7% below 1 year, 6.7% between 1-2 years, and 26.7% between 2-3 years. On the size of the homestay businesses that were surveyed, 40% had 1-9 employees, 48% had 10-25 employees, 9.3% had 26-100 employees while 2.7% had 101-200 employees. The use of e-commerce technology by the homestay business with highly interactive web presence was 37.3%, those connected to the internet with e-mail but no website was 35%, and static web without any interactivity was 22.7%, while transitive web that allows online purchasing selling and purchasing of products and services was 6%.

Correlation Analysis:

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the relationship between variables (Independent and Dependent Variables). Table 2 describes the correlation test between the

independent and dependent variables. Overall, technological, organizational and environmental factors show significant relationship with the e-business adoption among homestay businesses in Kuching, Sarawak.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		DV	IV 1	IV 2	IV 3
E-Business Adoption (DV)	R	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	150			
Technological (IV 1)	R	.614**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	150	150		
Organizational (IV 2)	R	.768**		1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	150		150	
Environmental (IV 3)	R	.638**			1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	150			150

As shown in Table 2, the strongest relationship is between organizational factor and e-business adoption (r=.768, p=<.05). The other two are technological (r=.614, p=<.05) and environmental factors (r=0.638, p=<.05) that also have significant relationships with e-business adoption among homestay businesses in Kuching, Sarawak.

Regression and Multiple Regression Analysis Results:

Table 3 below explains the factor that has the most influence on the adoption of e-business among homestay businesses in Kuching, Sarawak**.**

Table 3: Regression between independent variables and the e-business adoption

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.741[a]	.549	.540	1.904

a. Predictors: (Constant), TT1,TO1,TE1

As depicted in Table 3, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.741, showing that 74.1% of the respondent's perception is explained by the three independent variables in the TOE framework while 25.9% of the variance is explained by other factors. The R square will let us know what percentage of variability in the dependent variable is accounted for by all of the independent variables. According to Draper and Smith (1998), an R square of 1 shows that the regression line perfectly fits the data.

Table 4: The coefficient of the model of e-business adoption

Variables	R Square	Standard Coefficient
		Beta
Technological	0.417	0.737
Organizational	0.713	0.769
Environmental	0.609	0.759

Organizational factor has the highest beta coefficient (0.769). This means that organizational factor gives the greatest effect toward the dependent variable and followed by environmental and technological factors. The values in beta coefficient indicate how much the independent variables impact the dependent variables. Thus, it indicates that organizational factor has the highest influence on e-business adoption among the homestay businesses in Kuching, Sarawak.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

It is concluded that all the three elements (TOE) have significant relationships with e-business adoption. This shows that the independent variables (technological, organizational and environmental) influence the dependent variable (e-business adoption). All the hypotheses that were tested and supported indicate that organizational factor has the highest influence on e-business adoption among homestay businesses in Kuching, Sarawak. This finding is supported by

Mole et al. (2004) which stated that the organizational factor is also significant. However, the finding for this study contrasts with that of Ahmad et al. (2015) in which it was found that technological factor has the highest influence on e-business adoption.

Recommendations for Homestay Businesses

The study recommend that the homestay businesses should be concerned more with the size of the firm, organizational readiness, and top management support to improve the internal and external business operations.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research are numerous. Technically, the scope of this study should be expanded to other SME business operations and the result may show different findings and discussions. In depth analysis will be possible with a bigger sample size of respondents. It is also appropriate if comparison is done between the various states in Malaysia and this may provide more interesting results. Lastly, since this study was essentially quantitative, future studies can focus on qualitative techniques in order to improve the knowledge based on e-business adoption among the homestay businesses.

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