

## ABSTRACT

Despite the growing importance of the use of the Internet as a marketing tool in the hotel industry, the factors that affect the adoption of Internet and Web based marketing activities (IWMA) by the hotel industry have not yet been fully investigated. There have been no comprehensive studies about the facilitating and inhibiting factors that distinguish the differences between Thai and Australian hotels in their adoption and diffusion of IWMA. Therefore, the aim of this study was to make an effort to fill this gap by investigating factors affecting the successful adoption of IWMA in Thai and Australian hotels. Furthermore, a specific aim was to develop a conceptual model for the successful adoption and diffusion of IWMA by Thai and Australian hotels.

To investigate the factors affecting the adoption of IWMA, the analysis of hotel Web sites, a questionnaire survey of hotels and a series of confirming interviews of hotel managers were employed. Data were gathered from hotels located in three cities in Australia (Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane) and in three provinces in Thailand (Bangkok, Phuket and Chiang Mai). For this study, the research process was conducted in three stages.

*The first stage* was an evaluation of the features and customers' information needs provided on a total of 206 Web sites including 107 Thai hotel Web sites and 99 Australian hotel Web sites. Descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test were used to analyse the differences in the features and customers' information needs provided on the hotel Web pages between Thai and Australian hotels. *For the second stage*, a quantitative survey methodology was used to test the model for the adoption of IWMA by Thai and Australian hotels. Data collected from the questionnaire survey of 143 Australian hotels and 152 Thai hotels were analysed and the hypotheses specific to the main model were tested using four statistical methods: multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA); one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA); discriminant function analysis (DFA); and independent sample *t*-test. *In the last stage*, confirming interviews with eight senior hotel managers in both Thailand and Australia were conducted to provide detailed explanatory information to support the findings from the quantitative questionnaire survey.

The *findings from the first stage indicate that* Australian hotel Web sites provided a greater variety of features and information that met customers' needs than Thai hotel Web sites. *The findings from the second stage* are in line with technological innovation theories that organisational, technological innovation and environmental factors can influence innovation adoption in an organisation. For *Thai* hotels, organisational factors with regard to *size of hotel* and *organisational readiness*, technological innovation factors with regard to *perceive benefits* and *compatibility* and environmental factors with regard to *customers power* and *level of government support* had a significant effect on their adoption of IWMA. For *Australian* hotels, the findings indicate that 1) organisational factors with regard to *size of hotel*, *top management support*, *CEO's attitude* and *CEO's IS knowledge*, 2) technological innovation factors with regard to *compatibility* and 3) environmental factors with regard to *customers power*, *competition intensity* and *level of technology support* had a significant effect on the adoption of IWMA. Thus, the model for adoption of IWMA by Thai and Australian hotels delivered from this study consists of three main groups of factors including organisational, technological innovation and environmental. The *findings from the last stage* also provided support for the findings of the second stage that organisational, technological innovation and environmental factors influenced the use of IWMA in Thai and Australian hotels. For *Thai hotels*, the organisational factors, *organisational readiness* and the environmental factors, *level of the Government support*, were identified as playing a major role in the adoption of IWMA. For *Australian hotels*, installing advanced technologies was the most significant factor amongst organisational factors. *Competition intensity* and *customer power* were the external factors that had driven most Australian hotels to use IWMA.

This study contributes new knowledge to increase understanding of the benefits regarding the use of IWMA for hoteliers in these two countries since it is the first study to have empirically tested a model of adoption of IWMA in the context of hotels in Thailand and Australia. The model that was delivered from findings of this study can provide guidance for Thai and Australian hoteliers to evaluate and improve their use of IWMA. The findings of this study also have important implications for both hotel management and policymakers for developing the use of IWMA. Policymakers in each country need to communicate effectively with their hotels about their IWMA adoption intentions. Indeed, further investment in improving the communications infrastructure and creating environments for developing the use of IWMA is needed.