

The Perception of Omani E-consumers on the Importance and Performance of Dubai SMHs' Website Dimensions and Attributes

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Abstract—There is no doubt that Internet technology is widely used by hotels and its demand is constantly booming. Hotels have largely adopted website information services through using different interactive tools, dimensions and attributes to achieve excellence in functionality and usability but these do not necessary equate with website effectiveness. One way to investigate the effectiveness of hotel website is from the perspective of e-consumers. This exploratory research is to investigate the perceived importance of websites effectiveness of some selected independent small and medium-sized hotels (SMHs) located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from the perspective of Omani-consumers by using non-random sampling method. From 400 questionnaire addressed to respondents in 27 organizations in Muscat the capital city of Oman, 173 are valid. Findings of this study assist SMHs management in Dubai with the reallocation of their resources and efforts in order to support business development and to sustain a competitive advantage.

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Keywords—Dubai's SMHs, Hotel websites, Omani e-consumer perception, weight and performance evaluation.

I. INTRODUCTION

MODERN Internet technology has created electronic markets (e-markets) in the hotel industry through the elimination of geographical, political, cultural and economic barriers or constraints between consumers and accommodation suppliers. Today, the e-market is the base through which all travel and hotel establishments can compete effectively and develop economically. As modern Internet technology leads to various and rapid changes that affect the hotel management strategies and tactics, product and / or service innovations, creating business development opportunities when such technological applications are used effectively and efficiently leading to several competitive advantages for most hotel enterprises and other related businesses.

Furthermore, the rise of modern Internet technology has changed both the nature of hotel supply offerings and the demand patterns; empowered potential hotel guests and web users to visit these sites online and search for information about hotels' features, facilities and services provided through the websites. A high quality hotel website can enable the user to gather valid, accurate and up-to-date information about a particular hotel property and possibly make an immediate reservation without trouble of calling a travel agency.

A wide range of prior studies proved that electronic users (e-users) make an impression so quickly; if a website does not work properly or is poorly designed, then consumers will simply try browsing a different hotel website. Clearly, the importance of internet technology applications in the hotel industry has been recently emphasized by academic researchers and industry practitioners. The use of Internet applications is a major prerequisite in developing innovative distribution methods to communicate and interact directly with consumers and satisfying their constantly changing needs and expectations [1]. No hotel enterprise including small and medium-sized hotels (SMHs) can survive without cooperating with the travel trade through the usage of Internet applications. To a certain extent, this becomes the standard of today's tourism industry and whoever is lagging behind will be unable to attract consumers for their products [2].

Internet is gaining commercial viability and particularly suited to an independent hotel business as it enables the SMHs to keep their door open 24 hours a day at minimal cost to hotel consumers and guests from all over the globe and dealing directly with potential target markets, solving the problem of limited resources through developing easier use, cost effective and flexible approach to websites. On the other hand, SMHs that are not represented online will definitely fail to bridge the distance with their consumers and suffer shortage of competitive advantages [3].

According to several researches [1], [2], [3] there is a mismatching between the context of existing websites and consumers' needs and expectations, i.e. consumers have difficulties for being familiar with contents of hotel websites. Therefore, this study explores the opportunities of SMHs by evaluating the framework for gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage; depending on the consumers' perception and not on evaluating website against a benchmarking tool or standardized aspects; as the process

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of benchmarking identifies mainly the features the SMHs have and have not on the websites.

Therefore, this study aims to reallocate the SMHs resources according to consumers' needs and expectations, in addition employing the most valid and accurate features that only could add value for hotel consumers' online bookings.

The absence of published papers on consumers' view on the importance of hotel website attributes and dimensions is particularly true for Dubai, as a leading travel destination in the Middle East. Therefore, this paper concentrates on the implications of Internet technology for SMHs sector in Dubai aiming to investigate the impact of hotel website characteristics and service features on website effectiveness from e-consumers' perspective.

In order to accommodate our aim: the first section includes the introduction followed by literature concerning the hotel industry in Dubai and presenting related papers that are pertinent to the issue of hotel website evaluation. Then the research methodology is described using self-administered questionnaire. Then the research results and findings are presented followed by the conclusion that summarizes the study as well as some recommendations that emphasize on how SMHs in Dubai can best benefit from using the Internet in leveraging the organizational performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Hotel Industry in Dubai*

Dubai, one of the seven Emirates comprising the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which is strategically positioned on the north-eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, South of the Arabian Gulf. Dubai is the second largest emirate in terms of size and economic wealth after Abu Dhabi the UAE capital city. The tourism industry in Dubai is constantly and rapidly expanded and gaining significant competitive positioning within the last decade, as the oil to non-oil ratio of the Gross Domestic Product has increased in 2010-2011 [4]. Dubai is considered now to be one of the most flourishing tourist destinations in the Middle East and it was the fastest growing tourism destination in the world in 2002, 2007 and 2011, with growth rates of over 34% (growing ten times faster than the rest of the world). Therefore, tourism is the fastest growing economic sector in Dubai and normally it takes the lead as the fastest growing holiday destination in the history of the travel industry [5]. This is due to its huge economic growth and investment opportunities and funds employed in this vital economic sector and because of its unique location which is surrounded by less demanding touristic countries and / or destinations [4].

Moreover, today's tourism in Dubai is obviously raising due to the instability of some tourist markets especially in the Middle East as a result of political turmoil and security concerns across the region (such as in Egypt and Syria) and to less extent in Bahrain, all of these forces have forced significant upward demand growth in Dubai, not only for commercial and business purposes but also for leisure, recreation entertainment, shopping and fashion show events,

sporting competitions and art/music festivals participations and attendances, In addition to the major exhibitions and conference tourism. Correspondingly, Dubai as a destination has managed to leverage its strategic location as a hub between continents and was valued as a safe destination during the time of Arab-spring [4].

Furthermore, the SMHs' accommodation sector in Dubai plays a crucial role in the tourism industry and hence the country's competitive positioning. Currently, there are 496 Lodging and Hotel establishments in Dubai, 278 are SMHs. The tourism authority is insisting on flourishing SMHs sector as they generally achieve stable occupancy rates across both good and difficult economic periods. During periods of strong economic growth they tend to profit from growing weekend and leisure demand, while weak economic periods often characterized by a growing number of business guests who cut costs. The SMHs sector is expecting to mature into an important sector of Dubai market. This positive change is expected to broaden the attraction of Dubai and open up the market to new sectors of demand that were previously being priced out of the market [6], [7].

Dubai's hotels have one of the highest revenue per average room worldwide therefore attracting numerous hotel investors and developers eager to catch on the lucrative market, leading to a highly competitive region. Accordingly, the hotel sector experienced a 19 % increase in revenues generated during 2011, 14 new properties opened in 2012 and another 18 to open during 2013 - 2014 and this is expected to affect the destination's wide occupancy rate pushing to fierce competition. As a result of the global economic downturn that Dubai witnessed in 2008, the market was dominated by 5 stars and luxury hotels and the SMHs segment had been largely non-existent in Dubai, this leads to big decreasing in times of distress which has increased the appeal of budget, economy and SMHs. Therefore, the tourism authority in Dubai creates various potential opportunities to develop the SMHs through setting considerations to help entrepreneurs find the suitable environment for SMHs to thrive [5], [6], [7].

Dubai government believes that the SMHs lead to sustained tourism demand and growth in Dubai. Although these hotels do not provide investor returns of the margin and scale of the luxury and 5 star hotels' products, SMHs can produce a more steady revenue stream, owing to their performance being less volatile in an economic downturn. In spite of the fact that budget and economy hotels could be more price sensitive, revenue per available room variances across economic cycles are typically lower for this asset class than their 5-stars counterpart [4]. Therefore, the hotel and accommodation sector in Dubai is characterized by a strong duality, on one hand, there are large lodging businesses and hotel chains (established local brands and international chains) that use tour operators and packages and on the other hand, there are SMHs that cater to particular tourist segments who largely organize and arrange the vacation and accommodation on their own by using the hotel websites.

Although hotel sector has largely been dominated by luxury hotels, with over 60 % of the stock in 4 and 5 star rating, the

number of independent and SMHs in Dubai is constantly maximizing, this results in the completion of nine projects with 2,800 rooms over the years 2007-2010, increasing the SMHs stock by 175 %. Although supply gap persists in budget hotels, the gap is compensated by the presence of hotel apartment properties [4].

Actually, hotel apartments are very popular, particularly with visitors from the gulf countries who prefer this type of lodging properties and they normally bring their families. This sector is particularly considered as an important driver in Dubai's market. There is hardly being any doubt that hotel apartments in Dubai are an indispensable and important part of the hotel industry. This type of accommodation plays a pivotal role in Dubai's hotel sector as it possesses the ability to redefine the concept of commercial hospitality in a new way of branding. Dubai also possesses what is called the Dubai beach apartments which are equally popular with visitors and travelers seeking vacation or leisure travel. There are approximately 230 Apartment hotels in Dubai including luxury, upscale, economy and budget categories [4].

Amusingly, the accommodation tariff (room rate) is quite reasonable, for the extra space and privacy that the guests receive, along with the modern, state-of-the-art amenities, up-to-date and fashionable facilities and services. Therefore, Dubai's strategy is to include all hotel assets classes and increase 3 and 4 star and hotel apartments' supply to reap the benefits of the trend of increase in intra-regional travel. The hotel market in Dubai is experiencing a deep and diverse range of demand generators which are attracting an increasing number of visitors all over the world [6]. Dubai hotel apartments are recorded approximately 9.8 billion Emirates Drhs. in revenue generated during the second half of 2011, making a 22% over the same period last year. Hotel apartments continue to increase in popularity and capacity, with the average length of stay growing from 4.9 nights to 5.6 nights in 2012 meanwhile the average length of stay in a standard hotel is 3.4 nights [5].

Particularly, Dubai receives a great number of tourists that can be characterized by autonomously tourists, meaning gather information, organize and purchase their holiday by themselves and also travel to the destination by their own vehicles. The number of frequent travelers from nearby countries (specifically from Oman and Saudi Arabia) represents a great percentage of Dubai's tourist flow. According to self-observation made by one of the researchers, the frequent travelers are normally visiting Dubai on a regular basis for three common travel purposes that are; VFR (visiting friends and relatives), trade or business and shopping including some other recreational activities accompanied such as sightseeing, enjoying a wonderful landscape and visiting popular man-made attractions.

According to a recent study of data analysis prepared by Dubai tourism authority in 2011, showed that Oman is a major exporting tourist market to Dubai. The distance between Oman and Dubai is 385 km. Excluding the regular Omani visitors who are permanently working in UAE or doing routine jobs and temporarily businesses in Dubai or Al Ain and

are crossing the borders on a daily basis from different points of access such as Al-Buraimi, Musandam and Shinas, there are approximately 193,715 travelers came into and visited Dubai in 2010 either by private automobiles, buses, coaches or aircrafts and they have spent in total 368,057 nights in Dubai during the same period [4]. Also, it has been noticed that the rush travel times were during the public holidays, weekends and during the occasions and special events such as Dubai shopping festival [5].

B. Websites Evaluation Approaches for SMHs

According to the literature review and prior studies done, evaluating hotel web sites can be divided into four different levels according to the research method and the technological phases adopted. The first level is when the hotel company possesses only e-mail address with no website; the second level is when the hotel company establishes a website for online presences only. The third is for business integration with different stakeholders, and the fourth level is for business transformation and transactions [8].

Furthermore, reference [9] shows that the evaluation of websites can be done by testing the webpage history and updates through examining its content. It examined Malaysian hotels' websites using way back machines; the results showed that large hotel chains lead in Internet usage, leading to great pressures on SMHs and on their ability to compete. These ways of evaluating websites faced several criticisms, one of these is the decision to use differs according to the implemented business strategies and tactics of the hotel and not all features should be developed, also some features can be developed before others [10]. Moreover, this method of websites evaluation is criticized because fast technological development and new website applications will be difficult to keep up with [11]. In addition to, leaving one feature or another on the hotel's websites or the web page age and archives changes cannot be an accurate evaluating method.

Another evaluation method can be done by examining the website's characteristics or features; this is to evaluate the performance of hotels websites through analyzing their contents and the website design. A study was done on 36 hotels websites identified 32 separate features [12]. Another study evaluated the website content using the balanced score-card approach; the study was done on 16 small hotels in Scotland. They determined four website dimensions namely are; technical, marketing, internet and customers [13]. This evaluation method is more flexible because it does not need primary data collecting, based on benchmarking of adopting all new features and new approaches. But still excellent in features, content and design does not indicate effectiveness of websites, sometimes over-crowded or technological complicated may be not user friendly or brand image developer of the hotel website.

Reference 14 argued that it is vital to evaluate hotel websites from the users' perceptions because these views give a clue to manage websites effectively and determine their eventual success. Two ways for measuring the website effectiveness were suggested; either by financial results or

consumer purchase intentions [10]. Besides, a wide variety of website dimensions and attributes are classified to measure experts or e-consumers perceptions as follows: accessibility, navigation, readability and down load speed [15].

A study done to weight hotel website dimensions in Hong Kong identified six dimensions which are; reservation information, facilities information, contact information, surrounding area information and website management with different attributes, reservation information received the largest average weight and website management received the lowest average weight [16]. Although, in another study it was found that online travel purchasers viewed a secure payment method as the most important factor for a successful travel website [3].

Furthermore, a study distributed 156 questionnaire forms among e- consumers to gather data for understanding online customer behavior on tourism websites. This study identified the following website features; site customization, multi-media (product customization), reservation, support (complaints, claim and ask questions, rescue help via telephone, chat, e-mail), customer forum (interactive with other visitors on the websites) via chat, questionnaire or view comments or get advice from customers [17]. Additionally, reference [18] identified twelve dimensions, then the same issue was tested again after adding other dimensions to cope with the rapid evolution of information technology that were deemed appropriate for the hotel industry such as social media, search engines, a total of 69 items were used to test the consumers' opinions and views on perceived important features on hotel websites [19].

Another survey was done using a questionnaire with five main dimensions and forty attributes, these dimensions were facilities, information, reservation, contact information, website management and surrounding area information. After analyzing 304 questionnaires, it was found that the reservation transaction and information is the most important dimension with the following attributes; room rates, availability policy, easily accessible, clear displayed and room rate were viewed as important in addition to secured transactions procedures [20].

A different study revealed that it is not wise for SMHs to adopt Internet features and dimensions simply to follow trends, fashion or imitate their competitors. They should weight their online investment according to clear objectives and well planned strategies [21]. A recent study on SMHs' websites in Spain showed that online visibility is considered a differentiating factor for the hotel businesses that can enhance the organizational performance thus increasing occupancy rate through capturing new clients [22].

From relevant literature review, it is clear that various customer segments are the major samples for website's evaluation although financial results are effective indicators, but it is difficult to obtain as it is considered confidential information for hotels. Thus to evaluate the website effectiveness is usefully to be done through e-consumers or frequent web users as they are the main potential hotel target markets [23]. In spite of the existence of numerous hotel

websites, there is no single standard measurement or a universal ranking mechanism for assessing the performance of websites, in addition to the difficulty in tracking the rapid technological changes. Evaluation website effectiveness is recommended because it measures both functionally; (meaning the content and information provided) and to measure usability; (meaning the design and ease to use).

Furthermore, it can be concluded from the literature review that the international competitive advantage is changing not only through adopting advanced IT and communications and not only through functionality, usability and adopting the best features, dimensions and attributes, competitive advantage is largely obtained through increasing consumer's perceived values. In addition, SMHs play a vital role within many major economies all over the world, their ability to successfully adopt and utilize the Internet and electronic commerce is of prime importance in ensuring their stability and future survival.

Therefore, the primary purpose of the research is to identify the relative position of SMHs' website features, usability and functionality from the perspective of Omani- consumers and to recognize clearly to what extent such dimensions are important in the decision-making process as well as to identify whether the contents meet their perceived requirements and expectations or not. Although, there are several published articles that evaluated the performance of hotel websites based on consumers' perspective, still there is a lack in prior studies particularly in adopting segmentation customer strategy; in the context of segmenting customer perceptions by nationality. In addition, the existing hotel management literature has no published articles that investigated the consumers' perceptions of features of hotels' websites in Dubai.

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper describes a quantitative method of measuring and evaluating the importance and performance of Dubai SMHs' website dimensions and attributes. It aims to measure specific information, which as a whole constitutes the information services offered through the website. Data from an extended web search along with responses of Omani frequent travelers, hotel guests, e-consumers and web users with regard to the importance of varied information services are used.

A conceptual model that describes the SMHs' website features is used in order to summarize the data and to present an overall volume that is currently offered. The applied method and measurement of successful performance of SMHs' websites in this research, was basically determined by a set of six dimensions; each of these dimensions, in turn, comprised a number of attributes. The Omani e- consumers' perceptions are used to weight the relative importance of the six dimensions. Clearly, it has been known that the acceptability of the content or the overall acceptance of a website comprises several major components such as functionality, usability, system feasibility, usefulness and social acceptance.

This research mainly focused on the first two components because of their direct relevance to contents; dimensions and attributes. Through a questionnaire designed and sent as an electronic version by using the form creation tool provided via www.kwiksurvey.com and addressed to 400 Omani people in 27 organizations in Muscat, the capital city of Oman, those respondents had previously visited and used websites of SMHs in Dubai during the past three years (2010-2012). Further, the attributes occurrence percentage in SMHs and the extent to which various hotel website dimensions and attributes were perceived as important aspects while designing the website for the purpose of online booking are examined.

Particularly in tourism and its related information/intensive sectors, products and services, the potential of the Internet has been proven. According to reference [24] nearly 75% of adult web surfers have shopped for travel-related services on the Internet in the last few years. In order to sample the data, an extensive online search was conducted to locate the SMHs' websites in Dubai, by screening the links detailed on local portals containing tourism directories [4], [25], [26], [27], [28]. Lastly, an in-depth Internet search on the keyword was conducted on the complete list of existed website addresses registered in Dubai [29].

For the construction of a universal set of information services and features, approximately top20 international brand hotels' websites are searched during a period of 72 days in late July, August and September 2012, according to the Hotel-online special annual report hotel ranking [30]. Moreover, the UAE Yellow Page for Travel and Hospitality is used to identify SMHs in Dubai which have website and electronic access for reservation [31]. At the end, the researchers selected 75 SMHs' websites which represents 40% of the SMHs total population in Dubai according to Dubai SMEs Report [32] and 65% of the SMHs in Dubai which have already activated website access, as this percentage is considered acceptable in terms of scale and scope of the study.

This process of information recording and content analysis for a target population such as the websites of SMHs in Dubai, if hypothetically, a hotel website offers all or the most of the recorded service information features (dimensions and attributes). In the present study two researchers independently performed a web search following a similar methodology conducted by several previous studies [3], [20], [11] and then their research outcomes were compared to form a joint report. The survey resulted in the creation of a universal set of 100 information services (attributes) that were associated with six dimensions, as the procedure aims to find and record as many information features offered by the websites worldwide as possible. In this way, a complete list of dimensions and attributes was formed in order to capture every information service (attribute) offered on websites. The included dimensions studied within this research paper are respectively as follows; "Facilities information", "Reservation/Price information", "Contact information", "Web site management", "Surrounding information" and "Company information".

Considering the amount of information services and features provided in the present study, this is due to the fact

that the hotel websites nowadays should include more features than before (which surveyed in previous researches) since they are rapidly and continuously expanding and developing. As well as, it is preferable for any new research discussing and investigating a repeatable topic analyzed and measured before to meet the current needs and constant changes occur in the website studies. Therefore, the present study goes a step forward to the direction of measuring and evaluating the service information (dimensions and attributes) provided through hotel websites.

In fact, many of these information services and features (dimensions and attributes) included in this study are similar to those mentioned in most of the previous studies except two main things that should be taken into consideration which are; first, the present study is focused mainly on a particular target market (Omanie-consumers and web users) of independent and SMHs located in Dubai –as a leading destination in the Middle East, second, this study is much more richer in terms of attributes that almost include all information services which recently anticipated and required by most IT innovators in the hotel industry, website designers, e-consumers, web users, hotel guests, distribution channels, brokers, and / or intermediaries like tour operators and travel agencies in addition to marketers and hoteliers.

The questionnaire was designed and modified from several previous studies [3], [16], [14], [20], [22]. Research outcomes are, therefore, expected to contribute to the development of a measurable way that has the potential to form a long-term metric that would assist in the refinement of Dubai SMHs' e-business programs.

The Cronbach's alpha measure of the reliability analysis of the six dimensions is shown in Table I. The value reveals the consistency of the evaluation and the homogeneity of all the items in the scale. The results in Table I show good reliability for all dimensions included in the questionnaire; the dimension of reservation/price information has the strongest alpha value of over 0.9 and the alpha values for company profile and contact information are less than 0.8. The study collected data was computed and statistically analyzed by using SPSS software version 18.

TABLE I
CRONBACH'S ALPHA MEASURES OF THE SMHs' WEBSITE DIMENSIONS

Facilities information	0.8946
Reservation / Price information	0.9223
Contact information	0.7767
Website management	0.8418
Surrounding information	0.8621
Company profile	0.7369

In September 2012, a limited-scale electronic survey was conducted among 27 organizations from some selected higher educational institutions (HEIs), as well as the most popular tourism and travel business organizations located in Muscat.

The questionnaire is written in English and directly sent through non-random sampling to different market segments of the Omani people (academic/faculty members, administrative staff, students, professionals, marketers, tourism researchers,

travelers, frequent flyers, and internet users). The target response is to collect back roughly 15 surveys from each selected organization. By the end of October 2012, the completed and usable questionnaires reached to 173 copies (with a response rate 43.25%).

The questionnaire is divided into two sections, the first section is to seek for demographic characteristics and segment profiles of the respondents. While the second section required respondents to rate on a five-point Likert scale, (with a score ranging from 1="unimportant", 2= "somewhat important", 3= "neither important nor unimportant", 4= "important", 5= "very important") their perceived level of importance for each of the included features and attributes when searching or booking online for hotel accommodation in Dubai either for business or leisure purposes. Then, these e- consumers' views are used in an attempt to provide quantitative data on how consumers evaluate SMHs websites in terms of importance and performance.

The weight modeling approach for SMHs' website attributes was modified from the multi-criteria weighing model presented in [16], [33]. The means of the ratings were used as weights to standardize and correct the findings, which resulted from the web search. This was done in the following way: for every attribute the associated rating was divided by the sum of the ratings of the attributes involved in the dimension to produce a percentage. In this way for example, if a hotel website did provide all the attributes in a dimension, occurrence of each attribute would be noted by the digit 1, and this result would be multiplied by the percentage. The total results of all multiplications within the dimension would add to 100%. This approach is used for weighing the six dimensions by using the average ratings from the six relative dimensions as well.

It should be noted that the six dimensions have different numbers of attributes within them. Thus computed percentages of website attributes provided through SMHs may produce findings that have different meanings for different dimensions. For example, a percentage calculated for a dimension that has only ten attributes may have a different interpretation compared to a percentage computed for a dimension of fifteen or twenty attributes because every attribute in the ten attributes dimension is associated to a greater percentage and of course this constitutes a limitation in this study.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Taking into account the respondents' views, all the information services (dimensions and attributes) do not have the same weight with regards to the overall features offered. Instead, some may be considered to be more important than others. To incorporate this into the evaluation procedure, the mean rating for each attribute was used as a weight that is associated with using the data from the questionnaire, thus resulting in estimating the volume of each dimension.

It was clear from the numerical results of the profile section of the questionnaire that all targeted respondents have acceptable familiarity degree with the Internet browsing and

have good knowledge and awareness about the information services in travel, hospitality and tourism websites, the age group is 18-36 years old and most of them had received a university/ college diploma and / or degree. Most respondents had an average annual income ranges from less 5000 to 10000US \$ and most of them having high levels of travel experiences (domestically, regionally and internationally). The majority has 3-9 years of experience in Internet usage, and most of them were frequently browsing the Internet sites for more than average 20 hours a week. Also, the majority prefers to visit the web sites of hotels / resorts and airlines. In general, most of respondents are aware of the information services and they were clearly able to evaluate the dimensions and associated attributes provided by SMHs in Dubai and listed in the questionnaire form.

It can be interpreted from table II that respondents generally perceived the included dimensions as "somewhat important", "important" and "very important", (with mean ratings from 2.0 to 2.73). E-consumers and web users rated reservation / price information and facilities information as the most and second most important dimensions, whereas company profile was perceived as the least important dimension. The computed weights of different dimensions do not differ greatly among each other. In addition, Table II indicates the occurrence weight % which ranges from 56.62 % to 73.90 %, whereas the occurrence % of SMHs in Dubai ranges from 24.93 % to 45.93 %.

Table II illustrates the difference % between the occurrence weight % in the present study as perceived by the e-consumers and web users on one hand, and the occurrence % of SMHs in Dubai as indicated by the web search on the other, the difference % is ranging from 23.78 % (the narrowest) for facilities information to 37.18 % (the widest) for the reservation / price information.

In terms of attributes, hotel facilities / features, guestroom facilities / amenities and general hotel description that respectively has the mean ratings (3.42, 3.21 and 3.16) are perceived as the most important attribute in the facilities information dimension (average mean rating = 2.72).

Whereas, check prices and room rates, online rooms availability and security payment systems that had mean ratings (2.95, 2.88 and 2.63) respectively have been perceived as the most important attribute in the reservation / price dimension (average mean rating = 2.73) and this matches the statement made by prior studies that consumers and hotel guests are most sensitive to room rates and security of payment [3],[20]. As for the contact information dimension (average mean rating = 2.33), respondents felt that the attributes of hotel property address, social media (share / like) icons and claim form were the most important for them (with mean ratings from 2.78 to 2.36). For the website management (average mean rating = 2.51), e-consumers rated the first three attributes as very important among all other attributes in the same dimension, these attributes were respectively; up-to-date information on the site (3.11), website download time and speed (3.05) and website design and page layout (2.98), this result also matches with previous research paper conducted for

hotels in Greece [14], however, all other attributes viewed as neither somewhat important nor unimportant attributes.

Regarding the surrounding information dimension (average mean rating = 2.51), there are only one attribute viewed as very important which is; destination / city attractions (with a mean rating 3.07), another attribute is perceived as important which is nearby tourist facilities (with a mean rating 2.69). In the dimension of company profile, almost all attributes are perceived as somewhat important except two attributes are perceived as important; press / media and announcements (mean ratings 2.10 and 2.05 respectively). The following attributes are perceived unimportant for the respondents in this study as they got the lowest ratings of mean score (less than 1.80) and the lowest weight occurrence percentages (less than 39 %), these attributes are; video files, bars / pubs, accessibility maps, dealings with tour operators and travel agencies, rent cars, newsletters, hotel fax, multilingual site, staff directory, help, e-shop, means of transportation, public holidays, up-to-date weather report, employment and sponsorships.

In terms of occurrence weight % in present study, out of 100 attributes, few of them had exceeded 70% which are; hotel facilities / features, guestroom facilities / amenities, online rooms availability, online booking, security payment system, accepted credit cards, social media icons, up-to-date information, chat rooms, ease of use of the site, city main attractions and announcements, these previously mentioned attributes represent together only 12%. Whereas, with 17% the following attributes had scored together less than 50% as occurrence weight % in present study including for instance; souvenirs/gift shops, frequent guest program, refund function, rent a car online, newsletters, e-shop, help, public holidays, employment and quality programs. With a weight of 69.75%, the respondents were specifically seeking out environmentally friendly hotel establishments with a social responsibility programs or green actions provided by the hotel as it is a reflection of a good brand image, reliability and a clear indication of the standard of services provided. With a weight of 73.14 %, chat rooms and guest comments are very important attribute as it gives the potential consumers the incentive security needed to handle the online reservation decision and process in these particular hotels.

In terms of occurrence % in Dubai SMHs, out of 100 attributes listed, few of them had exceeded 50% such as; hotel photos album, facilities / features, guestroom facilities / amenities, accessibility maps, check prices and room rates, check-in / check-out time, reservation policy, hotel property telephone, website ease of use, destination / city general information and about us/branding and these previously mentioned attributes represent together only 11%. Whereas, with 62% the following attributes had scored together less than 20% as occurrence weight % in Dubai SMHs including for instance; warranty / legality, video files, calendar of special events, cancellation policy and fees, payment options, social media icons, claim form, FAQ, graphic layout, multilingual site, chat rooms, regular updating of web page design and structure, save/print function, airport information,

awards, information for travel agencies and quality programs. These findings may contradict with those discussed in a research paper for Hong Kong hotels' website evaluation [16].

It has been noticed that the attributes of hotel general description, room rates and location map has a weight of 82.10%, 78.89 and 72, 44 respectively, which indicates that these attributes are very important for Dubai SMHs. In short, the overall perceptions of the respondents in this study shows that e-consumers, travelers and web users generally agree that the included dimensions and attributes are important and / or somewhat important with taking into consideration the results show a significant importance for both reservation / price and facilities information dimensions.

TABLE II
PERCEPTION OF OMANI E-CONSUMERS AND WEB USERS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF WEBSITE DIMENSIONS OF DUBAI SMHS

Website Dimensions	Mean	SD	Rank of	Coefficient of variation	Occurrence weight % in present study	Occurrence % of SMHs in Dubai	Difference
Facilities information	2.72	1.17	2	0.43	56.62	32.84	23.78
Reservation / Price information	2.73	1.25	1	0.46	66.50	29.32	37.18
Contact information	2.33	1.20	4	0.52	65.50	41.16	24.34
Website management	2.51	1.19	3	0.48	62.00	24.93	37.07
Surrounding information	2.17	1.18	5	0.55	69.98	36.14	33.84
Company profile	2.0	1.15	6	0.57	73.90	45.93	27.97

Before proceeding to the measurement of the dimension volume, some remarks should be made regarding the relation of mean ratings to the actual occurrence percentages of the same attributes and dimensions.

To incorporate these queries in the analysis, a correlation in Table III shows that three dimensions are high and significant which are: facilities information, reservation/price information and website management as well as the overall/total dimensions included in the present study and computed from the 100 attributes and 6 dimensions mean ratings and standard deviations scored and analyzed in table II has 0.597 in terms of Pearson coefficient which is considered as high significant <0.001. Since the total dimensions correlations are high and significant, it can be concluded that the most frequent attributes information are considered important or are offered frequently by most of SMHs in Dubai.

TABLE III
CORRELATION BETWEEN DIMENSIONS' WEIGHT % IN THE PRESENT STUDY
AND THE OCCURRENCE % IN DUBAI SMHS

Website Dimensions	r	p	Significant
Facilities information	0.745*	<0.001	High
Reservation/Price information	0.762*	<0.001	High
Contact information	0.528	0.078	Weak
Web site management	0.724*	<0.001	High
Surrounding information	-0.319	0.339	No
Company profile	-0.048	0.882	No
Total dimensions	0.597*	<0.001	High

r: Pearson coefficient

Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table IV lists the weights (relative importance) of the six dimensions of the SMHs' websites. As previously stated, the total sum of weights for all dimensions amounted to 100%. Likewise, the sum of all overall weights should add up to 100%. As shown in table IV the rendered dimensions percentages have been formed in the following manner: for every SMH investigated, the weighted amount of attributes is added for each dimension and the result is expressed as a percentage of the services attributes rendered by the SMH for this specific dimension. If for example, this percentage is 33%, the SMH would have reached a provision of a third of the potential specific dimension analyzed in this study.

It can be concluded from table IV that the richest dimensions are; "Reservation / Price information" and "Facilities information" because they both reach more than 30% of the full capacity to offer these attributes and features of the website, while they also enjoyed the highest values of importance rates according to Omani e-consumers' view ratings. At the same time, these two dimensions are considered as the most important dimensions (22.39%) and (20.37%) to make successful online business for Dubai SMHs. Table IV shows that by weighing each dimension's volume by its relative importance the overall score can be calculated, this over all score may reach its maximum value (100%) when all the dimensions have reached the 100% of their capacity.

Weighing the dimensions is necessary because it represents a more realistic estimation and logic approach of the importance of each one and the respondents have the opportunity to evaluate these dimensions and attributes separately. In this case, SMHs' websites have 24.68%, as an overall measure of volume which is calculated by combining the six different dimensions after weighing them by dimensions' ratings. This overall volume of dimensions can be regarded as a measure of what the potential e-consumers totally perceive while visiting and navigating through the SMHs' website, therefore in the present study it is assured that SMHs in Dubai fail to provide a wide range of attributes and service information on their websites as perceived by the target market of Omani e-consumers and web users because as shown in table IV the overall information volume is (24.68%) which means approximately equals the quarter of the total volume.

TABLE IV
MEASURES OF DUBAI SMHS' WEBSITE DIMENSIONS VOLUME

Website Dimensions	Volume according to information attributes occurrence in Dubai SMHs and e-consumers/users perceptions (average value %)	Relative importance according to e-consumers'/users perceptions (average value %)
Facilities information	30.18 %	20.37 %
Reservation / Price information	33.15 %	22.39 %
Contact information	19.32 %	13.04 %
Website management	28.37 %	19.15 %
Surrounding information	24.25 %	16.37 %
Company profile	12.85 %	8.68 %
Overall information volume	24.68 %	100%

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper demonstrates a procedure used to measure and evaluate quantitatively the dimensions and attributes offered by Dubai SMHs' websites based on the perceptions and views of the Omani e-consumers that allowed a realistic recording of such information, by means of their relative importance and ratings. Empirical findings of the procedure indicated that most of the survey's respondents generally agree that the examined factors of SMHs' websites are important for online reservation decisions. In spite of the limitation in scope of the time frame and the number of respondents, findings of this study can provide useful insights for SMHs' managers to determine whether their hotel websites meet the requirements and expectations of their potential and existing consumers.

This study aims to assist the SMHs' hoteliers and other marketing decision-makers to track consumer perceptions and to provide SMHs with the necessary insights they need to determine where and how to prioritize the change, as well as to recognize the current approaches and applications which drive a high level of e-consumers satisfaction. Therefore, this study is considered a significant benchmarking tool for SMHs operating in the Middle East markets as it provides hoteliers with the relative positions of their website features, and in turn can enhance the effectiveness of their service delivery and communication with potential target markets.

In addition, this study reveals that SMHs website effectiveness needs to be considered and incorporated with website design, content analysis and market analysis due to the fact that a competitive advantage is gained and sustained in today's hotel business environment through increasing the customer's perceived value through effectiveness.

The study also reveals that most of SMHs in Dubai still have lack of some critical services information and they need to pay more attention toward specific attributes such as; hotel facilities warranty / legality, appearance and use of multimedia tools, social media and chat rooms, security system, online

cancellation, claim forms, consumer interactivity, search function, promotions and sponsorships and finally the surrounding information in general.

The findings of the procedure indicate that Dubai SMHs provide limited use of the Internet potential as a whole and also provide little information about online reservation process and website management features even though it is considered the most important dimensions. Based on that, the SMHs in Dubai do not take advantage of crucial factors which could, in turn, enhance the e-business for these hotel properties. The study also concluded that most of SMHs in Dubai still need to be well-equipped in database technological systems to face the fierce competition from the well-known branded and large international hotel companies, as well as these SMHs' owners, top managers and directors should be aware of the importance of website services information as a hotel resource asset and avoid to consider it as a cost-oriented resource.

Furthermore, the study reveals that very few SMHs launch their chat services and social networks pages as Facebook and Twitter for receiving comments and complaints from their current consumers/guests on what to be added or what might be presently missing on the hotel's website and to discover the popularity of some shared suggestions. This research shows that today's social customers are increasingly sharing full range of guest comments in both positive and negative ways as customers turn to social media to express their satisfaction and frustration publicly. Therefore, hotels should deal and respond rapidly with the guest complaints through online public relation function before it turns into verbal conversations.

The online customer conversation should be analyzed from public relations and marketing perspectives, as it gives direct customer insights that can be used to formulate a set of competitive business strategies and value added service information. This is an important application to ensure customer retention and to guarantee the future business demand.

In addition, it is clear from the research results that e-consumers and web users are now considering to a large extent the environmental issues, and most of hotel consumers are becoming today more aware and concerned about the hotel engagement in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, as well as to be mentioned on the hotel's website to increase trust and confidence and this is exactly what SMHs need to impose in e-consumers.

In particular, the SMHs' websites need to be networking with other travel services and provide links on their websites or adding some integrating efforts with other tourism services. To ensure further enhancement of the business environment for SMHs, a coordinated effort between SMHs and the industry leaders, the government bodies and authorities will be extremely required to adopt and execute the appropriate business initiatives.

Also, it was apparent from the research findings that there is a serious problem with security confidence for e-consumers through using credit cards; therefore, the SMHs' websites should be actively supported by the Government of Dubai, the

General Department of e-services and Dubai Police through creating more secured system for such a purpose and launch an awareness program for the public and web users to address this issue.

On the hotels' websites, there should be a sign for the hotel engagement in one of the well-known service quality standard organization and environmental conservation organizations. E-consumers become more alert to these issues as they seek standards to rely on as guides to the most sustainable hotels to stay in, such as the green globe hotel; a global benchmarking certification and improvement system for sustainable travel and tourism and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design LEED; a certificate aiming to accelerate the development and implementation of sustainable building practices.

Finally the findings of this study contribute to hotel operations by providing practical information on how to develop their websites according to the needs of e-users and consumers. SMHs should have clear aims and well-planned marketing strategies in terms of using effectively the technological systems (e.g. database), the Internet applications and regularly updating their websites whether for promotion and/or reservation purposes.

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