

# E-HOSPITALITY AND SERVICE QUALITY: A STUDY ON MALAYSIA'S HOTEL WEBSITE

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## Abstract

*The emergence of e-commerce through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development is among important strategic forces that would transform Malaysia to a knowledge based economy especially in tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics of the e-commerce especially on online service encounter and how the value of the service can be developed in the cyber environment. The interactive relationship with the client and the service provider is the critical moment to make consumers "commit" to a web site. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the relationship of e-Hospitality elements and E-S-Qual on attitude toward website and the mediating effects of flow. The result shows that attitude toward website was explained by both e-Hospitality and E-S-Qual and enhanced through the flow. However, the research is without a limitation. First, the experience with the hotel website among the respondents was not tested a priori; second, the measurement was tested specifically on Malaysia hotel website; thirdly, the variability of respondent demographic; and finally, the limitations of the convenience sampling process that affect the generalisability of the results.*

*Keywords: E-Hospitality, E-S-Qual, Service Quality, Consumer Attitude, Flow, Tourism*

## INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) development was among important strategic forces that would transform Malaysia to a knowledge based economy. As of January 2020, 83.1% (27 million) of the population subscribed to internet. This is a stark escalation from June 2009, where only 65.7% of the population (15.7 million) subscribed to internet (according to the official portal of Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation). The adoption of internet among Malaysia was increasing due to strong government intervention with specific attention to the use of "e-dagang", Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) as well as National Broadband Policy under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

The adoption of e-commerce (in the early 2000s) and now the emergence of media richness of tourism content such as the application of using virtual reality and

metaverse also significantly increased perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment for online content for the tourism and hospitality industry in Malaysia (Un-Kon, 2022). The importance of e-commerce in particularly for hotelier embodied in Malaysian Association of Hoteliers (MAHA) statement that “online distribution cuts costs, attracts affluent customers and lessens the dependency on more traditional and expensive channels”. MAHA also collaborate with Fastbooking Internet Booking Engine Providers to initiate e-commerce together with hotels own booking engine.

According to Saha et. al (2022), intention to purchase is enhanced by customer satisfaction and shopping experiences and that satisfaction plays a mediating role in these relationships. Rowley (2006) also suggested that e-service experience does not limit solely on purchase. Since information is the primary value between service provider and customers, e-service also mean “information service” thus point to both search and information retrieval for the information content of web sites have a role to play in consumer evaluation of service quality.

Kimiloğlu (2004) urged the important to understand the dynamics of the online service encounter and how the value of the service can be developed in the cyber environment just like it is done in the real world of marketing or “as parallel as self service” (Rowley, 2006) or as similar as “the moment of truth that similar to physical encounters” (Jones, Spence, & Vallaster, 2008). Hofacker and Murphy (2009) suggested that the more interactive relationship with the client and the service provider, the higher the chances of converting that client into a buyer. Thus the critical moment is to make consumers “commit” to a web site.

As suggested by Jones, Spence, and Vallaster (2008) service provider may; through online generate emotional reactions to the web experiences during online interaction and control content of the websites. Thus, the evokes emotion concepts also alligned with hospitality concept as “consideration of concepts such as generosity, friendliness, the host–guest relationship, entertainment, and experiences friendliness, the host–guest” (Hemmington, 2007), and as “free and friendly space – creating physical, emotional and spiritual space for the stranger” (Lashley, 2008).

This study examines the relationship of e-Hospitality elements and E-S-Qual on attitude toward website and the mediating effects of flow. It proposed that e-hospitality elements will strengthen the explanatory power of E-S-Qual on attitude toward website. This is enhanced through the medating effects of flow. An engaging website that have “hospitality elements” will leverage the customer attitude on websites beside the functional factors of sytems availability and efficiency.

Therefore, the study seeks to identify the elements of “e-Hospitality” and its relative important with e-service quality to determine their effect on attitude toward websites and to find the intervening effect of flows between the e-service quality and e-Hospitality with attitude toward website.

## **E-Commerce and Hospitality**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) crucially impact on travellers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. The increased online price/product transparency and the new e-business models (e.g. online auctions) enhance tourists' purchasing power, who is becoming more price sensitive, less brand loyal, more sophisticated and experience seekers.

The Internet has become a new channel for the commercialization of products conventionally sold through traditional outlets. Electronic commerce (e-commerce) requires little additional investment by companies (a website is sufficient) and facilitates access to markets previously considered as out of reach. Many companies have been built upon an exclusively electronic system of sales and, unlike the offline market, have employed a weak e-business strategy. This has led to serious tactical errors which have caused many firms to fail (Phan, Chen, & Ahmad, 2005).

Using the Internet as a reservation method can benefit the hospitality firms and also the customers by reducing costs and providing real-time information to both parties. According to Cobanoglu (2001), business travellers still use travel agents as their favourite hotel reservation resource followed by toll free reservation numbers, and then calling the hotel directly. Use of online hotel reservation system follows the previous three media in terms of favour.

However, experts in IT predict that within several years the Internet will be one of the most important sources for hotel reservations and services (Cline & Warner, 2001). The number of online hotel reservations in 2001 accounted for 4.9% of total reservations made, and this percentage is expected to more than triple over the next 3 years. While the proportion of online reservations is increasing, only 64% of hospitality firms currently handle such transactions (Cline and Warner, 2001). Because an explosive increase in the number of online hotel reservations is expected, hotel marketers need to understand the determinants of customers' online hotel reservation intentions.

## **E-Service Quality**

As proposed by Sahadev and Purani (2008), "origin of e-service quality as a concept that can be traced from the concept of service quality". The e-service quality does differ between "website quality" in sense that e-service quality are measuring the online interaction (Smith & Eroglu, 2009). Website service quality consists of the technological aspects of websites such as appearance and layout and also services aspects such as response time and personalized service (Zhou et. al, 2009).

Smith and Eroglu (2009) as an example, measured the interaction using an off-site customer service (OCS) scale is comprised of usability and experiential dimensions, with the usability dimension consisting of items capturing ease of use,

error recovery, security, and customization and the experiential dimension consisting of items capturing satisfaction, socialization, empathy, and privacy sensitivity.

Eventhough, e-service quality had been explored by many researcher (Smith & Eroglu, 2009) with variability of dimensions (Juran and Gryna, 1970; Loiacono, Watson, and Goodhue, 2000; Szymanski and Hise, 2000; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Barnes and Vidgen, 2001; 2002; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003; Zafiropoulos & Vrana, 2006; Bauer, Falk & Hammerschmidt, 2006) there are no well accepted of conceptual definitions and models of service quality and its measurement (Seth, Deshmukh, & Vrat, 2005).

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005) suggested that future researcher to integrate E-S-Qual dimensions with other hedonic benefits such as fun, enjoyment or pleasure. It was cleared that “experiential aspects such as fun or pleasure do not fall within the conceptual domain of service quality because such hedonic aspects are distinct benefits that may not be relevant in all contexts or to all customers”.

It is this research intends to fill in the gap to explore the flow state to explain the consumer attitude beside E-S-Qual and e-Hospitality. It is also our attempt to modify the E-S-Qual to suit with information search behaviour of future customer/traveller that focused on only two dimensions; system availability and efficiency based on (Jang, 2004) that proposed more research needed to understand online information search behaviours.

## **E-Hospitality**

It is widely accepted that the Internet can serve as an effective marketing tool in tourism (Buhalis & Law, 2008). It is a valuable tool for both suppliers and consumers for information dissemination, communication, and online purchasing. Businesses, including customer-oriented and information-intensive tourism enterprises, are increasingly adopting e-business models to achieve their organizational goals.

Maintaining an effective website has thus become vital for a business to strengthen its customer relationships and gain a larger market segment. In the context of tourism, Jang (2004) stated that online information search will become a major trend among travellers; with online reservations for travel products and services becoming an important application (Law & Hsu, 2006). Tourism has illustrated how the Internet can change the structure of an entire industry and create new business opportunities (Berger 2006).

Furthermore, it is a quite unique area of business because products and services cannot be reviewed directly prior to purchase. Instead, customers have to rely on indirect or virtual experiences. The virtualization of tourism is proceeding at a rapid

pace and been an important success factor in the industry. It is therefore essential that tourism websites devote enough attention to the presentation of information.

However, meeting those requirements and becoming successful in these new environments represents a great challenge for tourism organizations, particularly because the dynamism of the industry. Pertaining to that, to face this great challenge, tourism website should not be limited as marketing tool for the company, but should be treated strategically and been design as part of the entire hospitable experience of the tourism products or services.

Each hospitality transaction will contribute to the total meanings associated with the tourism experience (Lynch, 2005) including the tourism website. Therefore, a key to success to the tourism websites in this postmodern society is “how hospitable the website” to the guest. Therefore, the tourism industry has to adapt its web presences in order to improve their business value and to meet the customers’ needs.

This means that tourism websites should integrate user generated content, as well as functionalities and emotions which contribute to their total tourism experience. The retention of a guest perspective is essential to the effective delivery of hospitality products; customers do not buy service delivery, they buy experiences; and they do not buy service quality, they buy memories. Therefore, the tourism delivery process should start from the beginning process of interaction where web site plays a critical role in providing the hospitable experience to the guest.

The hospitable websites possess unique characteristics that affect the likelihood of generating emotional reactions and functional performance to the web experience. The emotion-causing antecedents elucidated are the website’s vividness, interactivity, challenge, interaction speed, machine memory, and allowable social interactions (Jones et. al, 2008). Depending on how a website performs on these dimensions, positive or negative emotions may result. Regardless of the valence of the resultant emotion, the feelings generated may attach to the website as initial stage of guest interaction (initial positive emotions to the company).

Through a better understanding of the provision of hospitality and acts of hospitableness, tourism hosts are better able to recognise the emotional experiences involved and ensure that organisation focuses on their entire tourism process or products. Successful hosts are able to engage customers on an emotional and personal level, which creates feelings of friendship and loyalty amongst guests (Telfer, 2000). Hence, this research contributes to current literature by define hospitality in online context or “e-Hospitality” constructs.

## The Flow State

Despite the existence of different experience typologies, it is the flow of experience with its idea of total immersion or plunge which has most attracted marketing researchers, in particular those working on consumer behaviour, who (Arnould & Price, 1993) have compared it to the peak experience conceptualised by Maslow (1964) in the 1960's with reference to religious ecstasy.

From Hoffman and Novak (1996), it stated original definition of flow as the "holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement." When a person in the flow state "they become absorbed in their activity" Csikszentmihalyi, 1975 in Hoffman and Novak, (1996) flow is characterized by; focused attention, complete involvement and intrinsically enjoyable experience. However, the attempt to measure the flow construct was done by Hoffman and Novak (1996) in computer-mediated environment (CME) as "the state occurring during network navigation" and significant to consumer learning "that leads to more informed decisions, whereas flow resulting from experiential behaviors leads to greater recall and word-of-mouth activities".

This state of flow or flow is perhaps not that rare in the context of computer games or internet-surfing, but all kinds of interaction involving a digital device could perhaps allow flow to occur. There has been some research on a variety of issues related to information technologies that has made use of the flow construct as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

Chen et al. (2002) have done research on flow experiences occurring while using the World Wide Web while Finneran and Zhang (2002) have studied flow experiences in computer-mediated environments. Ghani and Deshpande (1994) studied the structure of flow experiences in information technology usage. Koufaris (2002) has compared several models including the flow model to map on line consumer behaviour. Woszczynzki et al. (2002) state, that the flow model would be a good account of playful actions with computers.

All these findings approach the issue of flow and information technology use from different viewpoints, but they all seem to support the hypothesis that flow experiences do occur in information technology use. Chen et al. (2002) even conclude that the World Wide Web would be especially suited for flow experiences. Also, Chen (2006) found that most World-Wide Web users experience positive moods while online. In addition, Wan and Chiou (2006) have argued that the interactive and engaging properties of online games offer users the opportunity for flow experiences.

Flow is therefore a state of consciousness (usually characterised by a loss of a sense of time passing) that is sometimes experienced by individuals who are deeply involved in an activity they are enjoying. Flow is most often experienced by

individuals as pleasure, satisfaction and as playfulness (Webster, Trevino, & Ryan 1993). Chen et al. (1999) found that some of the most flow-inducing activities were information retrieval, reading and writing emails, creating web pages, playing online games, and chatting online.

In summary, flow is conceptualized as an intrinsically enjoyable experience, and is operationalized as the enjoyment or the intrinsic interest of human-computer interactions. We directly measured flow in the present study with enjoyment and time distortion. The intervening effects of the flow construct will be explored to predict the attitude toward websites.

### **Attitude Toward Website**

In recent years, web sites have become a common marketing communication tool, but both practitioners and academic researchers still struggle to measure the effectiveness of these new tools. Attitude toward the Web site is an important measure of Web site effectiveness.

Factors influencing online shopping intention and attitude toward online shopping have been researched and documented in the context of traditional consumer literature. A review of empirical studies in this area shows that the theories of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). According to Fishbein (1975), attitudes toward an object are generally viewed as a function of an individual's beliefs about the object and the evaluative responses associated with these beliefs.

Advertising researchers also found empirical evidence regarding attitude towards website as a measure of the audience's affective response has been employed to assess the effectiveness of Web sites. Some researchers have borrowed from traditional measures of attitude to measure attitude toward the Web site because of the absence of scales designed specifically to measure the effectiveness of Web sites.

Chen and Wells (1999) argued that a new scale is needed for this new medium and they developed a scale to measure attitude toward the Web site. The Chen and Wells scale was developed primarily from the input of experienced Web users. Based on previous research on the development of the advertisement scale, this measure seems to be a good starting point for understanding the effectiveness of Web sites and is thus central to the current study.

According to Elliott (2005), attitude to the retail web site is an indicator of retail web site effectiveness. Several studies suggest that it is positively related to attitude toward the brand and purchase intent, shopping likelihood and site loyalty (Donthu 2001 in Elliott (2005), brand belief strength and confidence in brand belief (Bellman and Rossiter 2004 in Elliott, 2005).

According to this research also, attitude toward a retail web site is as the dependent variable. The consumer attitude toward a retail web site is favourably strengthened by the six web site characteristics (e.g., ease of use, product information, entertainment, trust, customer support, and currency). In addition, the relationship between the web site characteristics and attitude toward the retail web site is moderated by product involvement and online shopping experience.

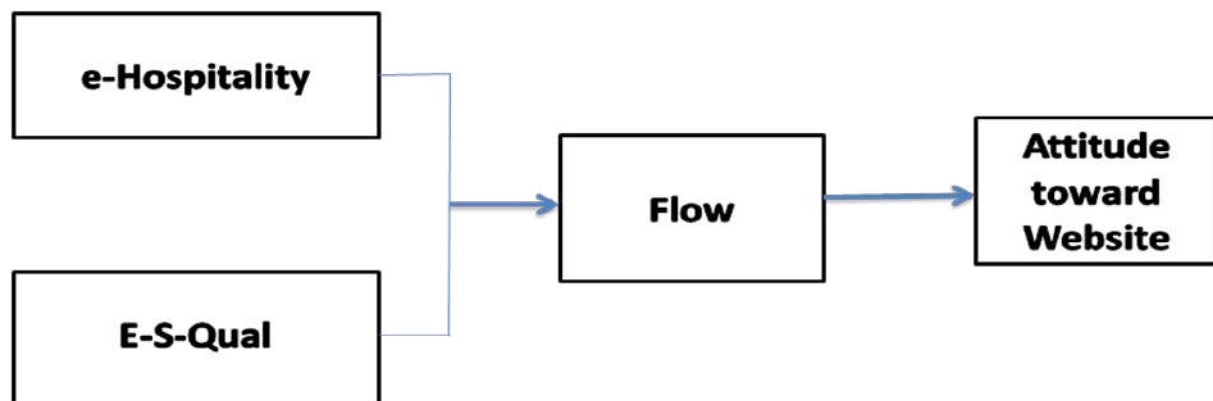
Huang (2005) suggested that attitude refers to an individual's overall evaluation of online shopping as a way of shopping, which can be positive or favourable, negative or unfavourable. Three aspects used to measure attitude such as the hedonic aspect could be measured by items of fun or frustrating, enjoyable or not enjoyable, and interesting or boring, while the utilitarian aspect could be measured by items such as safe or risk, ordered or chaotic, wise or foolish, and reliable or unreliable and the overall aspect could be measured by items such as useful or useless, pleasant or unpleasant, entertaining or weary, and nice or awful.

According to Heath and Gaeth (1994) in Wu (1999), there are literally hundreds of definitions for the term attitude. Attitude has become an everlasting interest of study for social scientists. The digital world in which we are is no exception gives a state-of-the-art summary of definitions and example measures of key constructs associated with attitude. However, they do not elaborate on issues surrounding attitude, and they choose to adopt one-component view of attitude as "a general and enduring (consistent over time) negative or positive evaluation of a person, object, or issue" (p.129).

However, Zanna and Rempel (1988) discuss three critical issues: (1) one-component versus three component view of attitude, (2) the extent to which an attitude is dispositional or episodic in nature, and (3) the relationship between affect and evaluation. After discussing these three issues, they conclude that an attitude should be defined as "the categorization of a stimulus object along an evaluative dimension based upon, or generated from, three general classes of information: (1) cognitive information, (2) affective or emotional information, and/or (3) information concerning past behaviours or behavioural intentions" (p.319).

This definition helps resolve the three issues surrounding attitude, and is more flexible and adaptable to various situations. It fits the Web well for two reasons. First of all, the Web is changing rapidly and a firm's website in this week might be different from that in the next week. A web site is a multimedia product, which could contain audio, video, graphics and texts. More importantly, a web site allows users to interact with it in real time. It does appear that in the case of commercial websites, if a website is well liked, some visitors to the website may be more receptive to the website's contents. Hence, this research attempt to explore consumers' attitude toward the website as an indicator of e-service quality effectiveness and a successful point of a "hospitable" website.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



**Figure 9: Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 depicts the research model of this study. The model proposes that E-S-Qual and e-Hospitality have an effect on the attitude toward the websites. Consequently, flow was proposed to enhance the effect of E-S-Qual and e-Hospitality on attitude toward websites. The variables of this study are:

- **E-Hospitality** - the commitment of electronic provider to create memorable experience for the guest through fulfilling the needs of web-guests; emotional and psychological needs. Emotional (Parsa et al, 2009; Lashley, 2008; Lovelock, Wirtz, Keh & Lu, 2005; Hemmington, 2007) Psychological (Lashley, 2008; Palmer, 1992; King, 1995; Telfer, 2000; Neuwen, 1975)
- **E-S-Qual** - the extent to which a web site facilitates efficient and systems availability of online information search (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005).
- **Attitude Toward Website** - an evaluative dimension based from three classes of information; cognitive, affective and behavioural information toward the hotel websites (Chen and Wells, 1999; Chen et al, 2002)
- **Flow** - the state of time distortion and enjoyment that occur during network navigation (Skadberg & Kimmel 2004, Ellis et al., 1994; Novak & Hoffman, 2000; Koufaris, 2002 and Hsu and Lu, 2004).

Based on above literature gap and conceptual framework, we proposed below hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>** : e-Hospitality is correlated with flow
- H<sub>2</sub>** : E-S-Qual is correlated with flow
- H<sub>3</sub>** : Flow is correlated with attitude to the website
- H<sub>4(a)</sub>**: Flow is correlated with e-Hospitality to determine attitude toward the website
- H<sub>4(b)</sub>**: Flow is correlated with E-S-Qual to determine attitude toward the website.
- H<sub>5</sub>** : e-Hospitality and E-S-Qual are correlated with flow to determine attitude toward the website

## METHODOLOGY

This research used a questionnaire survey to collect the data as in *Appendix 1*. The questionnaire included forty items measuring four factors as well as six items of demographic questions. To develop the scales that would allow us to measure the constructs of e-Hospitality performance, e-service quality (E-S-Qual) and its relationship with attitude towards web site and flow as moderating, we perform critical review of relevant literatures. The scales were developed from the adoption and adjustment of the established constructs; *E-S-Qual* (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005); *Attitude toward the Website* (Chen and Wells, 1999; Chen et al, 2002) and *flow* (Skadberg & Kimmel 2004, Ellis et al., 1994; Novak & Hoffman, 1996; Koufaris, 2002 and Hsu and Lu, 2004).

The survey population is the post-graduate students, and convenience sampling was used. For the purpose of convenient to part time students, they were given a link to answer the questionnaire.

The respondent was asked to indicate his/her level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements based on a 5-point Likert scale. Overall, 59 responses were received. Then researchers examined these completed surveys and dropped those with incomplete answers such as a surveys that 50% incomplete.

We managed to get 52 respondents which are considered as 'appropriate for most research' according to Roscoe (1975) in Sekaran 2003. The respondent demographics are listed in *Table 1*.

**Table 1: Respondent Demographics (N=52)**

| Demographic |             | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender      | Male        | 26        | 50      |
|             | Female      | 26        | 50      |
| Age         | 20-30       | 23        | 44.2    |
|             | 30-40       | 23        | 44.2    |
|             | 40-50       | 6         | 11.5    |
| Country     | Indonesia   | 1         | 1.9     |
|             | Iran        | 5         | 9.6     |
|             | Jordan      | 1         | 1.9     |
|             | Malaysia    | 41        | 78.8    |
|             | Middle East | 1         | 1.9     |
|             | Not stated  | 3         | 5.7     |
| Education   | Master      | 32        | 61.5    |
|             | PhD/DBA     | 20        | 38.5    |

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Reliability and Validity

As shown in *Table 2*, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients ( $\alpha$ 's) for the sample data set is high, reliable and valid at 0.97, which is greater than 0.7 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988 and Sureshchandar, 2001). Pertaining to the study construct component, *attitude toward website* shows among the highest Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which is 0.94, followed by *E-S-Qual* (0.91), *e-Hospitality* (0.89) while *Flow* (0.85).

**Table 2: Reliability Result**

| Variables                | No of items | ( $\alpha$ ) | M     | SD    |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------|-------|
| E-S-Qual                 | 11          | 0.91         | 3.365 | 0.634 |
| e-Hospitality            | 8           | 0.89         | 3.330 | 0.623 |
| Flow                     | 4           | 0.85         | 2.899 | 0.821 |
| Attitude Toward Websites | 11          | 0.94         | 3.250 | 0.754 |
| <b>OVERALL</b>           | <b>34</b>   | <b>0.97</b>  |       |       |

### E-Hospitality Constructs

For the new construct of e-Hospitality, we carried out an exhaustive review of the specializing literature and a search of previous scales available for adjustment. The studies of Parsa et al (2009), Lashley (2008), Hemmington (2007), Telfer (2000), Nouwen (1975), King (1995) and Palmer (1992) has been reviewed for the e-Hospitality scale development. Then, we carried out a series of qualitative studies using in-depth interviews to obtain the e-Hospitality profile.

Once the context of analysis was known and developed by the qualitative study, the information contained in the preliminary scales was judged by a group of experts belonging to the academic area related to the hospitality marketing. Based on the opinion, we refined the scales. From the initial 30 items, eight items was selected for further refinement for pilot test. The result indicates that the Cronbach's alpha for the eight-items of e-Hospitality measure are above 0.70. Sekaran (2003) stated that "those in 0.70 ranges are acceptable".

Based on pilot test, all eight items shows a good usability based on the mean scores. The scale were tapped on 5-point scale; 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree.

From the result in *Table 3*, it shows that greeting, additional information beside the hotel information and a user-friendly web site as the main criterion of a hospitable website. This is aligned with offline hospitality definition by Lovelock, Wirtz, Keh and Lu (2005) as "hospitality-related services should ideally, reflect pleasure at meeting

new customers and greeting old ones when they return”, “friendly” as Ottenbacher, Harrington and Parsa (2009), Lashley (2008) and Hemmington (2007).

**Table 3: e-Hospitality constructs (N=52)**

| Mean  |        | Std.<br>Deviation |
|---|--------|-------------------|
| The site has sense of compassion  | 3.1731 | 0.92294           |
| The site greet and welcoming me as a guest                                      | 3.5577 | 0.97846           |
| The site is user friendly   | 3.4615 | 0.89578           |
| The site is entertaining  | 3.0192 | 0.99981           |
| I have a memorable occasions with the site                                      | 2.8654 | 1.01032           |
| The site has a friendly tools as medium of information interaction              | 3.2885 | 1.01627           |
| The site has provide additional information beside lodging information          | 3.5385 | 0.93853           |
| The site has courteous dismissal and deduction with guest comments / complaints | 3.3462 | 0.83747           |

\*1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree.

### Relationship of the Constructs

Among the components of independent variables, e-Hospitality show strong relationship with Attitude toward Websites (82.8%). The significant value for the study is 0.000 which is below 0.05 then the relationship is significant (Urdan, 2005).

Based on the findings in *Table 4*, the Pearson Correlation has been used to determine the relationship between the first independent variable dimension (*E-S-Qual and e-Hospitality*) and the dependent variables (*Attitude toward Website*) with intervening variable by *Flow*.

**Table 4: Correlation Matrix**

| VARIABLES     | Attitude<br>Toward<br>Websites | E-S-Qual | e-Hospitality | Flow    |
|---------------|--------------------------------|----------|---------------|---------|
| E-S-Qual      | 0.781**                        | 1        | 0.739**       | 0.570** |
| e-Hospitality | 0.828**                        | 0.739**  | 1             | 0.728** |
| Flow          | 0.722**                        | 0.570**  | 0.728**       | 1       |

### Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses in this study, multiple regression analysis was done. The results of all the variables involved in this study can be seen in *Table 5* below. Noted that all the hypotheses have been supported; based on the value of R<sup>2</sup> (which explained the relationship between the variables) and the coefficient level which reaches statistical significance  $p < .0005$  (Sekaran, 2003, Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996).

**Table 5: Hypotheses Testing**

| Hypothesis    | Relationship  | Result                                   |
|---------------|---|--|
| <b>H1</b>     | E-Hospitality $\square$ Flow  | SUPPORTED<br>R Square = 0.529, P = 0.000 |
| <b>H2</b>     | E-S-Qual $\square$ Flow   | SUPPORTED<br>R Square = 0.325, P = 0.000 |
| <b>H3</b>     | Flow $\square$ Attitude to the website                                    | SUPPORTED<br>R Square = 0.521, P = 0.000 |
| <b>H4 (a)</b> | Flow $\square$ e-Hospitality $\square$ Attitude to the website            | SUPPORTED<br>R Square = 0.637, P = 0.000 |
| <b>H4 (b)</b> | Flow $\square$ E-S-Qual $\square$ Attitude to the website                 | SUPPORTED<br>R Square = 0.649, P = 0.000 |
| <b>H5</b>     | E-Hospitality + E-S-Qual $\square$ Flow $\square$ attitude toward website | SUPPORTED<br>R Square = 0.723, P = 0.000 |

\* Correlation at .0005

After all the intercorrelations among the two independent variables are taken into account, the R<sup>2</sup> stated about 72.3% variance for attitude toward websites has been significantly explained by the E-S-Qual and E-Hospitality variables and this quite respectable result because more than 0.3 or 30 percent acceptance value (Sekaran, 2003) Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996) toward assess the statistical significance result. In addition, coefficient test is significant at level 0.000 which reaches statistical significance  $p < .0005$  (Sekaran, 2003, Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). Therefore, the study concludes the E-S-Qual and E-Hospitality significantly explains attitude toward website.

The study shows that the relationship of flow as mediating variables between e-Hospitality with attitude toward the website was 63.7% with 95% of significant level. Apart from that, the relationship of flow as mediating variables between E-S-Qual with attitude toward the website was 64.9% with 95% of significant level. The most important point is the relationship of flow as mediating variables between e-Hospitality and E-S-Qual with attitude toward the website was 72.3% with 95% of significant level.

Therefore, it shows that attitude toward website was explained by both e-Hospitality and E-S-Qual and enhanced through the flow.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, e-Hospitality is developed to measure the important of website to have a hospitable element beside the emphasis on e-service quality. The constructs are aligned with Bauer, Falk, and Hammerschmidt (2006) findings that suggest users strongly associate the efficiency of a Web site and the quality of the content with the “visual appeal” of the web site design. It also shows that the “tangibalized” of intangible service factor are important to service provider as in our case, hotel website.

The research also found that the element of flow to create “enjoyment” and “time distortion” of the website user might explain a favourable attitude toward the website. Ghani and Deshpande (1994); Hoffman and Novak (1996); Chen et al., (2000) and Novak et al. (2000) has successfully used a similar approach in eliciting examples of experiences of flow among online consumers.

As with any study, there are limitations with this study. First the experience with the hotel website among the respondents was not tested a priori. Some respondents may never have used a hotel website to search information or various numbers of websites for that purposed. As a result, certain respondents may have been asked to evaluate an activity they have never used before.

Second, the measurement was tested specifically on hotel website. This may not be generalized to other tourism website. Hence, further research needed to explore the performance of this scale. This construct could include travel agent website, airline companies’ websites or any hospitality industries players.

Thirdly, the variability of respondent demographic (79% Malaysian and 21% from other country such as Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Middle-east, etc.) may have an effect based on the cultural differences. Apart from that, the limitations of the convenience sampling process affect the generalisability of the results. Future research could overcome both limitations by adopting a more rigorous sampling process across different nation website.

This research examines the effects of e-Hospitality and E-S-Qual on consumer attitude toward hotel website. Apart from that the relationships also mediate by flow. Thus, website managers and should emphasis on service quality and also hospitality of the website beside enjoyment and time distortion to enhance a favourable attitude toward the websites. In other words, an engaging website that has “hospitality elements” will leverage the customer attitude on websites beside the functional factors of systems availability and efficiency.

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