Article Title
The effect of website features in online relationship marketing: A case of online hotel booking

Citation

Abstract
The primary objective of this research is to develop a theory-based model of utilitarian and hedonic website features, customer commitment, trust, and e-loyalty in an online hotel booking context. Structural Equation Modeling was deployed to test research hypotheses. Findings highlight the importance of creating loyalty by focusing on both hedonic and utilitarian features. Affective commitment is more influenced by hedonic features whereas calculative commitment is driven by utilitarian ones. Both commitment dimensions sway customers’ trust towards the online vendor and trust is an important antecedent of e-loyalty. Findings confirm that web design features are important for online relationship marketing. Both commitment dimensions were found to be precursors of trust whereas affective commitment is the precursor of e-loyalty.

Methods
A descriptive cross-sectional survey was created using the online questionnaire service, Qualtrics. A random sample of 5000 American consumers was selected from a national database using a marketing company. A total of 549 responses were received with a 10.9% response rate.

Conclusion
The results of this study provide several important theoretical and practical implications. In the first place, a comprehensive theoretical model of relationship between website features, commitment and loyalty is developed. This model indicates that e-commerce and online booking websites should focus on both hedonic and utilitarian features in order to increase customer loyalty. In practical terms, this means that the interactive and social aspects of an e-commerce website presenting hedonic features should be improved. For instance, Marriott’s Travel Brilliantly (https://travel-brilliantly.marriott.com) challenges their customers to help “shape the future of travel” by asking them to share their groundbreaking ideas about how to improve the modern travel experience. Members of such platforms receive both hedonic and utilitarian benefits from interacting with like-minded customers and gaining mutual assistance. In online environments, social relationships create a sense of community. Additionally, websites should work on their functionality, practical design and user friendliness. This, in turn, should improve customer loyalty and develop trust with online hotel booking websites.