A Consultative Research for WATA SOLUTIONS on How to build a successful Online Hotel Booking site

Tram Tran
421050

Examiners:
Ralph van Dijk, PhD
Marc Vink

Written for Saxion Hospitality Business School
June, 2017
Foreword

This thesis project has been written to fulfill the graduation requirements of the major Hotel Management at Saxion university of Applied Sciences in Apeldoorn, Netherlands. The student started working on the thesis project per the 6th of February 2017 and first set up a so-called ‘Thesis proposal’. After two examiners approved the thesis proposal, the student can pursue the project in a relatively independent way.

This thesis project is "A Consultative Research for WATA SOLUTIONS on How to build a successful Online Hotels Booking Site". The research aims to generate advice as to what must be taken into consideration in order to create a successful online hotel booking site. With this new knowledge about web users’ behaviors and relevant issue regarding customer trust, commitment and loyalty, I hope that this project has value for Wata Solutions.

I have experienced this period as very stressful but interesting. At the beginning I had little knowledge of online hotel booking system and online hotel booking’s behavior. However, I have been able to achieve a result I am very satisfied with. I would like to thank Mr. Djik and Mr. Marc Vink as my first and second examiners for their excellent guidance and support during this stressful time. I also wish to thank all of the respondents, without whose cooperation I would not have been able to finish this project.

I also benefitted from debating issues with my friends and family. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my friends, Mr. Kurt Patrizi for informative advice and great knowledge to the design of research strategies, theoretical framework and the use of language. If I ever lost interest, you kept me motivated. My family deserves a particular note of thanks: you all gave me strength to complete this challenge.

Malaysia, June 2017

Tram Tran
Summary

The aim of this project is to introduce an innovative advice for Wata Solution on how to build a successful online hotel booking site, which will help the organization attract more users and increase their revenue.

This paper is written with the improvements based on the feedback in the last quarter. The improvement mostly made in **Theoretical Framework** and **Research** part in order to ensure the coherence of the report. All the major changes are written in **Orange color**.

Methods of analysis include literature review, a comparative study, customer feedback analysis and interview. The purpose of literature review is to establish a theoretical framework for my topic by looking at relevant theories related with elements of a successful online hotel booking site, while a comparative study enable the researcher to draw examples of the best practices to feed into the discussion of which elements determining a successful online hotels booking site. Lastly, in-depth interview was chosen as a data collection method to obtain primary data to identify which current knowledge Wata Solutions use to create an effective online booking site.

Result of the literature review indicated that customer trust is a key element lead to a successful online booking site. Specifically, trust is divided into three components: competence trust, predictability trust and goodwill trust. In order to gain customer competence trust, the website need to ensure the ease of use while the sense of assurance is important to gain customer predictability trust. Lastly goodwill trust is particular rely on customer supports, price strategies and loyalty programs. Together with the findings from literature review, some good practices is identified through the comparative study of the 4 most popular online hotel booking sites: a comprehensive search engine, connecting with trustworthy review site, variety of price strategies and loyalty programs. Later on, knowledge gap is identified based on both desk research and interviews.

Based on the knowledge gap and the findings from both literature review and the comparative study, the research came up with two recommendations as below:

**Recommend 1:** Close the gap in building customer competence trust by improving filter tool and simplifying cancellation process.

**Recommend 2:** Close the gap in building customer predictability trust by connecting with trustworthy reviews – Trip advisor and providing "nearby..." filter.

**Recommend 3:** Close the gap in building customer goodwill trust by simplifying best price guarantee program and displaying transparent cost.
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I. Introduction

1.1 Reason for The Thesis
Online bookings of hotels have increased drastically throughout recent years. The Internet has become the dominant way for selling rooms in the tourism and hospitality industry. According to a 2009 forecast from the market intelligent centre, the online travel product category is the Internet’s largest commercial area (48.9%), generating worldwide revenue of over 446 billion United States dollars in 2014. Effective website design for online hotel bookings is now critical for business success.

The literature reveals that the success of online booking is determined mostly by consumer intentions to purchase (Ansary & Samir, 2013). Furthermore, numerous studies also pointed out that trust and commitment are both particular important in the context of e-commerce, because the customer is unlikely to shop online if they do not trust the website on which they are shopping (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). Another key to successful online booking site is an accessible online booking system. An online booking system is a small but very important part of a hotel’s overall hotel marketing strategy. Why is it so important? It is important because an effective online booking system is a critical element for building customer trust and loyalty. If the booking system is too difficult to use, or doesn’t efficiently give them the results they want, they will not likely use the booking system again.

Wata Solutions (watasolutions.com) is an IT and web design firm, located in Vietnam, that has started their own project to build a new online hotel booking site. They have extensive web design capabilities and experience, however, they have never undertaken an effort to make a website aimed specifically at enhancing online hotel bookings. Wata Solutions is determined to provide an online hotel booking site which outperforms all others. For that reason, Wata Solutions has hired me, as an expert in hotel management, to provide them with advice regarding which elements of the online hotel booking site that they should take into consideration to create an online hotel booking site that can attract and retain more customers.

To ensure that the author is current in my knowledge of effective website design for online hotel bookings, I will undertake the thesis research to identify critical elements determining a successful online booking site.

1.2 The Objective of The advice:
As mentioned above, the thesis project is conducted in order to help Wata Solutions to build a new online hotels booking site that can appeal more users and increase hotel bookings. Hence, the objective of the thesis project: is to generate advice as to what Wata Solutions must be taken into consideration in order to create an successful online hotel booking site.

The intention is that, with this new knowledge about critical elements determining successful online booking site, Wata Solutions will generate a great product that can appeal more users and increase their bookings as well as revenue.
1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions:

In order to deliver useful information mentioned above, it is important to learn relevant knowledge about critical factors of the online hotel booking that can attract consumers and keep them coming back. Besides, understanding about knowledge gap that prevent Wata Solution from providing an effective online booking product to their client will enable the author come up with the most suitable advice. Hence the research objective is firstly to identify critical elements determining a successful online booking site and secondly to identify knowledge gap that will prevent Wata Solutions from providing a successful online booking site.

The research questions are a great tool to guide researcher to obtain required knowledge. Consistence with the objective of the thesis, the first central research question is to identify what is critical elements for a successful online hotel booking site. The first challenge is the variety perspective on the critical factors determining successful online hotel booking site. Hence, the sub questions are made in order to identify the right answer for central research question. The aim sub questions of research question is help the researcher identify the most relevant theories and practical implementation from the most popular online booking sites.

In order to deliver a sound advice, the second research question is to reveal Wata Solution’s current understanding/knowledge of the nature of an effective online booking system? In other words, what are the knowledge gaps that will prevent Wata Solutions from providing an effective online booking product to their client? The results of this research question will reveal their knowledge gaps, and thereby direct the advice and recommendations to be provided to Wata Solutions per the results of the first research question. The central research questions fall into 2 categories:

Category 1: (questions that the literature and a field research must answer)

1. What are the critical elements for a successful online hotel booking site?
   Sub-questions:
   1.1 What are the critical factors that influence hotel booking intentions?

   1.3 What are the common practices of the most popular online hotel-booking site?

Category 2 (questions to ask Wata Solutions in order to assess their baseline knowledge regarding what to take into consideration when creating an online hotel booking system).

1 What is Wata Solutions’ current understanding of the nature of an effective online booking system?

2. Sub-questions:
   2.1 What is your Wata Solutions’s target group?

   2.2 What does Wata Solutions know about customer booking behaviors?
2.3 Which aspects Wata Solutions take into account to attract their customers?

II. Research part of the thesis

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 The Search Process:

To begin the search, it is better to take into account some search terms used to enter on those favorable search engines databases or even for online searching. Since the research focuses on how to define the reason why travelers prefer one online booking channel among others. Some key terms used to search are “online hotel booking behaviors”, “online hotel booking strategies”, “how to increase the number of customers using booking online system”.

Regarding the Category 1 literature review, examples of key terms used to search are “critical factors of online hotel booking influence customer decision”, “online hotel booking strategies”, “how to increase the number of customers using booking online system”. Document studies are to be mainly collected through Google scholar and the Saxion library, as Google scholar and Saxion library are platforms to access well-known and trustworthy sources.

An example of an important article is “Customer Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision” by Pauline Ratnasingam, which investigates the impact of customer trust indicators on their online hotel booking decision. This paper contributes to awareness regarding the importance of trust indicators in the online hotel booking decisions. Another important findings are: the impact of customer trust indicators to customer commitment and loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Morgan & Hunt; 1994 ); Consumers’ Preferred Criteria for Hotel Online Booking (Astrid Dickingera, Josef Mazanecb, 2014); customer satisfaction (Venkatesh Shankara,*, Amy K. Smithb,1, Arvind Rangaswamy, 2003); Brand names (brand equity) could also have higher impact online (Degeratu et al., 2000), Hotel Reservation Systems (Richard Bemile, Akwasi Achampong and Emmanuel Danquah, 2014).

In addition, the books “Researching Hospitality and Tourism” (Brotherton, 2008), Qualitative Research (Verwijmeren, 2010) will be used to guide the academic research process and structure.

2.1.2 Literature review:

This part consists of an in-depth analysis of relevant, current publications regarding the core and sub concepts. The review of the existing literature is necessary to explain and justify the core concepts and relationships among the study subjects and indicates the types of approach, processes, instruments, analytical techniques and contexts that have been used in previous studies as suggestions for the field research of the thesis paper (Brotherton, 2008). According to research questions above, a complete understanding of customer commitment and loyalty with the hotel booking sites is required. Furthermore, relevant reviews on the most popular hotel booking sites are useful to choose the most popular online hotels booking site for a comparative study.
Commitment and loyalty in the online hotel booking system:

Learning more about differences view in commitment and loyalty with the booking hotel system will aid in the more successful advice report.

Commitment refers to consumer attitude that reflect his desire to continue a valued relationship with the seller. According to Disk & Basu (1994), loyalty is defined as a behavior that the customers will stay with an organization or service provider until he/ she can find some better alternative in the marketplace. Similarly, Oliver, (1997, p.392) defined brand loyalty as “a deeply held commitment to repurchase or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the despite situational influence and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (Shankar, Smith, & Rangaswamy, 2003). These studies had pointed that commitment and loyalty not only indicates higher likelihood of customer return, but also the willingness to pay at certain price and the willingness to recommend the service provider to their acquaintances.

A number of researchers have investigated commitment and loyalty in the online hotel booking system. Some recent studies indicated different critical factors lead to customer commitment and loyalty. For example, the impact of customer trust indicators to customers’ commitment and loyalty (Ratnasingam, 2012; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Morgan & Hunt; 1994); Consumers' Preferred Criteria for Hotel Online Booking (Astrid Dickinger, Josef Mazane, 2014); customer satisfaction (Venkatesh Shankaran*, Amy K. Smithb,1, Arvind Rangaswamy, 2003); Brand names (brand equity) could also have higher impact online (Degeratu et al., 2000), Hotel Reservation Systems (Richard Bemile, Akwasi Achampong and Emmanuel Danquah, 2014).

In the online hotel booking context, it is important to consider successful online hotels reservation system. Richard Bemile, Akwasi Achampong and Emmanuel Danquah had indicated the critical factors of good online reservation systems in order to improve customer commitment and loyalty. These authors aimed at developing an online hotel reservation system to enable customers book for a suitable room from wherever location they are before lodging into the hotel by looking at different online hotels' reservation system. The research shows the factors leads to successful online hotel reservation of Shangri–La Hotel, Singapore: the structure of this website is well organized and easy to navigate through; fully & clear information, up-to-date content. They strongly recommend developing an online hotel reservation with:

- Well laid out information about hotel.
- The manual booking system is replaced with an online reservation system.
- Management can pull reports at anytime to tell the current situation in order to put the necessary measures in place.
- The system helps secure customer information since no information is disposed off.

However, the conclusion of this research seems not valid since the authors examined only a few cases and there is no structure and guideline regarding what elements they examined, and how they evaluated these
systems. Observing and evaluating the system bias without the measurement methods could damage the validity of the finding. Other limitation of this research is that the author investigated only the impact of hotels reservation system, while other factors like services, customer satisfaction or tangible are not mentioned and discussed in this study.

The link between Rewards program and customer commitment and loyalty

Another example, there is wide agreement (Sarah Tanforda, Carola Raabb, Yen–Soon Kimb, 2012; Hsin–Hui “Sunny” Hu, Chun–Te Huang, Po–Tsang Chen, 2010) in the link between customer commitment/loyalty and the reward program. In the study “Do reward programs truly build loyalty for lodging industry?”, the authors examined the relationships among timing of reward programs, value perception of program loyalty, satisfaction, and customer loyalty in hotel industry. The finding of this paper indicated that the strength of reward timing can build customer value perception of loyalty program (Hsin–Hui “Sunny” Hu, Chun–Te Huang, Po–Tsang Chen, 2010). Specifically, immediate rewards, for example lotteries or instantly redeemable coupons, are likely more effective than delayed rewards. However, another findings suggested that delayed rewards such as a mileage program is more effective as long as they are linked with value–enhancing rewards (Hsin–Hui “Sunny” Hu, Chun–Te Huang, Po–Tsang Chen, 2010). Similarly, Sarah Tanforda, Carola Raabb and Yen–Soon Kimb (2012) examined the link between customer/loyalty and the reward program in two hotel segments: full–service and limited–service. The findings of this study suggested that limited–service guests are driven primarily by value considerations, in the form of reward program benefits and pricing. In comparison, Full–service guests are more likely to develop personal brand commitment, and value non–price related attributes. Regarding customer commitment and loyalty, the authors recommended that marketing efforts directed to full–service patrons should aim at emotional connections, while marketing to limited service guests may need to place a greater emphasis on hotels' attributes and price.

In short, the findings of above studies are useful for hotel pricing and marketing strategies in order to improve customer commitment and loyalty. However the researches above have some limitations that must be considered. The research by Sarah Tanforda, Carola Raabb and Yen–Soon Kimb (2012) only collected U.S. respondents, therefore the result may not related to studies were conducted in non–U.S. markets. In the study by Hsin–Hui “Sunny” Hu, Chun–Te Huang, Po–Tsang Chen, (2010), the experiment is not designed to generate the result in a larger population. The data collection is not randomly selected, which might increase bias in the selection. Hence, the results may need to be examined in other studies. Lastly, the conclusion of the link between reward program and customer commitment and loyalty does not give a comprehensive picture for the researcher developing an theoretical framework with respect to the online hotel booking context.

The link between customer trust, satisfaction and customer commitment and loyalty

More relevant with this project, there are several previous studies investigate on the impact of customer's trust in customer commitment and loyalty. It is argued that trust and commitment are both particular important in the context of e–commerce, because the customer is unlikely to shop online if they do not
trust the website on which they are shopping (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). The findings of Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) indicate that trust affects brand loyalty from the perspective of brand commitment in relationship marketing. It is found that trust leads to commitment in business-to-business relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Similarly, Ratnasingam had examined the important of customer trust in online booking decision. Trust is defined as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trust or, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). According to Morgan & Hunt (1994), trust is described as “the existing element when one party has confidence in the exchange partner’s reliability and integrity.”

Specifically, in “Customer Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision” by Pauline Ratnasingam, there are three types of trust:

According to Pauline Ratnasingam, trust is divided into three types:

- **Competence trust**: It is suggested that competence trust is the belief in the ability IT infrastructure of the hotel’s website (i.e. its functionality), skills and knowledge of the hotel employees.

- **Predictability trust**: It is suggested that predictability trust is the belief in the consistency of the quality of service provided by the hotel. The predictability trust come after the competence trust when the customer have experience the actual services offered by the hotel website. This type of trust allow customer to develop expectation about future services.

- **Goodwill or relationship trust**: it is suggested that goodwill or relationship trust is the belief in the care, concern, honesty, and benevolence shown by the hotel. This type of trust refers to their expectation not only about a competent and reliable manner, but also about the well-being and interests of the customer at heart when providing services.

In order to test the relationship between website design and initial trust, Ratnasingam derived a conceptual model with use of trust indicators (Appendix III).

Hypothesis 1, the researcher found the negative link between the amount of effort and time customers used in searching relevant information the overall customer satisfaction of the whole process. In other words, website designed in such a way that can enable customer easily to navigate is crucial to positive respond when the customer first visit the online hotel booking website.

Hypothesis 2, it is recognized that the customer need to trust that their personal and financial information are protected. Regarding this issue, some hotels provide their customers with privacy and risks of identity theft. Thus, it is suggested that customers who found websites with privacy policy to be more reliable are likely to use those websites more often. This hypothesis emphasized that Information technology and functionality of the hotel’s website contribute positively to the predictability trust the customer has on the booking decision.
Hypothesis 3 indicated that goodwill trust is seen in service differentiation. The research found the positive link between the ability to fulfill the customer online booking request correctly and the customer goodwill trust.

(Ratnasingam, 2012)

Another important key determinant customer commitment is customer satisfaction. Back and Parks (2003) also indicated a strong link between customer satisfaction and cognitive brand loyalty. The finding from Getty and Thompson (1994) suggested that consumer’s intentions to recommend are a function of their perception of their satisfaction with the lodging experience. A number of researchers have investigated on determinants of customer satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers of customer satisfaction</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ease of use</td>
<td>Astrid Dickinger &amp; Josef A. Mazanec, 2008</td>
<td>Consumers’ Preferred Criteria for Hotel Online Booking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ratnasingam, 2012</td>
<td>Customer’s Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gomaa Agag, Ahmed A. El-Masry, 2016</td>
<td>Understanding the determinants of hotel booking intentions and moderating role of habit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency of use</td>
<td>Bolton and Lemon (1999)</td>
<td>General electric supply Television entertainment and cellular phone service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of assurance</td>
<td>Ratnasingam, 2012</td>
<td>Customer’s Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribute-level performance</td>
<td>Understanding the determinants of hotel booking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Astrid Dickinger, Josef Mazanec, 2014</td>
<td>Consumers’ Preferred Criteria for Hotel Online Booking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior experience</td>
<td>Customer’s Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratnasingam, 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability of fulfill booking</td>
<td>Customer’s Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratnasingam, 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gomaa Agag, Ahmed A. El-Masry, 2016</td>
<td>Understanding the determinants of hotel booking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Napaporn Rianthong, Aussadavut Dumrongsi, Youji Kohda, 2016</td>
<td>Optimizing customer searching experience of online hotel booking by sequencing hotel choices and selecting online reviews: A mathematical model approach</td>
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**Table 1: review of hotel attribute to customer satisfaction.**

The most frequently mentioned attributes that influence customer satisfaction in the context of online hotel booking: The ease of use, sense of assurance, and ability to fulfill a booking decision.

Consistent with Pauline Ratnasingam (2012), the research divided trust into three types: competence trust, predictability trust and goodwill trust.

When building a strong theoretical framework, the researcher realizes a strong link between trust and customer satisfaction that customers’ trust and satisfaction both lead to the long-term combination of relationships (Gladstein, 1984; Anderson and Narus, 1990). Looking at “Table of review hotel attribute to...
customer satisfaction" above, the most frequently mentioned attributes that influence customer satisfaction in the context of online hotels booking: **the ease of use, sense of assurance, ability to fulfill a booking decision.**

Furthermore, according to the characteristic of each type of trust, the researcher realized the level of goodwill or relationship trust is significantly based on the ability to fulfill the customer online booking request correctly while competence trust and predictability trust are relied on the ease of navigation and the sense of assurance respectively.

**A comparative method:**

Although numerous of researchers have investigated on critical factors of a successful online hotel booking site commitment and loyalty in the online hotel booking system, there is a lack of guidance on developing the hotel booking systems regarding customers’ trust. In this case, comparative study is seen as a great method to learn successful practices. Various previous studies has emphasized the advantage of this approach: seeking to formulate historical or explanation of specific outcomes (Ragin Charles C., 1987); Examining hypotheses and identify pattern of historical causation (Skocpol & Somers, 1980); help the historian look for better evidence about the past (Skocpol & Somers, 1980).

In order to learn more about the best practices that the most successful online hotels booking sites implemented, the research decided to conduct a comparative study of the 4 most popular online hotels booking site. 4 of the most popular online hotels booking site seems to be sufficient to identify a commonalities in this project.

**Relevant reviews of hotel booking sites:**

In order to find out the four of the most popular sites, relevant information from trustworthy magazine is gathered.

According to reviews.com (2015), the three best hotel booking sites are booking.com, hotels.com, hotwire.com. Specifically, Booking.com customers have reported a high degree of satisfaction with their service, particularly the ease of the booking process while hotels.com with their loyalty program enable their customers to earn a free night at participating hotels for every 10 nights customers stay or last minute deals. In comparison, Hotwire with powerful search and filtering tools earned Hotwire a reputation as one of the best hotel booking sites in terms of overall customer satisfaction.

According to toptenreviews.com, Hotels.com earns our Top Ten Reviews Gold Award for its arsenal of sorting, listing and help features. Hotels.com ranks as the best site for hotel booking because it gives customers so many sorting options, which lets customers easily find the suitable fast and it offers live chat customer support and it offers live chat customer support (McCarter, A., 2017).

According to skift.com (2014), expedia.com rank the second place just after booking.com with 41,5 million users just behind booking.com with 166 million users. At Expedia, speed and scale are considered significantly with the implementation of the note-taking functionality inside Amazon EC2. Whenever a user
conducts a search, a brief message is sent to our cloud-based User Interaction Service. Expedia goal is to preserve backward compatibility as the message format evolves, something that Thrift has done well so far ("Is Booking Hotels and Airfare Through Expedia Worth it?", 2017).

Another successful booking site is Agoda.com. Agoda.com is well-known for the internet’s top specialist Asia – but only in Asia ("Best and Worst Hotel Booking Sites", 2017). Agoda now even outperforms cooperate cousin booking.com on some metrics and satisfies their customers by offering consistently finds among the most lodging options and lowest prices.

In general, each booking site has different strategies to gain customer trust. Specifically, Booking.com is successful gaining customer competence trust with the ease of booking process while hotels.com with their loyalty program and live chat customer support easily gain customer predictability and goodwill trust. Agoda.com with the consistently lowest prices offers win the Asian market. In comparison, smartly engaging social media and applying current technology trend keep Expedia staying ahead of the curve.

**A comparative model:**

Consistent with the literature review, the research look at the most four popular hotel booking sites based three elements of trust: competence trust, predictability trust, goodwill trust. To evaluate competence trust, predictability trust, goodwill trust, the researcher look closer at how each site ensures the ease of use, the sense of assurance, and the ability to fulfill booking decision. Even more specific, for each criteria, the research proposed a list of measures for the comparison based on the review below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The drivers of customer trust</th>
<th>Authors and their topic</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ease of use</td>
<td>Ratnasingam, 2012</td>
<td>Website functionality, easy to navigate, friendly, speed, efficient.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Customer’s Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Astrid Dickinger &amp; Josef A. Mazanec, 2008</td>
<td>Location, service, star rating, security, food and beverage, image, price, room and hotel attributes, facilities for leisure time activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Consumers’ Preferred Criteria for Hotel Online Booking</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Bemile1, Akwasi Achampong and Emmanuel Danquah, 2014</td>
<td>Virtual tour: location, image, room and hotel attributes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Understanding the determinants of hotel booking intentions and moderating role of habit.</em></td>
<td>apps for mobile devices to book hotel online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toptenreview, 2017</td>
<td>Easy to navigate with the features: date, location, service, star rating, security, food and beverage, image, price, room and hotel attributes, facilities for leisure time activities, intelligent features.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna C. Chinthakayala, Chunying Zhao, Jun Kong &amp; Kang Zhang, 2013</td>
<td>Navigation, intelligence, photos, language support.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napaporn Rianthong, Aussadavut Dumrongsi, Youji Kohda, 2016</td>
<td>Customer choice decision: star rating, price, and review.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sense of assurance</td>
<td>Information accurate and reliable, personal and financial information is protected.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratnasingam, 2012</td>
<td>Sharing similar understandings of consumers’ needs, goals (location, attraction nearby), and policies, reducing their opportunistic behavior, implementing effective communication strategies, and increasing consumers perceptions' about privacy/security.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comaa Agag, Ahmed A. El-Masry, 2016</td>
<td>Understanding the determinants of hotel booking intentions and moderating role of habit</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toptenreviews.com, 2017</td>
<td>The building, amenities, hotel's policies, nearby attractions and a detail map, review, payment option</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrid Dickinger &amp; Josef A. Mazanec, 2008</td>
<td>World–of– mouth, review, engage social media, engage trust worthy side.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to fulfill booking decision</td>
<td>Ratnasingam, 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer’s Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision</td>
<td>Ability to email, confirm, provide tangible, keep its promise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hsin–Hui “Sunny” Hu , Chun–Te Huang, Po–Tsang Chen, 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do reward programs truly build loyalty for lodging industry?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toptenreviews.com, 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty program, customer supports.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the determinants of hotel booking intentions and moderating role of habit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Review of relevant hotel attributes to the ease of use, the sense of assurance, the ability to fulfill booking decision.**

The purpose of the proposed model is to enable researcher an assessment to evaluate the most popular four online hotel booking sites. Although there are different criteria presented in table 2, only attributes typically presented in an online booking setting will be used to measure in this report. The most frequently mentioned attributes that influence the ease of use, the sense of assurance and the ability to fulfill booking decision is summarized as below:

**The ease of use** refers website designed in such a way that can enable customer easily to navigate is crucial to positive respond when the customer first visit the online hotel booking website. The most frequently mentioned attributes that influence the ease of use: location, star rating, price range, theme, payment option, and intelligence. Those factors are normally displayed in search engine to enable customer find a suitable room.

**Sense of assurance** refers on how online reservation system to enable customers choose the room they wanted after a virtual tour to guarantee him a room (Richard Bemile1, Akwasi Achampong and Emmanuel Danquah, 2014). In order to secure the booking, the hotel booking sites need to provide accurate information about the hotel. The most valuable information includes images of the hotel and assorted rooms in the building, amenities, hotel’s policies, nearby attractions and a detail map. It’s especially crucial
to see what the hotel policies are so clients know check-in and checkout times, pet rules and cancellation details. A list of nearby attractions and a detailed map are useful to plan the trip. Furthermore, previous researches claimed that the hotel image with word-of-mouth as one of important criteria when it comes to hotel choice. For that reason, other features like guest reviews, give clients the inside ideas on the hotel’s services and facilities from people who have firsthand experiences with the hotel. According to table 3 the most frequently mentioned attributes that influence the sense of assurance: images gallery, location and attractions nearby, rules and cancellation details, guest review, engaging social media.

**Ability to fulfill booking decision** refers to the level of customer satisfaction with the booking process. The ability to fulfill the booking decision reflects on the following: customer services, price strategy, and loyalty programs.

According to above literature review, a comparative model for the hotel booking sites is designed. The proposed model provides a ground for evaluating the relationship of certain features and customer trust. It includes a list of measurable checkpoints for evaluators to customer trust with the online hotel booking systems:
Competence trust

- The ease of use
  - Location
  - dates
  - price range
  - star rate
  - theme
  - type of accommodation
  - intelligence
  - payment options

Predictability trust

- sense of assurance
  - Engaged with social media
  - Guest review
  - Rules and cancellation detail
  - Locations and attraction nearby
  - Hotel image gallery
  - customer service
  - price strategy
  - loyalty program

Goodwill trust

- fulfilling the booking decision
  - fullfilling the booking decision
  - customer service
  - price strategy
  - loyalty program
Opinions of customer feedback data analysis:

In this paper, a comparative study will examined 4 of the most popular website not only based on theories but also looking at a large amount of customer feedback. Examining to the large amount of textual customer feedback data will give the company the better idea of what the customers like or dislike about their product. Customer reviews can have a large impact on the company's profit margin (Daniela Oelke, Ming Hao, Christian Rohrdantz, Daniel A. Keim, Umeshwar Dayal, 2009). Product reviews give company critical information regarding customers’ concerns and their experience with the product (Jiaming Zhan, Han Tong Loh, Ying Liu, 2008). However, accessing the customer feedback remain challenges: not as straightforward as people may think, a large-scale knowledge base (Michael Gamon, 2004).

In order to tackle the challenges, the article “Visual Opinion Analysis of Customer Feedback Data” presented an approach to automatically analyze large volumes of customer reviews with respect to what was commented on positively or negatively (Daniela Oelke, Ming Hao, Christian Rohrdantz, Daniel A. Keim, Umeshwar Dayal, 2009). The authors also developed a novel discrimination-based technique that reveals which product attributes were frequently commented on. Consistence with Daniela Oelke, Ming Hao, Christian Rohrdantz, Daniel A. Keim, Umeshwar Dayal (2009), Michael Gamon (2004) also indicated that providing the intelligent and automatic classification of negative and positive feedback can help the organizations react to the feedback quickly (“Sentiment classification on customer feedback data: noisy data, large feature vectors, and the role of linguistic analysis”, 2004).

Based on the approach mentioned above, the researcher decides to conduct customer feedback analysis by summarizing which product attributes were frequently commented at positive and negative feedback from Expedia.com, Agoda.com, Hotels.com and Booking.com. The theoretical framework developed by literature review enable the researcher to identify keywords of website’s attributes. Due to the fact that there are only customer reviews of the hotels services, the researcher decided to collect the customer feedback from a trustworthy review site – Trustpilot.com. In Truspilot.com, thousand of reviews with detail information are displayed. The company also has strict policies to fight fabricated reviews, which ensures the reliability of the data.

Although there are different beliefs regarding customers' commitment and loyalty, the "commitment–trust" theory is the most relevant and sufficient in the online hotels booking context. The incredible growth of the Internet has uncertainties to customers by information intensive, intangible and impersonal characteristics on the hotel’s website as well as online hotels booking sites. Hence, the customer is unlikely to book the hotel online if they do not trust the website. Consistent with Ratnasingam (2012), Agag & El-Masry, 2016, Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), the research chose "trust" as an important element determinant customer commitment. Among studies about the impact of customer trust, “Customer Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision” by Pauline Ratnasingam is the most relevant for this project for several reasons below:

- In line with the context of the project (the online hotel booking sites), Pauline Ratnasingam investigates the impact of customer trust indicators on their online hotel booking decision.
This study also included framework highlighting the trust indicators and a conceptual model discussing the research hypotheses, which can help researcher easily develop the theoretical framework for project. The main limitation of the study by Pauline Ratnasingam is the limited of market samples, which is mostly in America. This will limit the generalizability of these findings to other markets while this thesis project is an advice for a company in Vietnam.

Together with "commitment-trust" theory, the researcher also uses "commitment/loyalty-satisfaction" theory of different authors to identify critical factors influence's customer trust when it comes to online booking decision. Note that only theories related to the online hotels booking context is used to this thesis project.

Lastly, due to the lack of studies investigating on practical example with the online hotels booking site, the researcher decided to use comparative study of the most 4 popular online hotel booking sites: Expedia.com, Booking.com, Hotels.com & Agoda.com to identify the commonalities determining their success. 4 of the most popular online hotel booking sites would be sufficient to identify a core commonalities, and that if it turn out to not to sufficient, then the research will consider adding more cases.

2.2 Research methodology:

2.2.1 Research Strategy:
The research approach is concise and straightforward, and will result in the ability to provide advice and recommendations to Wata Solutions. Data collection will consist of three components:

a) Review of empirical and other literature
b) Interview relevant Wata Solutions employees,
c) Identification common features of the four most popular online booking system.

The four most common philosophies – paradigm, positivistic, interpretative and critical. In order to choose the right research philosophy, the research philosophies are reviewed and compared as shown in Appendix I. On the basis nature of the research topic, the positivistic philosophy is selected for the thesis report. Small samples, investigations, qualitative are popular data collection methods associated with positivistic philosophy. Qualitative research will be chosen conducted from experience–near perspective since it is suitable for the investigation of the foreign hoteliers’ experience in the Vietnamese hospitality industry and enable researcher to know insights perspective into both the knowledge and knowledge gaps of relevant Wata Solutions personnel.

Moreover, due to the limited time given to meet the requirements of the dissertation, such research philosophy helps to save time through fast and economical process.

In addition, with respect to a wide range of researches conducted in the field of expatriation management, the research will start will the relevant theories to develop the research questions, interview guide are then used to clarify, confirm and answer these proposed questions.
2.2.2 Data Collection:

For this research, two sources of knowledge were utilized to cover all aspects and variables of the research, which were primary and secondary data:

Literature review: The purpose of literature review is firstly; establish a theoretical framework for my topic by looking at relevant theories related with elements of a successful online hotel booking site; secondly is to identify key terms, definitions related with my topic; lastly, is to help the researcher develop her own models and interview guide.

A comparative study: The purpose of comparative study to draw examples of the best practices in the online hotels booking context to feed in to the discussion of which elements determining a successful online hotel booking site. Together with literature review, the result of the comparative study will provide the researcher enough knowledge and information to answer the first central research question. The researcher decided to examine four of the most popular website: Expedia.com, Agoda.com, Booking.com and Hotels.com. 4 of the most popular online hotel booking sites would be sufficient to identify a core commonalities, and that if it turn out to not to sufficient, then the research will consider adding more cases.

Customer feedback analysis: Customer feedback analysis is a part of the comparative study. The purpose of doing customer feedback analysis is to test the theories and to learn more about customer perspective regarding trust issue. 800 feedbacks randomly gathered in the same period of time from Trustpilot.com: 200 feedbacks of Expedia.com, 200 feedbacks of Booking.com, 200 feedbacks of Agoda.com, 200 Feedback of hotels.com.

Lastly, an in-depth interview was chosen as a data collection method to obtain primary data to identify which knowledge Wata Solutions use to create an effective online booking system?

In addition, it is also important to decide whom to select for interviews to gain in-depth, which lead to the consideration of "sampling". Sampling, as it relates to research, refers to the selection of individuals, units, and/or settings to be studied. If quantitative studies strive for random sampling, qualitative studies often refers to purposeful or criterion–based sampling, that is, a sample that has the characteristics relevant to the research question(s) (slideshare.net, 2017). A purposive sampling was the chosen one for the depth interviews in this project. To have a comprehensive picture about Wata Solutions’s knowledge, it is decided to interview key’s staffs of this project. Based on the size and the structure of employee working in this project: 20 employees divided into 2 teams marketing and technical, the researcher made a decision to interview 4 key staffs as below:

- Mr. Thien Dam – Director of Wata Solutions
- Mr. Luc – Manager of financial & marketing department
- Ms. Tran Tran – Marketing staff (in charge of content)
- Mr. Tien – Technical staff
Based on theoretical framework made in the literature review, the interview guide (Appendix 1) is created to learn about Wata Solution's understanding in respect of theory "commitment–trust" and their current knowledge.

Data collection plan is shown as below:

The **Category 1** questions will be researched via extensive, international literature review (centered around commitment–trust, commitment–satisfaction theories, findings about factors of customer satisfaction for decision criteria from an adaptive conjoint study among 20 authors) and examining each of the four most popular hotel booking sites.

The **Category 2** questions will be researched via interviews with Wata Solutions project managers and other key personnel. A questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions will be developed and administered. The same questionnaire will be administered to each respondent. This direct, qualitative approach will provide important insights into both the knowledge and knowledge gaps of relevant Wata Solutions personnel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central research questions</th>
<th>Sub question</th>
<th>Way of data collection</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>What critical elements for a successful online hotel–booking site?</strong></td>
<td>What are critical factors that influence hotel–booking intentions?</td>
<td>International literature review (centered around commitment–trust, commitment–satisfaction theories, findings about factors of customer's satisfaction for decision criteria from an adaptive conjoint study among 20 authors)</td>
<td>-Theoretical framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the link between trust and customer commitment and loyalty?</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Comparative models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the common features of the five most popular, online hotel booking systems regarding customer's trust?</td>
<td>Field research: A comparative of the most four popular hotels booking sites. Customer feedback analysis</td>
<td>Examples of best practice in the online hotel–booking context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. What is Wata Solutions' current understanding of the nature of an effective online booking system?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Wata Solutions' target group?</td>
<td>Field research: In depth interviews with Wata Solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Wata Solutions' difficulties?</td>
<td>-provide important insights into Wata solutions' s understanding in the nature of an effective online hotel booking site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Wata Solutions' current knowledge and strategies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.3 Data analysis:
After collecting the data by conducting the interviews, it came to the part of an actual analysis of data. In order to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, a qualitative researcher must engage in active and demanding analytic processes. The researcher will not only of doing qualitative research, but also of reading, understanding, and interpreting it. Thus, in the advice report, the content analysis will involve coding and classifying data for the purpose of identifying the knowledge gaps of Wata Solutions team.

Regarding the comparative study, the collected data will be summarised through tables. Furthermore, the researcher decides to conduct customer feedback analysis by summarizing which product attributes were frequently commented at positive and negative feedback from Expedia.com, Agoda.com, Hotels.com, and Booking.com. The text summarization is used to gather detail opinions from customer’s feedback (Appendix V, VI, VII, VIII). Lastly, the researcher will use column chart to show a graphical picture of the percentage of website attributes to the positive and negative feedback.

Data analysis will involve synthesizing the result of the interview, literature review and the assessment of the 4 most successful booking online systems. The result of the data analysis will be discussed, and the advice to be provided to Wata Solution will be derived from the result.

After the interviews were conducted, open coding and axial coding were defined. At the first level of coding, open coding is mainly based on text to distinguish concepts and categorize the data. Axial coding was defined to explore how the concepts and the categories are related and find the similarities between different open codes.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the interviews cover all the core concepts, there are specific topics to be discussed during the interview:

- General information of the project
- Characteristic of the target group
- Difficulty in implementing
- Current knowledge and strategies
2.3 Field research result:

2.3.1 A comparative study of four online hotel booking sites:

Different studies have been conducted to compare hotel booking sites from different perspectives. The previous work focused on comparing certain specific usage scenarios. This paper conducts a measured and comprehensive comparison on Expedia.com, Booking.com, Agoda.com, Hotels.com according to 3 elements of customers trust: competence trust, predictability trust and goodwill trust.

- **Competence trust**: 

  Competence trust refers to belief in the ability IT infrastructure of the hotel’s website (i.e. its functionality). In this paper, the common options of Sorting and filter features are considered to evaluate competence trust: location, date, star rates, price range, theme, payment options, type of accommodation, and intelligent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sorting options</th>
<th>Expedia</th>
<th>Booking.com</th>
<th>Hotels.com</th>
<th>Agoda.com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star rates</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price range</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment options</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Virtual card</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of accommodation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>&quot;My scratchpad&quot; feature, which enable their clients to not only save the names of the hotel you search, but also prices and dates</td>
<td>The site saves the properties you looked at on the top of the screen.</td>
<td>Change preferences for dates and locations without going back to the homepage</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3**: summary of attributes to competence trust

Booking.com customers have earned a high degree of satisfaction with their service, particularly the ease of the booking process. In other words, Booking.com is strongly generating customer’s competence trust. Along with certain amenities, there's also the option to run a theme search, which isn’t something clients will find with most hotel sites. These searches are ideal when users are trying to quickly locate a family-friendly or business hotel.
A lot of hotel booking sites let clients sort by guest ratings, but Booking.com takes this feature a step further – clients can sort reviews based on different kinds of guests. Different people want different things from a hotel, and this obviously affects their reviews. This site's unique option lets clients search for the best-reviewed hotels from travelers in situations like them. Clients can find reviews from solo travelers, couples, and groups of friends or business people. Strikingly, if clients leave Booking.com's site, they don't have to worry about remembering which hotels they were considering – the site saves the properties they looked at on the top of the screen so clients can return and view them later.

On Hotels.com, clients can filter rooms by the standard categories like amenities, price, star rating, and distance and accessibility features. For special occasions, clients can filter hotel rooms by type or theme to find spa, romantic or family-friendly accommodations. Further filters allow clients to sort hotels using a list of 20 amenities, including spas, free Wi-Fi, meeting rooms, pets allowed and airport transfers. One especially useful feature lets client change preferences for dates and locations without going back to the homepage.

Expedia.com: this site allows clients to narrow these results by location, date, price range, distance to the center, amenities and accommodation type, guest review, and payment options. However, the sorting feature of Expedia just allows customers to sort the result from low price to high price and high to low customer rating while other sites offer both ways. In the "choose your accommodation section" let clients choose the date, number of rooms without going back to the first page. Strikingly, Expedia offers the so-called "My scratchpad" feature, which enable their clients to not only save the names of the hotel they search but also prices and dates and it tells them how many other users are viewing the hotels.

Agoda: This booking provides the standard sorting features like other reviewed sites: price, star rating, amenities, and guest rating. However, clients can't look for hotels based on features for hearing- and sight-impaired people and by theme search, which offered by other reviewed sites.

Predictability trust:

Predictability trust refers to the belief in is the consistency of the quality of service provided by the hotel. The predictability trust come after the competence trust when the customer have experience the actual services offered by the hotel website. In this paper, the ability to secure the booking is used to evaluate the predictability trust.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability to secure the booking</th>
<th>Expedia</th>
<th>Booking.com</th>
<th>Hotels.com</th>
<th>Agoda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel image gallery</td>
<td>can view hotel images in small or large detail, and a zoom option allows you to see the pictures in better detail</td>
<td>The large, high-resolution images flip through as an automatic slideshow.</td>
<td>Without even scrolling, you can see images of the hotel and its rooms</td>
<td>The images on each hotel's page are large and give you a good look at the rooms and facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations and attraction nearby</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X Lack of nearby attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and cancellation detail</td>
<td>✓ Connect with Tripadvisor</td>
<td>✓ Connect with Tripadvisor</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest review</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ Connect with Tripadvisor</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged with social media</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4**: Summary of attributes to predictability trust

All of the hotels booking sites allow clients to see a list of amenities, hotel image gallery, location and attraction nearby, rules and cancellation detail. It’s especially important to see what the hotel policies are so clients know check-in and checkout times, pet rules and cancellation details. A list of nearby attractions can help clients plan their trip (toptenreviews.com, 2017).

Booking.com: When clients view a hotel profile, the large, high-resolution images flip through as an automatic slideshow. Booking.com displays the large images with the most important information at the top of the page. Below the images, there’s a short description that discusses the hotel’s amenities and location. To the side, the site displays property highlights, including information about bed sizes, popular facilities and nearby points of interest. When location and distance from attractions are important, clients can expand the map on the side of the profile to see where in the city the hotel stands.
Hotels.com: Client can find the attractions that they plan to visit. Destinations like theme parks, shopping centers, and museums often appear under the landmarks category. Clients can also search for hotels based on neighborhoods, which is convenient if clients are visiting friends or family in the area (Toptenreview, 2017).

Strikingly, Expedia.com and Agoda.com provide other features like "guest review", especially from trusted sites like TripAdvisor.

Customer reviews are plentiful on Agoda. The reviews are made from a particular group such business travelers, families with young children, couples, groups, and solo travelers who booked through Agoda. Furthermore, Agoda includes the information about how close the hotel is to local transportation depots, hospitals, convenience stores and ATMs, which are very useful for international travel.

**Goodwill trust:**

Goodwill or relationship trust refers to the belief in the care, concern, honesty, and benevolence shown by the hotel. Customer’s expectation not only about a competence and reliability, but also about the well-being and interests of the customer at heart when providing services. In this paper, the ability to fulfill the booking decision with customer service, price strategy, and loyalty program is used to evaluate goodwill trust.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>fullfilling the booking decision</th>
<th>Expedia.com</th>
<th>Booking.com</th>
<th>Hotels.com</th>
<th>Agoda.com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>Standard customer support</td>
<td>Resend the confirmation email in case you lose or accidentally delete the original. Help is available in 40 different languages.</td>
<td>Only site offers live chat support</td>
<td>Standard customer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best price guarantee</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promotion</td>
<td>Only for members</td>
<td>Booking.com's prices are average</td>
<td>Last-minute deals</td>
<td>Secret deal Best price, especially in Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty program</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Summary of attributes to goodwill trust

In general, all reviewed sites offer customer support with the help in the FAQs section and customers can use email forms, or clients can call support team. However, Booking.com and Hotels.com has offered unique customer services as below:

Booking.com: Like other sites, booking.com send their customers a confirmation email after the reservation was made. But unlike other websites, Booking.com makes it easy to resend the email in case clients lose or accidentally delete the original. Furthermore, customers can change dates and edit the guest or card details without an extra fee. Although Booking.com doesn't have live chat support like hotels.com, it offers help in 40 different languages.

Hotels.com: Unlikely other reviewed sites, the contact tab at the top of each FAQs article provides access to live chat. This service is believed to help customers reach the support team quicker.

Regarding price strategy, all the reviewed sites offer "best price guarantee" with guarantee clients always get the lowest price when they reserve a room. However, each site has different methods to satisfy their clients:

Booking.com: Although Booking.com does not offer the best deal in comparison with other sites; it will match a competitor's lower rate if clients find the same reservation with the same conditions (Toptenreviews.com, 2017)

Hotels.com: Hotels.com is reviewed as a little pricier than some of the other booking sites it offers unexpected savings in specific areas (toptenreviews.com, 2017). Specifically, it helps clients earn a free night at participating hotels for every 10 nights you stay and plenty of last-minute deals.

Expedia: Although Expedia doesn't offer last-minute deals; it offers great discounts and a loyalty program to its members.

Agoda.com: Agoda offers great deals on hotels, whether clients are looking to travel domestically or internationally (toptenreviews.com, 2017). Agoda.com's secret deal is frequently able to offer high-end rooms at very attractive rates. To find Agoda's secret deal, clients simply browse the list of Agoda Secret Deals and apply filters based on client preferences. After clients book the deal that matches their references, the accommodation name, location, and contact details will be revealed (wishtottravel.com, 2017).

Hotels.com: plenty of opportunities to save, sometimes up to 50%, on client's total room costs. If customers have questions, the customer service tab at the top of the page lets clients view their reservations, read FAQs or contact a support representative. The tab's FAQs and contact options lead to the same page, and while these sections are related, it can be confusing if clients simply want to talk to a reservation department. The contact tab at the top of each FAQs article provides access to live chat, or client can request a call-back. The customer can also help others by giving site feedback and reviewing the hotels through Hotels.com.
Expedia and Agoda offer standard customer support. The customer can find help on the website in the FAQs section and using email forms, or customers can call Expedia's support team. The FAQs section shows common queries about the hotel, flight and rental car booking in a searchable format.

Customer feedback:

800 reviews were randomly gathered in the same period of time from Trustpilot.com: 200 reviews of Expedia.com, 200 reviews of Booking.com, 200 reviews of Agoda.com, 200 reviews of hotels.com. Customer Feedback is divided into positive and negative responses. The detail of website attributes and specific customer opinion can be found in Appendix V, VI, VII, VIII. One customer responses may mention different website attributes. Hence, the researcher use the column chart below to show the portion of 3 of the most frequently mentioned website attributes in positive and negative feedback:

**Expedia:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34 responses</td>
<td>166 responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Chart 1: Portion of the most frequently commented in Positive & Negative feedback]

According to the data collected through trustpilot.com, Expedia has low level of customer satisfaction with 166 negative responses (83%). Customer support (54%), refund issue (36%) and hidden cost (30%) are the main reasons that led to customer negative feedback. According to the summarization in Appendix V, the communication between customers and customer support department is often confusing. The staffs keep repeating answers without willingness to help. However, 40% of positive feedback indicated that the staffs were friendly and helpful, Expedia is willing to refund if the mistakes occurred from their side. Apart from customer support, long and frustrating refund process; hidden cost had created customer negative emotion, while the ease of use and fast responses on customer complaints enable Expedia to earn customer satisfaction.

**Booking.com:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive feedback is mostly due to the ease of use. Booking.com provides a great tool to simplify user-booking process and help customers easily access wide selection of hotels. Cancellation process of booking.com is the easiest and the most efficient cancellation process. Besides, the strategy “no hidden cost” and friendly customer support has a great influence on overall customer satisfaction. However, customers experience that the customer reviews and price guarantee from booking.com are not reliable. The price is not competitive in comparison with other sites.

Agoda.com:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 2: Portion of the most frequently commented in Positive & Negative feedback

Chart 3: Portion of the most frequently commented in Positive & Negative feedback
By offering both good price and easy booking process, Agoda has earned a high level of customer satisfaction with 172 positive responses (86%). However, the cancellation process still has so many disadvantages, which led to 17% of negative feedback. Unfriendly the staffs (38%) and hidden cost (18%) are frequently mentioned in negative feedback.

**Hotels.com**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 4: Portion of the most frequently commented in Positive & Negative feedback**

In comparison with other sites, customer support of Hotels.com is seen as friendly, helpful and efficient, which contributed more than 60% of positive feedback. Loyalty program also earns high level of customer satisfaction by offering free nights for frequently clients or other attractive discount. Similar to Expedia and Agoda, the client is disappointed with hidden cost (18%). Specifically, the price in Hotels.com will change in the end of booking process. Similar to booking.com, price guarantee program (20%) is seen as unreliable. It is difficult for customer to use price guarantee program.

In summary, consistence with the theoretical framework, the customer feedback analysis indicated the great impact of customer support, the ease of use and price on customer general satisfaction. However, the customer feedback analysis revealed new website attributes that are not identified in the theoretical framework: hidden cost, price guarantee program, reacting to customer complaint, refund issue, and cancellation process. Most of the negative feedback showed that customers often have a hard time when they need to do a cancellation, or asking for refund or matching price. The process is slow, complicated and frustrating. Among reviewed site, Booking.com is the only site, which simplifies cancellation process. This led to a lot of positive feedback. The hidden cost is also crucial to be considered. Customers often feel cheated with the absence of hidden cost.

2.3.2 Interview analysis:
Table 6: Summary of axial codes and open codes

- **What is Wata Solutions’s target group?**
  Wata Solution clients include partners (hotel in Vietnam) and users (travellers use website looking for accommodation). At the beginning, Wata Solutions want to deliver their online booking site to Vietnamese travellers. However, their vision is to reach travellers all over the world.

- **What are Wata Solutions’s difficulties?**
  Their main challenge is to gain customer’s trust since Wata Solutions is quite new to online hotel booking industry. Furthermore, this industry is very competitive with the existence of many popular booking sites such as Agoda.com and Booking.com. Technology, social media has given us the power of easy to reach our customers, we now can search online for options before making a decision. But, on the downside, it has also given us far more competitors that ever.

  Another difficulty of Wata Solutions is to choose the strategy that fit with their budget since marketing strategy cost a lot of money at the beginning. Investment is also very important to keep the system alive.

  Lastly, the misunderstanding between technical team and marketing is also a challenge for Wata Solutions when conducting this project. Sometime technical team have trouble to understand marketing requirement since marketing team don't understand a technical process.
Which marketing strategies that Wata Solutions already implemented?

Content marketing: Wata Solutions is about to run content on Google and social network (mainly in Facebook, and yalo) since the company is focusing on Vietnamese group. Twitter and Instagram are included in Wata Solutions’ s plan. They try to keep our promotion as well as policies clear and easy to understand. They also have customer support team to answer any questions from customers. They have a strict penalty if the hotels provide inaccurate information. Regarding hotel description, they plan to provide the information about price, promotion, location, star rating and an introduction from hotels.

Customer service: They have a customer service team (24/7) to support customers. They encourage the customer to give feedback if they find out any inaccurate information on our site. Customers can call or email to customer service team. In the content strategies, they will include promotion information to make sure our customers know about the promotion.

Ease of use: Wata Solution's system allows customers to sort the result according to rating, location, price range, and date and number of room. They just have basic features in comparison with other sites. However, Wata Solutions is focusing on optimizing review function in order to provide customers honest information about hotel facilities and services. The customer can rate hotel from 1 till 5 stars based on their satisfaction of the stay. There is a team in charge of checking if the reviews are accurate.

2.4 Conclusion

2.4.1 what are the critical elements for a successful online hotel booking site?

According to the result found in the literature review: The key element determining a successful online hotels booking site is "Customer's trust". Trust affects brand loyalty from the perspective of brand commitment in relationship marketing. Trust leads to commitment in business-to-business relationship. Thus, the ability of the hotel booking system to gain customer's trust will lead to high commitment of the customer towards the hotel booking site and success of the hotel booking system.

According to Pauline Ratnasingam, trust is divided into three types: competence trust, predictability trust, and goodwill trust. Based on a comparative, a summarize of practices in order to increase customer’s trust is presented as below:

Competence trust: It is suggested that competence trust is the belief in the ability IT infrastructure of the hotel’s website (i.e. its functionality), skills and knowledge of the hotel employees. In order to earn higher degree of satisfaction with their service, especially regarding the ease of the booking process, the search engine must allow users narrow the result by: location, date, star rates, price range, theme, payment options. There are two functionality that can help the online hotels booking site to stand out, which are not something clients will find with most hotel sites: theme search and intelligence. Specifically, theme search can help customers quickly locate a family-friendly or business hotel. Lastly, different intelligent features can help the website stand out and gain customer's competence trust such as, automatically saves the properties clients looked at after client leave, or an useful feature that lets client change preferences for dates and locations without going back to the homepage. Furthermore, it is also crucial to consider flexibility in payment options. Most of reviewed sites implemented different payment.
methods such as cash at hotel, different types of credit cards. According to customer feedback analysis, a complicated customer cancellation process will lead to negative emotion. Thus, the organization should simplify their cancellation process to ensure the ease of use.

**Predictability trust:**

Predictability trust refers to the belief in is the consistency of the quality of service provided by the hotel. The predictability trust come after the competence trust when the customer has experienced the actual services offered by the hotel website. In this paper, the ability to secure the booking is used to evaluate the predictability trust. All of the reviewed hotels booking sites allow customers to see a list of amenities, hotel image gallery, location and attraction nearby, rules and cancellation detail, guest reviews, engaging with social media. It's especially important to see what the hotel policies are so customers know check-in and checkout times, pet rules and cancellation details. A list of nearby attractions can help customers plan their trip, right down to the museums customers visit and restaurants customers want to dine at. Famous practice is Booking.com allows customers find the place within referred distance to the center. Other reviewed site give customers detail information about attractions, banks, and hospitals nearby. The guest review is also very important, especially with the customers never having first hand experiences with the hotels. Expedia.com and Agoda.com take customer reviews a step further by connecting with a trustworthy review site – Tripadvisor.

**Goodwill trust:**

Goodwill or relationship trust refers to the belief in the care, concern, honesty, and benevolence shown by the hotel. Customer’s expectation not only about a competence and reliability, but also about the well-being and interests of the customer at heart when providing services. In this paper, the ability to fulfill the booking decision with customer service, price strategy, and loyalty program is used to evaluate goodwill trust.

In general, all reviewed sites offer customer support with the help in the FAQs section and customers can use email forms, or customers can call support team. Hotels.com have earned high customer's satisfaction by offering live chat support, which allows a quick communication. In comparison, others booking site stand out by offering various language supports, resend confirmation email. Furthermore, the most common price strategy that can improve customer's goodwill trust is "best price guarantee". However, most of the customers find it difficult to ask for matching a cheaper price, which leads to majors of complaints and negative experiences. Hence, best price guarantee can be seen as a double-edged sword. Besides, last-minute deals on hotels.com or great discount for only members on expedia.com can help the organization improve customer's goodwill trust and later customer's commitment and loyalty. The hidden cost is also crucial to be considered. The price should be displayed in as complete and transparent as possible. The price should include the following: base room rate, tax, and other fees.

2.4.2 What is Wata Solutions’ current understanding of the nature of an effective online booking system?
Based on the result of the interviews and a comparative study, the review on Wata Solutions features and strategies is presented as below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Expected item</th>
<th>Wata Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star rates</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price range</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment options</td>
<td>No - only by credit card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of accommodation</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplifying cancellation process</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictability trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel image gallery</td>
<td>Yes but standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations and attraction nearby</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and cancellation detail</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest review</td>
<td>Yes plan to optimize this feature as a selling point.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged with social media</td>
<td>Yes with Facebook, Yalo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwill trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>Yes but standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best price guarantee</td>
<td>No. No strategies mentioned regarding ensure the best price guarantee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price is transparent and clear</td>
<td>No Not mentioned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty program</td>
<td>Discount for members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Capability scale:**

The score is calculated by taking the number of actual items divide by the number of expected items. With any yes answer in table 3 is seen as 1 item, with any answer yes but standard is seen as 0.5 items, no means 0 item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt; 0.5</th>
<th>&lt;0.8</th>
<th>0.8 - 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6** is used to interpret the data and produce competence/predictability/goodwill trust capability based on the scale shown in table 3. The result enable the researcher to identify which knowledge needed to close the gap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Number of expected items</th>
<th>Actual items</th>
<th>Capability level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence trust</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low (0,44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 4, Wata Solution’s project has low capability level on competence trust due to lack of expected item: theme, payment options, type of accommodation, chain and intelligent feature. Those features play a crucial role to ensure the ease of use, which mainly customer to find their best-fit accommodation. According to the result of the interview, Wata Solution was not aware of the importance of competence trust, the ease of use when it comes to online booking. As mentioned in the literature review: "The positive effect of ease of obtaining information on loyalty for a service provider is higher for customers who choose the service online than it is for those who choose offline" (Venkatesh Shankar, Amy K. Smith, Arvind Rangaswamy, 2003).

Regarding predictability trust, Wata Solution has some competitive advantages such as: clear information, policies, and strict policies to ensure accurate information, their own data of customer reviews. Those strategies believed to improve customer’s predictability trust. Especially, Wata Solution takes customer reviews a step further by creating their own team to check the accurate of the review and ensure the customer can be refunded if the hotels cannot provide the service that they promise. This strategy is highly evaluated since nowadays customers rely heavily on previous experiences of other customers. However, Wata Solutions is not aware of the importance of using review products from other trust-worthy sources (trustworthy review sites, blogs, etc). A famous example is that Expedia, Hotels.com have improved their customer’s predictability trust by allowing customer seeing the reviews on another trustworthy site – Tripadvisor. Another important information that Wata Solutions was not aware of is informing customers about "locations and attraction nearby". As mentioned in the literature review, this information is very important for customer regarding the sense of assurance. A list of nearby attractions and a detailed map can help customers plan their trip, right down to the museums client visit and restaurants customers want to dine at.

In respect of goodwill trust, Wata Solutions have high capability level due to providing a variety promotions and loyalty programs. Price offered by Wata Solutions is also competitive by working closer with hotels in Vietnam. Product’s price is one of the vital product attributes that affect customer loyalty and repurchase behavior. Lastly, Wata Solution aims to build a standard customer service with support of a 24 hours team, telephone, and emails. Mostly reviewed online booking sites also provide those methods. Hence, it is believed that the customer service offered by Wata Solutions is acceptable regarding goodwill trust, but it is not a strong point to help Wata Solutions stand out. However, Wata Solutions is not aware of the important of transparent cost and simple process for best price guarantee.

2.5 Discussion – reflection on validity and reliability:

2.5.1 Validity:
Validity refers to measuring what is intend to measure and that the research does not have any systematic errors. By an internally valid research, correct conclusions from the results can be drawn. (Verhoeven, 2011). This part discusses three types of validity, which are typically addressed in texts and research papers in discussion about the quality of measurement – Construct Validity, Internal Validity, and External Validity.

**Construct Validity** Research has construct validity when the instrument, e.g., questionnaire, accurately addresses the concepts being studied. In order to have good construct validity, the interview guide is created based on a tree structure (appendix II), which is in turn based on relevant previous studies. The A strong theoretical framework is by adaptive conjoint study from more than 15 articles. The main key articles is listed as below:

"Customer Trust Indicators in the Online Hotel Booking Decision" by Pauline Ratnasingam, PhD –Associate Professor Harmon College of Business Administration University of Central Missouri Warrensburg, Missouri, USA. "Consumers’ Preferred Criteria for Hotel Online Booking" b Astrid Dickinger & Josef A. Mazanec. "Customer satisfaction and loyalty in online and offline environments." by Venkatesh Shankara, Amy K. Smithb, Arvind Rangaswamy. "The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust." by Dr. Beverley A. Sparks.

**Internal Validity.**

Internal Validity refers whether the field research can be believed and if the result is authentic and credible (Brotherton, 2008). Internal validity is the integrity of the study conducted.

In this study, the author used the methodological triangulation that involved more than one measure or method to gather the data including interviews and customer survey for the focus group in and desk research. Furthermore, regarding the interview procedures, It is important to reduce the influencing the results. Specifically, it must be ensured that the interviewer does not express the researcher’s opinion, or reduce or prevent free expression from the subject (Campbell, 1963). Unfortunately, during the interview, the researcher had expressed her opinions and the purpose of the interview. The interviewees might adjust their answer to match with what the research want to hear. The result of the interview might not reflect the true picture of Wata Solutions' knowledge. This leads to the issue that the internal validity of the advice may be compromised and the advice might not be the best fit for Wata Solutions. Furthermore, the reviewed online hotel booking sites may have different market segment in comparison with Wata Solutions. The strategies on those website may not lead to the same effects when implementing by Wata Solutions.

For future research, the ordering of the questions must be discussed carefully and based on theoretical framework before conducting the interviews.

**External Validity:**

Research has external validity when the results derived from the study sample can be confidently generalized to the population was sampled, and/or to other relevant populations. The external validity of this report will be discussed through the findings from the comparative study and qualitative study.
In order to enhance the generalizability of the findings from a comparative study, relevant reviews of hotel booking sites is gathered to reduce the bias when choosing cases. The measurements also created based on an adaptive conjoint study among 20 authors. Choosing cases and varieties for a comparative study without measurement techniques may change the picture.

Regarding the qualitative study, the aim of the interviews is to learn the knowledge gap and current strategies at Wata Solutions and it will not reflect what other companies are doing. Furthermore the result of this project will be used only for Wata Solutions, so the external validity of the advice is not relevant for other organizations.

2.5.2 Reliability:
The reliability of the research refers how the research lead to the same result even when it will be carried out under different circumstances, at some other point in time (Verhoeven, 2011).

To answer the management questions, the interview is chosen to learn more about the current knowledge of Wata Solutions. It is decided to conduct the interview with the team project. Achieving reliability is challenging because each interview is unique in some way. However, interviews conducted by the author will reduce the threat to the consistency of a research. Before the interview was carried, the interviewer was trained about how to avoid biases and it helps to ensure the reliability of the report. Furthermore, the interview guide is created to ensure the consistency of the research. According to the research, one-to-one interviews with standardized questions appeared to have the highest reliability. In the interview guide, there is a similar introduction and a common core questions about customer trust in online hotel booking system. However, each person’s mood can affect their performance on the interview and affect the reliability of the information. Interviewee appearance, accents, physical appearance, and the candidate and interviewer’s experience can affect the result of an interview (Arvey & Campion, 1982). The interviewees might answer differently with others interviewers at other times, which will affect the consistency of the result. In such a situation, a training manual is created for the interviewer. The training manual includes an outline to be followed during training and reference to subject matter during the interview. If different researchers will carry out the investigation again, they must use this manual to train their interviewers to achieve the same outcome. Another issue that is able to threat the reliability of the report is “subject bias”, which means the participants might change the answer to match up with the researchers. That leads to the different result in two different researches. In this case, in order to ensure the consistency of the research, it is agreed not to encourage interviewees to give the answer that the researcher might expect. Lastly, the transcripts are trustful because it is saved by process data, which can be used to re–analyze the whole research (Verhoeven, 2011).
III. Advice

The focus of the advice is set on how Wata Solutions can build the online hotel-booking site that can attract and retain more customers. The advice is formulated based on the knowledge gap identified from the interviews with the knowledge gained through literature review and the comparative study of the most 4 popular online hotel booking sites. However, because the researcher had expressed the purpose of the project and relevant trust issues, the interviewees might adjust their responses to what the researcher want to hear. This advice may not be the best fit for Wata Solutions if the result of the interview did not reflect the true picture of Wata Solutions' knowledge.

After interpreting the research data upon knowledge gap, the research ought to turn this data into the sound advice that can help Wata Solutions close their knowledge gap and achieve their goals.

Recommend 1: Close the gap in building customer competence trust

Search by theme: In the theme feature, Wata Solutions should divide into different characteristic of travel such as: solo travelers, couples, groups of friends and business people. Different people want different things from a hotel, and this obviously affects their reviews.

Flexibility in payment options: Wata Solution should pay special attention to closing the deal by making payment as easy as possible. In order to that, it is suggested that Wata Solution should include various payment methods from different type of credit cards as well as alternative methods such as PayPal, cash at the hotel. The client is believed to gain more confidence and comfort for completing the booking transaction when the see their preferred payment option.

Type of accommodation: The appearance of different type of accommodation in tourism industry, such as guesthouse, hostel, hotel, motel, resort, villa, has increased choices when it comes to booking accommodation. Star rating no longer can used to justify the characteristic of accommodations. Hence, it is suggested Wata Solutions include this feature to allow their customer find their best-fit accommodation as easy as possible.

Intelligence: Wata Solution should pay special attention on how to save their customer time and reduce their effort as much as possible by offer intelligence feature. Based on the comparative study, the functionality that can enable clients to change preferences for dates and locations without going back to the homepage is offered by all of the reviewed website. Another the intelligent example is the functionality can allow clients to return and review the properties clients looked at on the top of the screen after clients already leave the website (booking.com & Expedia.com, 2017).

Simplifying cancellation process: cancellation process should be simplified by minimizing steps, clear instructors. Staffs are trained to give customer useful support when it is needed.

Recommend 2: Close the gap in building customer predictability trust
**Connecting with TripAdvisor:** An incredible growth of Internet has enabled to look at the reviews on different sources before purchasing online. Consumers seem to be willing to search and review products based on a mix of firms and consumer information. TripAdvisor is seen as a trust-worthy site with travel-related content. Expedia.com & Hotels.com has increased the sense of assurance of online booking by allowing customers to see the reviews not only on their websites but also on TripAdvisor.

**Providing "nearby..." filter:** A list of nearby attractions and a detailed map can give customers better idea on hotel to plan their trip. It is suggested Wata Solutions should add "nearby..." filter, which enables customers to search the hotel near their favorite spot within preferred distance.

**Recommend 3: Close the gap in building customer goodwill trust**

**Best price guarantee:** best price guarantee can be seen as a double-edged sword if the company makes it difficult for their customers. Clear structures and helpful staffs will help Wata Solutions to simplify this process.

**Transparent cost:** It is suggested that Wata Solution should display the price in as complete and transparent as possible. The price should include the following: base room rate, tax, and other fees.

**Suggestions on implementation of the plan of the advice:**

Managers know the right answers but somehow fail to put them into action. After providing the sound advice, the question still remains: "How Wata Solutions can turn knowledge into action?". That is why this suggestions on implementation plan gives Wata Solutions great insight of what the next step is, and who will be involved with. The researcher suggests Wata Solutions to use the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) method to test the change that is implemented.

**Activities and departments involved:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan phase</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning phase</strong></td>
<td>Meeting to transfer new knowledge</td>
<td>Project leader, marketing team, technical teams, HR department</td>
<td>Wata Solutions office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set budget</td>
<td>Financial department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Execution phase</strong></td>
<td>Defines new functionalities</td>
<td>Marketing and technical team</td>
<td>Wata Solutions office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create new features based on needed functionalities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hired extra staff if needed</td>
<td>HR department</td>
<td>Linkdle.com, Vietnamwork.com, Wata Solution office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation phase</strong></td>
<td>Test if the feature can provide the needed</td>
<td>Project leader, marketing and technical team</td>
<td>Wata Solutions office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher suggests Wata Solutions to use the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) method to the control and continual improvement of processes.

**Plan – Concise statement of what the company plans to do in this test.**

Statement: the organization plan to test the effects of implementing new features by giving out customer survey.

The measurement will be designed based on the actions and the goals of the company. However, Wata Solution can use the customer survey below as a reference for to evaluate the effects of implementing new features. The detail of questionnaire can be found in appendix XI.

- **The ease of use:** The most important and obvious thing to test the usability is whether customers are able to accomplish their tasks and goals (mashable.com, 2011). In the online hotel bookings context, it means the organization need to evaluate if the customers are able to find the best-fit accommodation when they use the website.

- **The sense of assurance:** The most important thing to test is whether the review is readable and the information is reliable (mashable.com, 2011).

- **Goodwill trust:** Goodwill trust can be evaluated by user experience. By measure user’s experience, the organization can see whether implementation has positive effects on customer general satisfaction, which later on leads to customer trust and commitment.

**Do:**

- Send customer surveys to the potential customers or employees.

- Help the attendances to complete the survey by clarifying the questions if needed.

- Write down the result of the survey: customer reaction, average score.

**Check:**

- Identify if the results meet the measurement goals.

- Identify the appropriateness and completeness of the plan.

**Act:**
If the "Check" shows that the implementation is has positive effects on customer satisfaction as well as customer trust, then it become a new standard for how Wata Solutions should keep going forward.

If the "Check" shows that the implementation is not an improvement or has some existing problems, then Wata Solutions should make some adjustments accordingly.

**Financial consequences and financial forecast of the advice:**

- **Financial consequences:**

  **ROI** is a comparison between how much the organization invests, the return on the investment and how much the organization gain on the investment. By implementing two recommendations advised in this report, there are few specific areas will be improved:

  - Usability: Improving filter tool will help Wata Solutions ensure the usability (the ease of use). If the website is easy to use then the users will be happy, come back and recommend it to their acquaintances.

  - Informative: By adding "nearby..." filter as well as useful information about nearby attractions and services, it is believed that the customers feel more comfortable and secured to make the decision.

  - Customer overall satisfaction: By ensuring the ease of use, the sense of assurance and the ability to fulfill booking decision, the customers will feel satisfied and happy with the services.

Those factors mentioned above will improve Website ROI. In order to measure website ROI, Wata Solutions need to compare what the website is now doing with the feedback from visitors, website traffic, an increase in sales. To emphasize the positive ROI of the recommendations, relevant famous website ROI example on improving websites features and contents with the online purchase services is gathered below as a reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Element of trust</th>
<th>Drives of trust</th>
<th>Financial consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expedia.com</td>
<td>Competence trust</td>
<td>The ease of use: change one information in payment process which confuses customers</td>
<td>Immediately saw an increase in revenue of $12 million a year. (Duncanjonesnz.com, 2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Centure hearing aids | Competence trust & predictability trust | The ease of use: minimal design, *Show off quality*  
The sense of assurance: adding reviews | Increased revenue 300%  
("How These 7 Companies Increased Revenue by an Average of 425%", 2013) |
Table 8: Summary of examples of financial consequences

Financial forecast:

There are two ways to fill knowledge gaps are training and hiring. Depending on the company's capacity and finance situation, Wata Solutions can decide to use existing human resources or hiring extra staffs or experts to improve their project based on the knowledge gap. Relevant extra cost is collected to support the manager's decision:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required services</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiring extra staffs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital marketing:</td>
<td>1800$–2700$/a month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer programmer:</td>
<td>450$–1100$/a month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting with TripAdvisor</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Using Widgets, it allows customers to add TripAdvisor content to your own website.</td>
<td>Tripadvisor.co.uk, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving functionality of the website</td>
<td>200 $</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal from intelsoft company, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing content</td>
<td>180$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Financial forecast
Afterword:

I have experienced this period as very stressful but interesting. At the beginning, I had little knowledge of online hotel booking system and online hotel booking's behavior. However, I have been able to achieve a result by looking at different previous studies and plenty of feedback from the examiners – Mr. Dijk and Mr. Marc Vink. Many meetings with the first examiner – Mr. Dijk were made to ensure the quality of the thesis paper. In the first meeting with two examiners, I had received useful advice on how to develop a theoretical framework and on which aspect I need to take into consideration when conducting the research. Besides, through personal meetings with my clients, I was able to arrange the interviews with key staffs from Wata Solutions. Useful information of the interviews with the knowledge learned from the literature review and the comparative study enable me to come up with a sound advice. In the last two final weeks, Mr. Dijk had given me some useful feedback to ensure the coherence of the report. Furthermore, Mr. Dijk and Mr. Marc Vink recommended me to look at customer feedback, since it will help me to test the theories and reinforce my confidence in the results. Accordingly, I made major improvements mostly in Literature Reviews and Research part.

The findings of this study acknowledge that trustworthy relations can lead to the success of an online hotel booking site. Results of the literature review reveal the important of "ease of use", "sense of assurance" and "ability to fulfill the booking decision" as drivers of customer trust. Furthermore, through the comparative study of the most 4 popular online hotel booking sites, some good practices are identified: ease the booking process by comprehensive filter tool, simplifying cancellation process and intelligence functionality; secure the booking by useful information and customer reviews; fulfill the booking decision with best price guarantee, loyalty programs, transparent cost.

Value of current needs in likewise industry:

Although the purpose of this thesis project is delivering a sound advice for Wata Solutions, the results of this research have relevant practical implications for marketing department and managers, who design strategic plans and implement tools to improve the performance of online hotel bookings websites. The research investigated trust indicators only on online hotel booking services. However, the findings from literature review and the comparative study can be generalizable to other service contexts such as: online shopping, booking airplane ticket online and likewise.

Limitations and future research directions:

Like any other studies, this project is bound by certain limitations. The reviewed online hotel booking sites may have different target groups in comparison with other organizations. The strategies on those websites may not lead to the same effects when approaching Asia market. The 4 popular online hotel booking site was examined only by the researcher, which could lead to biases. The data of customer feedback collected only from Trustpilot.com, which will limit the validity of the result. The future research should also look at customer reviews from different sources and based on variety factors like age, genders.
References:


Kyrö, P. (2004). TABLE 4 The features of action research and benchmarking. Available at: https://metodix.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/kyro-benchmarking-as-an-action-research-process/ %5BAccessed 16 Nov. 2015%5D.


Appendix I: Interview guide

Introduction:

I am Tram Tran fourth-year student of Saxion University of Applied Sciences, majoring in Hotel Management. I am doing the research about online marketing strategies for hotel industry in order to inform which aspect Wata Solutions should take into account to increase customer trust, commitment, and loyalty. This interview is conducted to learn more about Wata Solution’s current understanding/knowledge of their customer’s booking behaviors and their strategy in term of customer’s trust and loyalty. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed. The information just will be used for the class.

Interview question:

☐ Start recording

Part 1: Personal question

1. Could you introduce yourself?
   - Age
   - Position
   - Experience
   ✓ Evaluate + summarize

2. What do you think about Wata Solutions’s target group?
   - characteristic
   - behaviors
   ✓ Evaluate + summarize

Part 2: Theory part

1. Could you tell me about which aspects Wata Solution take into account to increase customer’s competence trust?
   - The ease of use: varieties of sorting options
   ✓ Evaluate + summarize

2. Could you tell me about which aspects Wata Solution take into account to increase customer’s predictability trust?
   - The sense of assurance
   ✓ Evaluate + summarize

3. Could you tell me about which aspects Wata Solution take into account to increase customer’s goodwill trust?
   - The ability to fulfill the booking decisions.
   ✓ Evaluate + summarize
Thank you for attending the interview. We will contact you if we need further information.
Appendix II: Tree Diagram

Success outcome of the online hotel booking

- Customer's commitment and loyalty
- Customer's trust
  - Competence trust
  - Predictability trust
  - Goodwill trust
Appendix III: Review salary in IT industry 2016 in Vietnam (Vietnam dong)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Base Salary</th>
<th>Top Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Software Developer/Programmer</td>
<td>Bachelor in Computer Science or Information Technology</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Developer/Web Designer</td>
<td>BA in Computer Science or Information Technology</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infogame.vn, 2016

daynhauhoc.com, 2016
## Appendix IV: Proposal from intelsoft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STT</th>
<th>Hàng mục chính</th>
<th>Thành tiền (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Thiết kế giao diện – Khách hàng cung cấp Appearance design</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Thiết kế cơ sở dữ liệu Data base design</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Lập trình chức năng các hạng mục của website Website functionality</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Lập trình chức năng quản trị nội dung Content management functionality</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tổng cộng (USD):</strong></td>
<td>480</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix V: Customer Feedback – Expedia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34 responses</td>
<td>166 responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Website attributes to positive feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attributes to positive feedback</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Customer support                        | 16                  | - Helpful, efficient, patient  
|                                        |                     | - Willing to help customer to fix even when they made mistakes on booking.       |
| The ease of use                         | 10                  | - Save time  
|                                        |                     | - Offer package all-in-one  
|                                        |                     | - Easy to use                                                                  |
| Payment                                 | 4                   | - Helpful staffs to solve payment issue                                           |
| Reacting to complains                   | 7                   | - React on complains and refund                                                   |
| Price                                   | 5                   | - Price is competitive                                                            |

### Website attributes to negative feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attributes to negative feedback</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer supports</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Confusing communication: staffs keep repeating answer, always sent question as answer, unfriendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services at hotel</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Bad experiences at the hotel mostly because of the facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Refund issues                           | 60                  | - Frustrating process to refund  
|                                        |                     | - Difficult for customers to find a right department to ask for refund           |
| Hidden cost                             | 50                  | - Extra cost for using card  
|                                        |                     | - Price increase before transaction is completed                                 |
| Content – policies and rules            | 30                  | Difficult and frustrating to understand                                          |

*(Trustpilot.com, 2017)*
Appendix VI: Customer Feedback – Booking.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attributes to positive feedback</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The ease of use                        | 90                  | - Easy to change the reservation  
|                                        |                     | - Smooth process  
|                                        |                     | - Fast response and easy for cancellation  |
| No hidden cost                         | 50                  | - Clear and no hidden cost  |
| Customer support                       | 40                  | - Do extra steps to help their customers  
|                                        |                     | - Friendly  |
| Refund                                 | 15                  | - Refund when mistakes occurred  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attributes to negative feedback</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Price guarantee                         | 30                  | Easy to find price cheaper in another sites  
|                                        |                     | Don’t keep its promise to match the price  |
| Price                                   | 26                  | Price is not competitive  |
| Reviews                                 | 35                  | Do not publish negative reviews  
|                                        |                     | Remove reviews  |
| Services at hotel                       | 10                  | Not the same as photos and information provided  |
| Refund issue                            | 15                  | Slow and Frustrated process  |
| Customer support                        | 22                  | Slow in replying customers  |

(Trustpilot.com, 2017)
### Appendix VII: Customer Feedback – Agoda.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>172</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attributes to positive feedback</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ease of use</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>– Simple and fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Various of choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>– Very competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer support</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>– Supportive and friendly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attributes to negative feedback</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cancellation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>– Cost fee while display in the website is free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Not supportive in cancellation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scam alert</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden cost</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>– Don’t listen to the customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Giving wrong information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo gallery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price guarantee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>– No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer loyalty</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services at the hotel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>– Full-paid without room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Incorrect information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Trustpilot.com, 2017)
## Appendix VIII: Customer Feedback – Agoda.com

### Website attributes to positive feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attribute</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer support</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Good price, discount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Good loyalty program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ease of use</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty program</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Often offer free nights for customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price guarantee</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Website attributes to negative feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website attribute</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Specific opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirming booking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wrong information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services at hotel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Not check hotel quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ease of use</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Less choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price guarantee</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Difficult to price guarantee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer loyalty</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden cost</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Not competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer support</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Cancellation support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Send spam emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refund issue</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Long process to get refund issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair assessable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancellation process</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Trustpilot.com, 2017)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Customer rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence trust</strong></td>
<td>Are there ways to streamline and reduce the time it takes to find the best-fit accommodation?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The ease of use:</td>
<td>It is easy for customer to enter relevant information? (Date, location, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficiency, memoriability)</td>
<td>The website avoid making visitors remember things?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Predictability trust</strong></td>
<td>How reliable the customer reviews are?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The sense of assurance: Ease of comprehension, usefulness)</td>
<td>The website provide complete and relevant information about the hotel and services?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Details and information are easy to understand?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goodwill trust</strong></td>
<td>Do users feel satisfied after interacting with the website?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(User experience:</td>
<td>Does the user feel like he's obtained value from using the website?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fulfillment, usefulness, positive emotions)</td>
<td>Do users feel happy, excited, pleased, etc. when they interact with the site?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix X: Interview Transcript of Thien Dam

May 20, 2017

Interviewer (IR): Tram Tran
Interviewee: Thien Dam

Interview setting: Interview was conducted through skype from 4pm tue 4.45pm due to busy schedule of Thien Dam and the fact that he is working abroad. The interview was made by Vietnamese, which will be translated into English in this project

Start of the interview:

I am Tram Tran fourth-year student of Saxion University of Applied Sciences, majoring in Hotel Management. I am doing the research about online marketing strategies for hotel industry in order to inform which aspect Wata Solutions should take into account to increase customer’s trust, commitment, and loyalty. This interview is conducted to learn more about Wata Solution’s current understanding/knowledge of their customer’s booking behaviors and their strategy in term of customer’s trust and loyalty. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed. The information just will be used for the class.

IR: Now we start with the first question. Can you introduce about yourself and your experience?

Thien Dam: About my experience, most of my experience is related to developing software and system, especially in mobile. Before I had worked to develop several system of hotel. From that experience, I learn and know several issues regarding this hotel booking system.

IR: What are your difficulties while carrying this project?

Thien Dam: The first challenge is to compete with other online hotel booking systems. That is why we need to differentiate our system. The second challenge is to gain customer’s trust and convince customer to choose our system instead of others. The third challenge is to manage information from the hotel to ensure the information on website trustful. That is all main issue when we are doing this project.

IR: I see that your issues are very related with my thesis project that to investigate which aspects that Wata Solutions need to take into consideration to gain customer’s trust. Could you tell me how many people working on this project?

Thien Dam: Our team has 10 people divided into two teams: Tech and marketing.

IR: Could you tell me the roles of each team?

Thien Dam: Tech is in charge of developing system, website and mobile app while marketing team will work on how promote this system to the customer.

IR: How many people in marketing?

Thien Dam: There are 4 people working in marketing team.
Thien Dam: Firstly, marketing team need to identify customer’s need and also hotel’s owner wishes. Regarding the hotel, we are working on how to deliver the hotel’s image to the target group and help hotels to manage bookings intelligently. Secondly, marketing need to introduce specific strategies based on client’s need. And from those strategies, tech team will develop certain feature. In short, marketing need to develop specific strategy on how to increase the booking on our system and convince customer choose our system instead of other popular sites like Agoda.com, booking.com, etc.

IR: Who is the person in charge of important decision?

Thien Dam: I will the person who is responsible for both decisions from tech and marketing team. However the solution come from each team. Each team needs to introduce their plan, and I will value the plans and decide which one is chosen to proceed.

IR: According to my research, customer’s trust is divided into 3 types: competence trust, predictability trust and goodwill trust. Competence trust is mainly based on the ease of use. So could you tell me what is your strategy or specific features that can help customer to find their best-fit hotel?

Thien Dam: In order to do so, we need to have data of the hotel and create our own policies to ensure the information is trustful and reflect the reality (quality management). Secondly, we develop the feature that allows our client to give their reviews. For example they can evaluate the quality and service of the hotel, and the client can rate the quality of the hotel from 1-star to 5-star. It also help other users when they want to make their decision.

IR: Could you explain more about the "review of customers" feature?

Thien Dam: Our clients make the reviews.

IR: Do you have a plan to cooperate with trustworthy review sites?

Thien Dam: So far we did not think about it but that is a great idea. However, my plan now is to have own our data, so we can ensure the quality of the review. Because for us, the accurate between information on the website and the reality is our priority.

IR: Thank you for your explanation. Regarding the sorting and filter, do you have any strategies to help customer easily narrow the result.

Thien Dam: Our filter feature allows customers to narrow the result based on price and star rating and customer reviews. For example, if you want the 4-star hotel, price from 200–400 $ and filter can help you to find the suitable hotel.

IR: how about dates, number of room?

Thien Dam: Yes we do offer.

IR: How about the policies for booking and cancellation?

Thien Dam: Yes we do
IR: Can you tell us about payment options?

Thien Dam: Need to pay by credit in advance

IR: How about sorting by theme?

Thien Dam: We don’t offer that feature.

IR: How about facility and service?

Thien Dam: We don’t offer at the moment but we have plan for it.

IR: How about the map?

Thien Dam: What do you mean about the map?

IR: For example, the map can help customer to know the location of the hotel or nearby attraction.

Thien Dam: Yes I do have

IR: Do you have nearby attractions?

Thien Dam: We don’t offer it, but it might be in the description of the hotel.

IR: Do you have any guideline regarding the description of the hotel?

Thien Dam: Rating of the hotel, location, and detail up to each hotel, promotion. Hotel owners are flexible to describe their hotel. Furthermore they can take our suggestion as a reference. There are some information is compulsory is: price, breakfast, and promotion.

IR: Regarding hotel images, which aspects you take into consideration?

Thien Dam: Firstly, we have a team in charge of checking the information that hotel provided. We also directly check at hotel if we receive the complaints from our clients. Strikingly, we have strict penalty for inaccurate information.

IR: Regarding customer reviews, which aspects you take into consideration?

Thien Dam: We have a customer service team (24/7) to support customers. We encourage customer to give comment if they find out any inaccurate information on our site. Customers can call or email to customer service team.

IR: Regarding goodwill trust, which strategies will you apply?

Thien Dam: We work with our partner to make sure that we provide a lowest price. We also plan to give many promotions for group and family. With frequently users, we offers discount.

IR: What will you do if the customer finds out the better deal on other websites?

Thien Dam: We are willing to refund in that case.
IR: Regarding promotion, which strategies will you implement?

Thien Dam: We believe we can offer the best promotion. The difference between our system and other sites is we not only enable users to book online but also allows hotels to manage their booking, expenditure, rooms, etc. Our promotion is applied for both new users and members.

IR: Currently, there is a trend to engage with social media. Do you have any plan to cooperate with other social media?

Thien Dam: Yes, we do. The main channels we use are Facebook and Yalo. But that feature is not implemented at this stage.

IR: Thank you very much for your information and I would like to close the discussion. And I hope that I will give a suitable advice based on which we had discussed.
Appendix XI: Interview Transcript of Mr. Luc

May 23, 2017

Interviewer (IR): Tram Tran
Interviewee: Mr. Luc

Interview setting: Interview was conducted through skype from 10.30pm tue 11.45pm due to busy schedule of Thien Dam and the fact that he is working abroad. The interview was made by Vietnamese, which will be translated into English in this project.

Start of the interview:

I am Tram Tran fourth-year student of Saxion University of Applied Sciences, majoring in Hotel Management. I am doing the research about online marketing strategies for hotel industry in order to inform which aspect Wata Solutions should take into account to increase customer’s trust, commitment, and loyalty. This interview is conducted to learn more about Wata Solution’s current understanding/knowledge of their customer’s booking behaviors and their strategy in term of customer’s trust and loyalty. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed. The information just will be used for the class.

IR: Now we start with the first question. Can you introduce about yourself and your experience?

Mr. Luc: My name is Luc from Wata Solutions and I am in charge of sales and marketing and also company's operation. Currently, we are doing a project about online hotel booking system sites. Do you have any questions about our project?

IR: I do have many questions later on? Could you tell me a bit about your experience?

Mr. Luc: About my experience, my experience mostly in Finance and Marketing, I also have experience in managing booking an application in hotel industry.

IR: Based on my previous interview Mr. Thien (Director of Wata Solutions), I knew that there are two teams working on this project and I also knew that you are a leader in marketing team. Could you tell me a bit about your responsibility?

Mr. Luc: I am responsible for marketing’s strategies and sales’ strategies. When introducing new strategies, I need to choose right strategies that fit within our budget. Our strategies aim to deliver our system to our clients including: Partners (hotel) and site's users.

IR: How did you divide the tasks within your team?

Mr. Luc: Marketing team is divided into 3 teams: customer's need analysis, content and customer's service. That is all very basic aspect when developing a online booking systems.

IR: Could you tell me more about the strategies that you approach your target customers?
Mr. Luc: We have content strategies: SEO, google network, social network (facebook, Yalo, etc). Within each network, we have different plans on how to apply the content and package and promotion.

IR: Could you explain more about marketing package?

Mr. Luc: Currently, we are about to run content on google and social network (mainly in facebook, and yalo) since we are focusing on Vietnamese group. Twitter and Instagram are on our plan. Anyway, we need to consider our budget before implementing any plan.

IR: Regarding customer services, which strategies did you implement?

Mr. Luc: We offer many promotions for our customers if they travel by group or family. Normally we offer extra points or free breakfast or discount. In the content strategies, we will include promotion information to make sure our customers know about the promotion. Because if the promotion only present on our site, newer customers won’t know about the promotion. Therefore we need to use content strategies through social network.

IR: According previous interview with Mr. Thien Dam (director of Wata Solutions), he said that Wata Solutions aims to reach global travelers?

Mr. Luc: At the beginning we want to focus on Vietnamese travellers, but in the long run, we are ambitious to deliver our system to travellers all over the world. I think Mr. Thien did not clarify with you about that. Our vision is global market, but now we step by step reach Vietnamese travellers and then Asia’s travellers.

IR: Gaining customer’s trust is one of Wata Solutions’s challenges. Could you tell which strategies you used to improve customer’s trust?

Mr. Luc: Our strategy is to ensure that the information is accurate and authentic as much as possible. Specifically, with the price, our content will include clear information of the price as well as policies for booking and cancellation. We don’t want to confuse our customer, especially in the price.

IR: How will you ensure that customer will believe in your information that your site provides?

Mr. Luc: I give you an example: when our customer book a room through our website with the hotel 2-star, they will see the facilities of the hotel and inside the room provided in line with the standard of 2-star hotel. Those information will be provided when customer want to book a room through our site. Furthermore we have promotion for members. We also provide best price guarantee.

IR: Which promotion program that you think it is different than other sites?

Mr. Luc: The difference between our system not only enable users to book online but also allows hotels to manage their booking, expenditure, rooms, etc. By closer working with hotels in Vietnam, we believe that we can offer more promotion than other sites can. Because our system is for two purposes: online booking and hotel management. Even Agoda cannot compete with us about the price.

IR: Could you tell me about the difficulties when you implement marketing strategies?
MR. Luc: Hmm. There are a lot of challenges and difficulties when we start this project. Firstly, challenge in balancing our financial needs. Secondly, challenge in deliver marketing ideas: when we first start, it is difficult for technical team understand marketing's goals. We need to work on it a lot. Furthermore, we are still new in the industry; it is difficult to reach our clients. Last but not least, investment is also very important to keep the system alive. We are working on the solution to attract more investors. I could say the main challenge is finance and follow by product, since marketing strategy cost a lot of money at the beginning.

IR (20–25)

IR: Thank you very much for your information and I would like to close the discussion. And I hope that I will give a suitable advice based on which we had discussed.
Appendix XII: Interview Transcript of Mr. Tien

May 23, 2017

Interviewer (IR): Tram Tran
Interviewee: Mr. Tien

Interview setting: Interview was conducted through skype from 10.30pm Tue 11.45pm due to busy schedule of Mr. Tien. The interview was made by Vietnamese, which will be translated into English in this project

Start of the interview:

I am Tram Tran fourth-year student of Saxion University of Applied Sciences, majoring in Hotel Management. I am doing the research about online marketing strategies for hotel industry in order to inform which aspect Wata Solutions should take into account to increase customer’s trust, commitment, and loyalty. This interview is conducted to learn more about Wata Solution’s current understanding/knowledge of their customer’s booking behaviors and their strategy in term of customer’s trust and loyalty. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed. The information just will be used for the class.

IR: Now we start with the first question. Can you introduce about yourself and your experience?

Mr. Tien:

IR: Could you tell me a bit about the hotel booking system project?

Mr. Tien: We are working on an online hotel booking site for hotels in Vietnam. Through this site, clients can find a best deal for accommodation in Vietnam and at the same time, hotel owners can also manage their hotel booking reservation. At the beginning, our target group is Vietnamese travellers.

IR: Could you tell me about your role?

Mr. Tien: We have two team working on this project: tech and marketing. I am a leader of tech team, who is in charge of giving solutions regarding technical that meet marketing’s goals.

IR: Could you elaborate it?

Mr. Tien: Marketing team want to create a friendly sorting or filter by date, room, location or offering users payment option through credit card, we will give relevant technical solutions.

IR: What are your website’s functions that you think can make your website stand out?

Mr. Tien: In my opinion, that is the feature to show how many rooms available, promotion, price. Since our website combine online booking and hotel management, we believe our promotion is very attractive in comparison with other sites. We also have a team to update promotion information.

IR: Could you tell me more about the features that can help customer to narrow the results?
Mr. Tien: We allow customer to sort the result according to rating, location, price range, and of course date and number of room. We just have basic features in comparison with other sites. However, we are focus on optimize review function in order to provide customers a honest information about hotel facilities and services. Customer can rate hotel from 1 till 5 stars based on their satisfaction of the stay.

IR: What are your difficulties in your work?

Mr. Tien: The most difficult thing of my job is the communication between marketing team and technical team. We have to cooperate with marketing team in order to create feature in line with marketing's goals. For example, marketing purpose is make it easy for users to see the availability of the rooms, the we need to create feature that enable hotel partners to update their availability. Sometime we have trouble to understand marketing requirement since marketing team don't understand technical process. Sometimes, because marketing team give us too general idea. For example, they want us to create a feature for customer review that can make sure hotel receive fair points. However, they cannot explain how to do it fairly. You know, there are hotels having reviews from customers, there are hotels not receiving any.

IR Which features you think can gain customer's trust?

Mr. Tien: Honest hotel image gallery, constantly update best price and promotion are the features that I believe will gain customer's trust.

IR: Thank you very much for your information and I would like to close the discussion. And I hope that I will give a suitable advice based on which we had discussed.
Appendix XIII: Interview Transcript of Ms. Tran Tran

May 23, 2017

Interviewer (IR): Tram Tran
Interviewee: Ms. Tran Tran

Interview setting: Interview was conducted through skype from 10.30pm Tue 11.45pm due to busy schedule of Ms. Tran Tran and the fact that she is working abroad. The interview was made by Vietnamese, which will be translated into English in this project.

Start of the interview:

I am Tram Tran fourth-year student of Saxion University of Applied Sciences, majoring in Hotel Management. I am doing the research about online marketing strategies for hotel industry in order to inform which aspect Wata Solutions should take into account to increase customer’s trust, commitment, and loyalty. This interview is conducted to learn more about Wata Solution’s current understanding/knowledge of their customer’s booking behaviors and their strategy in term of customer’s trust and loyalty. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed. The information just will be used for the class.

IR: Now we start with the first question. Can you introduce about yourself and your experience?

Ms. Tran: I have been working in marketing department for years, but I just join Wata Solutions around 6 months. And I am in charge of content marketing strategies for this project.

IR: Could you tell me a bit about the hotel booking system project?

Ms. Tien: We are working on an online hotel-booking site for hotels in Vietnam. Our site will offer users best deals for accommodation in Vietnam and at the same time, hotel owners can also manage their hotel booking reservation. We want to provide a booking site with accurate and clear information, which will help users to find a best-fit hotel without confusing.

IR: Could you tell me more about which channels you use to share content?

Ms. Tran: At the beginning we try to deliver our system to Vietnamese travellers, for that reason we use Facebook and Yalo. As you know Yalo and Facebook is very popular among Vietnamese. Since our promotion is aim to groups and family, we are working on the strategies to captivate our target group.

IR: What are the difficulties when working on the content?
Ms. Tran: Our main challenge is to captivate our audience in a unique and memorable way. Secondly, this industry is very competitive, it leads to another challenge is to gain customer's trust and stand out. Currently, we have many promotions for our users. Technology, social media has given us the power of easy to reach our customers, we now can search online for options before making a decision. But, on the downside, it has also given us far more competitors that ever. That is why we need to find the way to gain customer’s trust and convince them to choose us.

Besides, there is no specific plan or marketing goals from general managers, sometimes make it difficult for me.

IR: Could you explain more about your content strategy to gain customer’s trust?

Ms. Tran: It’s easy to overthink our process, over-complicate our words, and miss opportunities to connect with our audience. Therefore, we try to keep our promotion as well as policies clear and easy to understand. We also have customer support team to answer any questions from customers. We have strict penalty if the hotels provide inaccurate information. Regarding hotel description we plan to provide the information about: price, promotion, location, star rating and an introduction from hotels.

IR: What need to have in an introduction from hotels?

Ms. Tran: It is up to each hotel, but we give them some suggestion. For example writing about their unique selling point.

IR: Which aspects that you take into consideration regarding goodwill trust?

Ms. Tran: As I already said, we try to provide the information honestly and accurately. We keep our promise and do exactly like what we say in the policies or promotion.

IR: Thank you very much for your information and I would like to close the discussion. And I hope that I will give a suitable advice based on which we had discussed.