

Understanding the Mediating Effects of Technology Factor on Social Media Acceptance among Budget Accommodations

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ABSTRACT

The characteristics of social media and its interactivity propelled it to become an eminent medium of marketing for most business organisations, including SMEs. However, SMEs in the hospitality and tourism industry, such as budget accommodations, hardly utilise social media as their marketing medium. Thus, this study investigates factors influencing budget accommodation owners in utilising social media as their marketing medium since digital promotion remains underexplored in SMEs. The current study adopts an expanded research model consisting of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), where 300 respondents were selected and assessed using the convenience sampling technique. An analysis of Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the research model. Research analysis revealed that the exogenous constructs refer to the internal factor, while external and technology factors jointly explained 71.6% variance of the endogenous construct of social media acceptance. External and technological factors positively and significantly affect social media marketing acceptance among budget accommodation. However, internal factors show insignificant effects. The analysis of mediating effects illustrated that technological factors greatly mediate both internal and external factors on social media marketing acceptance among budget accommodation. In conclusion, the findings of this study provide useful insights into the perspectives of budget accommodation owners in social media marketing, which indirectly contributes to the development of the nation's tourism industry and economic growth.

Keywords: *SMEs, budget accommodation, social media acceptance, TAM, IDT.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of the information and communication technology (ICT) industry has led to the emergence of numerous digital media. Indeed, the internet's main role is to serve as a medium for information exchange (Aydin, 2020). However, its role has expanded beyond this function with the new internet generation. It gradually becomes an important platform, which is a large part of most people's lives. At present, global tourism activities are beginning to lean towards employing social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to enjoy these apps' casual and sociable sharing features (Mosweunyane et al., 2019; Groothuis, 2020; Halawani et al., 2020). Current statistics reported that by 2025, the number of Facebook users in Malaysia would reach 27.3 million, up from 23 million in 2019 (Müller, 2021). Malaysia's internet line rates are recorded at up to 20 per cent and are among the world's fastest countries to adopt tablet computer technology. To some degree, this situation has bolstered the confidence of business organisations, particularly SMEs, to accept social media in their marketing operation as it offers extensive accessibility with a higher number of users (Bernama, 2019; Aydin, 2020). Research also shows that active social media users in Malaysia increased consistently from 24 per cent in 2016 to 86 per cent as of January 2021 (Statista, 2020). Other than that, Malaysia is

also reported as one of the top five countries globally and the top country in Southeast Asia for mobile media breakthroughs (Bernama, 2020). This situation indicates that SMEs have huge opportunities to boost their businesses globally by incorporating social media as a communication and marketing outreach platform.

Tourists rely more on online self-search when planning for their vacation. This includes choosing vacation destinations, evaluating tourism destinations, and recommending tourism destinations to others (Groothuis, 2020). The dependency of tourists on social media regarding their holiday and travel activities has changed the marketing strategies for most tourism businesses today (Alrashid, 2012; Mosweunyane et al., 2019; Aydin, 2020). To retain the competitive edge and customer loyalty, SMEs in the tourism industry are urged to fully utilise the interactive technology provided by social media in their daily businesses, especially in interacting with customers (Ranatunga et al., 2021; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021). The branding of SMEs can only be established if entrepreneurs can make full use of the opportunities made available by ICT (Mosweunyane et al., 2019; Mijan et al., 2020; Groothuis, 2020; Ranatunga et al., 2021). By engaging in multiple social networking sites, SMEs can possess absolutely control over negative rumours and directly defend their brand name. This also allows entrepreneurs to sustain and stimulate tourists' interest and trust in their brand and services (Mosweunyane et al., 2019; Chakraborty & Biswal, 2020; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2020).

Previous studies mention that only a few studies on social media marketing and the hotel industry are currently available (Garrido et al., 2018; Aydin, 2020; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021). Hence, there is a need for a thorough understanding of how the hotel industry utilises social media in enhancing its business performance to gain competitive advantages. There are several studies reported that most SMEs in the tourism industry, including budget accommodation, lack appropriate marketing platforms in promoting their brand properly and even disregarded the role and importance of social media in doing so (Sa & Chai, 2018; Chakraborty & Biswal, 2020; Liu & Zhang, 2020). Most SMEs are still bound to conventional media in reaching out to their potential customers, including fliers, brochures, signage, and word of mouth (WOM) communication due to the lack of knowledge and technological competency, financial issues, lack of motivation, and support from the respective authorities (Chakraborty & Biswal, 2020; Ezzaouia & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to identify predictors that influence budget accommodation owners in accepting social media as their marketing medium. Both organisational factors (internal and external) and technology were tested as potential predictors. Moreover, technology was also tested as a mediating predictor between organisational factors and social media marketing acceptance. The conceptual framework of this study is based on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT). Henceforth, all "budget accommodation" mentions refer to homestay and budget hotels in Malaysia (Malaysia Budget Hotel Association-MBHA, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Social Media Marketing

The establishment of the ICT also saw the emergence of Web 2.0 technology, which has continuously changed the landscape of individual and business activities. Web 2.0 is a new edition of the internet that offers an opportunity for users to generate their own content and communicate with other users (Mohd Hisham et al., 2020). Social media is one of the initial platforms generated by Web 2.0 technology, which was formulated to limit the control of content by one party as its key features include the generation of feedback and information exchange (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Additionally, social media is an online platform focused on individual and personal social activities in facilitating content creation, sharing of content, and social networking (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Dedeoglu et al., 2020). It creates a new internet generation consisting of users from Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, Flickr, and many more. In this study, social media refers to a group of Internet-based applications that are developed based on the ideology and technology that allow users to interact, communicate, share ideas, content, experiences, perspectives and information with other Internet users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Jonscher, 2011; Dedeoglu et al., 2020). As the innovation in Web 2.0 is thriving and formulated strategically, the characteristics and interactive function in social media are not limited to only individual social purposes anymore (Dedeoglu et al., 2020).

On the contrary, most business organisations worldwide are likely to rely on social media and utilise all its functions for promotional and marketing activities in expanding their businesses (Sharma et al., 2020; Sobhanifard & Vaeyasi, 2020). Previous studies have highlighted that each social media networking offers distinctive features and individual interactive applications that enable its users to find and disseminate information through various formats, such as texts, images, videos, and audios (Gunelius, 2011; Sin et al., 2012; Dedeoglu et al., 2020; Sobhanifard & Vaeyasi, 2020). The interactive features that these social media possess have been utilised by most businesses to conduct their business transactions (Sharma et al., 2020). Users are free to create, co-create, discuss, modify, and share content with known or unknown individuals and communities without any special technical expertise (Halawani et al., 2020). From a business point of view, social media allows business activities such as information delivery, promotions, sales, and communication with users to be carried out effortlessly and expeditiously (Carter, 2020; Mohd Hisham et al., 2020).

Therefore, it is inevitable that social media has become an effective tool for budget accommodation in analysing tourists' attitudes regarding purchase, experience, and recommendation through content shared on social media (Bockermann, 2019; Carter, 2020; Dedeoglu et al., 2020). Besides, tourists' decision making is also highly influenced by information and experiences shared by previous travellers on social media (Javed et al., 2020; Matikiti-Manyever & Hattingh, 2020). As such, SMEs in the tourism industry are encouraged to actively engage in social media marketing. Apart from boosting sales and profits, it can also aid in ensuring the continuity of budget accommodation in the long run. This allows budget accommodation owners to approach tourists globally, creating a unique brand identity besides building up business' brands by enhancing website traffic and enabling better communication with the audience (Aydin, 2020; Dedeoglu et al., 2020).

b. Tourism Industry in Malaysia

The tourism industry is identified as one of the significant contributors to the nation's foreign trade income (Karim, 2020; Tourism Malaysia, 2020a). In the first half of 2019, a total of 13.35 million international tourists visited Malaysia (Tourism Malaysia, 2020b). Based on that arrival, there was a 6.8% expansion in tourist receipts, contributing to RM41.69 billion of revenue compared to RM39 billion during the first half of 2018 (Tourism Malaysia, 2020b). Nevertheless, by the end of 2019, there was a 2.4% increase, whereby a total of RM86.14 billion of tourist receipts was recorded (Tourism Malaysia, 2020c). Nevertheless, international tourist influxes have dropped 83.4% from 26,100,784 in 2019 to 4,443,722 in 2020. Due to that, Malaysia's tourist receipts in 2020 is RM12.69 billion, which declined 85.3% from RM86.14 billion in 2019. In addition, the tourists' average per capita spending also declined to 11.3% from RM3,300 in 2019 to RM2,928 in 2020. A data released by Tourism Malaysia (2021) indicated that the top 10 international tourist influxes to Malaysia in 2020 were from Vietnam (64,184), Australia (72,680), Japan (74,383), South Korea (119,750), Brunei (136,020), India (155,883), Thailand (394,413), China (405,149), Indonesia (711,723), and Singapore (1,545,255). Based on the data recorded by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and National Tourism Organisation (NTO), Malaysia is not the only country facing a reduction in the volume of international tourist influxes. Other ASEAN countries also show a significant decrease, including Indonesia (-75%), Vietnam (-78.7%), Thailand (-83.2%), and Singapore (-85.7%). Undeniably, the great plunge in international tourist influxes is associated with the shutting of Malaysian borders and travel restrictions since 18 March 2020 because of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the Movement Control Order (MCO) by the government of Malaysia. The tourism industry is among the worst industries impacted by the COVID-19, which was forced to close.

c. Budget Accommodation

Generally, budget accommodation is a small and medium-sized accommodation categorised as an SME in the tourism industry and monitored or controlled by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC, 2020). Budget accommodation is also highlighted as one of the sectors in the tourism industry that has consistently contributed to the development of the nation's economy (Rahman & Nordin, 2018; MOTAC, 2020). Despite providing low-cost accommodation to tourists, budget accommodation also impacts economic growth by raising residents' social-economy status in providing numerous job opportunities (Liu & Zhang, 2020). MOTAC (2020) stated that budget accommodation is a type of accommodation under the Orchid Rating, which is specially formulated for groups of accommodation that do not qualify for any star rating as they only provide accommodation to tourists with basic facilities. Besides, Malaysia Budget Hotel Association-MBHA (2019) has defined budget hotels as accommodations with a minimum of three-star rating or below. Prior literature adopted various definitions in explaining budget accommodation. However, two common traits recur in these definitions: low cost and basic facilities. Budget accommodation provides comfortable rooms with basic facilities at a fair price (Zhang et al., 2013; Che Musa & Mohammad, 2017). It is also identified as accommodation with limited rooms, normally fewer than 150 rooms, simple service, modest price, standardised accommodation and low cost in operation and construction (Peng et al., 2015; Liu & Zhang, 2020). Furthermore, the operation of budget accommodation is usually carried out by the owner

with the support of a few employees, where standard basic facilities are available at a low rate, such as RM50 per room or night (Sa & Chai, 2018). Some examples of budget accommodation include bed and breakfast, chalet, rest house, lodging house, backpackers' lodges, hostel, homestay, motel, guest house and inn (Abdullah et al., 2012; Liu & Zhang, 2020; MOTAC, 2020).

Budget accommodation plays a significant role in attracting frequent tourists' arrival to Malaysia (Sa & Chai, 2018; Malaysia Budget Hotel Association-MBHA, 2019; MOTAC, 2020). However, it is also predicted to face challenges because of the uncertainties of the global economy (Liu & Zhang, 2020). Therefore, it is essential for this sector to constantly upgrade and strengthen its marketing strategy to ensure the survival of these businesses. It is rendered insufficient to merely improve business service quality in strengthening business marketing strategies as this sector offers intangible products. An effective marketing strategy should support high-quality service delivery, particularly through digital and new media platforms (Aydin, 2020). Previous studies have found that budget accommodation owners face numerous challenges in employing social media as their marketing tool (Liu & Zhang, 2020). Some of the main challenges include internal, external, and technology, which is a factor in itself (El-Gohary, 2011; Jaafar et al., 2011; Dalvi-Esfahani et al., 2018; Sa & Chai, 2018; Liu & Zhang, 2020). Internal factors refer to firm size, CEO's technological knowledge, CEO's attitude, organisational resources, organisational culture, and employee's competency (El-Gohary, 2011; Dalvi-Esfahani et al., 2018; Sa & Chai, 2018). On the other hand, external factors refer to government support, competitive pressure, current trend, and cultural orientation (El-Gohary, 2011, Sa & Chai 2018, Liu & Zhang, 2020; Alrousan et al., 2021; Salah et al., 2021).

d. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed by Davis et al. (1989). This model suggests that an individual's beliefs on technology are influenced by their intention to use the technology. The intention to use the technology is influenced by an individual's perception of whether it is easy to use and its usefulness. According to this model, an individual's perspective may be derived from the external factors, which are stimulated by organisational and individual factors and the technological system. The perceived ease of use refers to the individual's belief that the technology incorporated will make their work easier. Meanwhile, perceived usefulness refers to the individual beliefs that the technology they use will increase their work performance (Davis, 1989). TAM has already been applied in investigating a broad range of studies regarding technological acceptance. These studies include social media adoption (Au, 2010; Lee, 2011; Romero et al., 2011; Dhume et al., 2012), e-marketing (El-Gohary, 2009, 2011), e-commerce (Grandon & Pearson, 2004; Ahmad et al., 2011) and online purchasing (Ahn et al., 2004; Sin et al., 2012).

e. Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT)

The Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) is one of the oldest technology theories that has been widely adopted in social science research. The IDT states that diffusion is only possible when people who adopt the idea, product, or behaviour, perceive it as something new or innovative. Rogers (1983) proposed five principles that can influence the acceptance of innovation. Firstly, relative advantage indicates that innovation is expected to be better than the previous idea.

Secondly, compatibility, where innovation is expected to be consistent with current values, prior experiences, and potential adopters' needs. Thirdly, complexity refers to the degree of difficulty understanding and using the innovation. Fourthly, the trial advantage is the innovation can be experimented with before being made available and accepted by potential adopters. Fifthly, observability can be remarked as the ability of the innovation to deliver actual results. Prior literature demonstrated that IDT is widely applicable in various fields of studies to understand the technology-adoption phenomena by individuals and organisations alike. For instance, technology adoption by SMEs in the tourism industry (El-Gohary, 2011; Nuryyev et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2020), mobile tourism shopping (Gu et al., 2019), mobile social networking usage (Kim et al., 2019), tourism sustainability (Sobhanifard & Vaeyssi, 2020), and mobile payment (Yang et al., 2020).

f. Research Model and Research Hypotheses

Figure 1 illustrates the research model that shows the influence of exogenous variables, which are internal and external factors of budget accommodation, as well as technological factors towards the endogenous variable of social media marketing acceptance. The technological factors refer to the combination of TAM's and IDT's dimensions: ease of use, compatibility, and relative advantage (Rogers, 1983; Davis et al., 1989; El-Gohary, 2009; 2011).

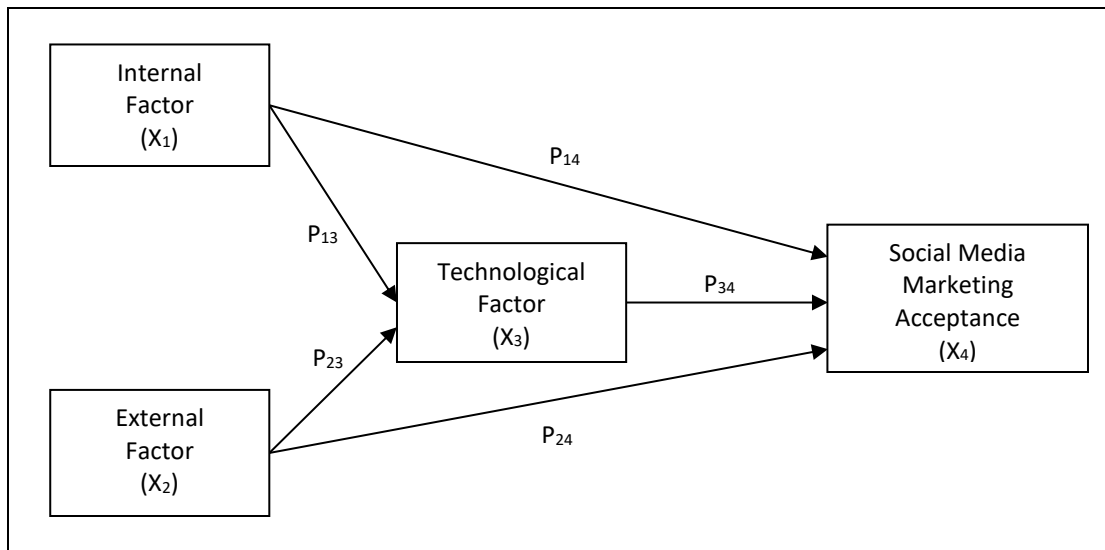


Figure 1: Research Model

By considering the previous literature, this current study hypothesised that:

- H1: Internal factors significantly influence social media marketing acceptance among budget accommodations (P_{14}).
- H2: External factors significantly influence social media marketing acceptance among budget accommodations (P_{24}).
- H3: Technological factors significantly influence social media marketing acceptance among budget accommodations (P_{34}).

- H4: Technological factors significantly mediate the relationship between internal factors of budget accommodations and social media marketing acceptance (P₁₃P₃₄).
- H5: Technological factors significantly mediate the relationship between external factors of budget accommodation and social media marketing acceptance (P₂₃P₃₄).

METHODOLOGY

a. Research Design and Sampling

The cross-sectional design was incorporated in this study to identify the respondents' perceptions of social media as a marketing medium. The research data were obtained from budget accommodations located in Selangor, specifically the Petaling district, which are considered a popular destination for tourist attractions in the central region of Malaysia. Through the convenience sampling technique, 300 questionnaires were distributed to the manager or owner of budget accommodations who made the final decisions in the business. Based on PLS-SEM statistical sampling procedures, the minimum number of respondents needed to achieve this study is 50 (10 x 5 structural paths = 50 respondents in line with the "10 times rule" procedure (Hair et al., 2014). A suggestion states that studies with a large number of respondents or an unidentified population should have an appropriate sample size of 100-200 respondents (Hair et al., 2006). Referring to these recommendations, a total of 300 participants were selected as the sample size for this study as it was considered acceptable and valid for further analysis.

b. Instrument - Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of three sections. Section A comprises respondents' demographic information, budget accommodation characteristics and causal factors for using social media. Section B contains internal and external factors, while Section C addresses technological factors and social media marketing acceptance. Items developed by previous literature were adapted and revised to fit into the research context. Apart from Section A, constructs in Section B and Section C were measured using a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). The internal factor constructs include 15 items of five dimensions: managerial skill (five items), the culture of the organisation (single item), resources of the organisation (six items), size of the organisation (single item), and costing (three items). These dimensions were adapted from Premkumar and Roberts (1999), Al-Qirim (2007), and El-Gohary (2011). The dimension of the budget accommodation size was established by taking into account the total number of staff in the company (Tan et al., 2007). On the other hand, the external factor constructs also have 15 items with five dimensions: competition (three items), government influences (three items), trend (four items), infrastructure (two items), and cultural orientation (three items). These items were based on similar items developed by Tan et al. (2007), Kurnia et al. (2009), and El-Gohary (2011). Technological factor constructs were measured based on TAM's dimension, which is perceived ease of use (five items) and IDT's dimensions: relative advantage (four items) and compatibility (four items). These items were retrieved from Davis (1989) and El-Gohary (2011). Lastly, the social media acceptance construct (four items) was measured using items developed by Ahn et al. (2004) and Lee (2011).

c. Measurement Model Assessment

Based on PLS-SEM, all constructs in the research measurement model are reflective. According to Hair et al. (2016), the reflective measurement model must meet four criteria, namely (1) internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability above 0.7), (2) indication of reliability (factor loading above 0.708), (3) convergent validity (based on the AVE value that is greater than 0.5) and (4) discriminant validity (cross-loading, Fornell-Larcker criteria ($\sqrt{AVE} > r$) and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio value greater than 0.9).

d. Structural Model Assessment

The measurement of the structural model was made by the evaluation of several values, namely, the variance inflation factor value less than 5 ($VIF < 5$), path coefficient (β) value, standard error (SE) value, t-value greater than 1.96, p-value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) and confidence interval (CI) value at 95%. The structural model was also presented as the conceptual research framework using the beta (β) and R^2 values. The structural model assessment also includes the coefficient of determination or R square (R^2). To describe whether the R^2 has a weak, moderate, or strong coefficient of determination, the value of 0.25, 0.5 and 0.7 were used as thresholds (Hair et al., 2011; Garson, 2016). Furthermore, the advanced procedure for mediation analysis in PLS-SEM was employed to assess the mediation effect, similar to Hair et al. (2016). Two steps should be carried out to evaluate the effect of mediation: (1) determining whether the indirect effects are significant; (2) clarifying if the mediation effects are full or partial. If the indirect effect is significant, the mediating effect is present - when the direct effect is not significant, but the indirect effect is significant, full mediation is said to have occurred. On the other hand, partial mediation has occurred when both direct and indirect effect is significant (Hair et al., 2014; Garson, 2016).

FINDINGS

The analysis conducted on the 300 respondents revealed that most respondents were females (51.8%) compared to only 48.2% of male respondents. The average age of respondents was 36 years old. The analysis of education level found that most respondents are bachelor's degree holders. The demographic analysis also showed that 59% of these respondents are budget accommodation owners while 41% are managers at budget accommodations. The majority of the budget accommodations are budget hotels (54.5%), micro size with one to four number of employees (63.4%) and have been operating the business for three years (26.8%). The results also indicated that most of the respondents have been using the promotional technique of WOM (86.6%) followed by banners in front of the premises (65.2%). These budget accommodations also have internet connection on their premises (97.3%) and use the social media app Facebook as their marketing medium (84.8%), followed by Instagram (50.9%) and blog (44.6%). The use of social media as a marketing medium is motivated by business opportunities (84.8%), followed by competition factors (64.3%).

a. Reflective Measurement Model Evaluation

Results exhibited in Table 1 indicated no issue regarding internal consistency, indicator reliability, and convergent validity of reflective constructs in the measurement model as each of the construct values met the criteria for reflective measurement model assessment. The analysis specifically found that the Cronbach alpha (α) values, composite reliability (CR) values, factor loading values (λ) and AVE values for all constructs were well-above the thresholds. Meanwhile, items with factor loading values under the thresholds were maintained since the construct where they belong has already achieved the CR and AVE value (Hair et al., 2014; Garson, 2016).

Table 1: Reflective Measurement Model Evaluation

Constructs	Items	λ (>0.708)	IR (>0.501)	(α) (>0.7)	CR (>0.7)	AVE (>0.5)	Discriminant Validity
Internal Factor (IF)	IF1	0.851	0.724	0.951	0.957	0.598	Yes
	IF 10	0.614	0.377				
	IF 11	0.807	0.651				
	IF 12	0.757	0.573				
	IF 13	0.820	0.672				
	IF 14	0.723	0.523				
	IF 15	0.770	0.593				
	IF 2	0.837	0.701				
	IF 3	0.715	0.511				
	IF 4	0.816	0.666				
	IF 5	0.795	0.632				
	IF 6	0.796	0.634				
	IF 7	0.809	0.654				
	IF 8	0.706	0.498				
	IF 9	0.748	0.560				
External Factor (EF)	EF1	0.733	0.537	0.947	0.954	0.581	Yes
	EF 10	0.779	0.607				
	EF 11	0.850	0.723				
	EF 12	0.815	0.664				
	EF 13	0.804	0.646				
	EF 14	0.620	0.384				
	EF 15	0.615	0.378				
	EF 2	0.576	0.332				
	EF 3	0.666	0.444				
	EF 4	0.807	0.651				
	EF 5	0.834	0.696				
	EF 6	0.795	0.632				
	EF 7	0.829	0.687				
	EF 8	0.811	0.658				
	EF 9	0.823	0.677				

Technological Factor (TF)	TECH1	0.903	0.815	0.975	0.977	0.766	Yes
	TECH 10	0.866	0.750				
	TECH 11	0.911	0.830				
	TECH 12	0.896	0.803				
	TECH 13	0.881	0.776				
	TECH 2	0.905	0.819				
	TECH 3	0.839	0.704				
	TECH 4	0.879	0.773				
	TECH 5	0.860	0.740				
	TECH 6	0.867	0.752				
	TECH 7	0.902	0.814				
	TECH 8	0.841	0.707				
	TECH 9	0.822	0.676				
Social Media Acceptance (SMA)	SM1	0.953	0.908	0.897	0.930	0.771	Yes
	SM 2	0.735	0.540				
	SM 3	0.936	0.876				
	SM 4	0.871	0.759				

The evaluation of discriminant validity based on cross-loading value proves that the discriminant validity is obtained as all indicators are loaded in their appropriate construct. Tables 2 and 3 show the discriminant validity evaluation based on Fornell-Larcker criteria and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Fornell-Larcker criteria are achieved when each construct has an AVE square root value larger than the correlation coefficient value ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}} > r$). This indicates that the construct is unique and different from the others. The HTMT criteria confirm that the construct is unique based on the correlation coefficient value between constructs of less than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2014; Garson, 2016).

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker Criteria

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Internal Factor (1)	0.77			
External Factor (2)	0.718	0.76		
Technological Factor (3)	0.670	0.739	0.88	
Social Media Acceptance (4)	0.673	0.743	0.815	0.88

Note: The values in bold are AVE square root values

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Internal Factor (1)	0.115			
External Factor (2)	0.036	0.159		
Technological Factor (3)	0.076	0.201	0.289	
Social Media Acceptance (4)	0.071	0.028	0.041	0.661

Note: HTMT.₉₀ < 0.90

b. Structural Model Evaluation

Analysis of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) found that all the predictive variables have less than 5 VIF values. The finding indicated the structural model has no collinearity issue between constructs. The bootstrapping operation's significant evaluation was based on the statistical t-value, which is more than 1.96. This is important to test the two-tailed hypothesis, which explains that the parameter is significant at 0.05 (Hair et al., 2014). The results show that two out of three direct effects predicted that the constructs positively and significantly affect the endogenous constructs.

c. Direct Effect

The research analysis found that internal factors of budget accommodation have insignificant influences on social media acceptance as a marketing medium ($\beta=0.129$, $t=1.46$, $p>0.05$, CI [-0.027,0.324]). This finding is supported by previous literature that posited internal factors such as the size of the organisation, lack of resources, lack of technology skills among managers and employers as well as employees' attitude towards social media marketing would affect SMEs of the tourism industry in adopting information communication technology (ICT) as their marketing medium (Wang & Qualls, 2007; Peltier et al., 2012; Wamba & Carter, 2012; Dalvi-Esfahani et al., 2018; Chau et al., 2020; Notta & Kitta, 2021). Since most of the sample in this study are managers and owners of budget accommodation who operate their businesses on a small scale, they tend to promote the business by using conventional marketing such as WOM, banners and digital flyers. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 (P_{14}) is rejected.

External factors of budget accommodation were found to affect social media acceptance positively and significantly as a marketing medium ($\beta=0.247$, $t=2.28$, $p<0.05$, CI [0.038,0.466]). This result is in tandem with the results of studies by Grandon and Pearson (2004), Kurnia et al. (2009), Scupola (2009), Alamro and Tarawneh (2011) as well as Alrousan et al. (2021), where they found that external factors of the organisation have positive and significant influence toward SMEs in accepting e-commerce technology in their businesses. Research by Wang and Qualls (2007), El-Gohary (2011), Ezzaouia and Bulchand-Gidumal (2020) as well as Jung et al. (2021) also found that external factors of the organisation, such as competition, governmental support, trend, supplier pressure, technology infrastructure, cultural orientation have had great influence toward ICT and e-marketing acceptance among tourism companies. Hence, Hypothesis 2 (P_{24}) is accepted.

Technology as a factor included the dimensions of perceived ease of use, relative advantage and compatibility were also discovered to have positive and significant effects on social media acceptance as a marketing medium ($\beta=0.546$, $t=5.89$, $p<0.05$, CI [0.367,0.729]).

Consistent with this result is research carried out by Al-Qirim (2007), Tan et al. (2007), El-Gohary (2011), Alrousan et al. (2021) and Salah et al. (2021). They identified that technology influences SMEs in the tourism industry to adopt technology innovation into their businesses. Thus, Hypothesis 3 (P₃₄) is accepted. Figure 2 illustrates the effect of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs. The analysis showed that the three exogenous constructs, internal, external factor and technology factor, can jointly explain the 71.6% value of the variance for the endogenous construct of social media marketing acceptance. This result also indicates that the overall R² is strong.

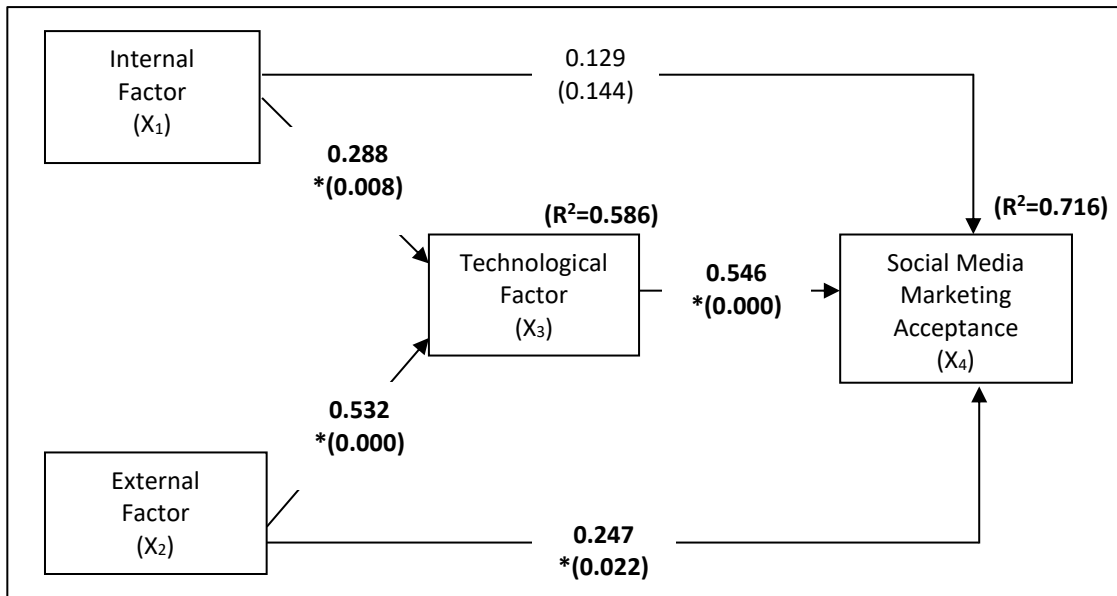


Figure 2: Structural Model

d. Mediating Effect

The technology factor was discovered to significantly mediate the relationships between internal factors and social media acceptance as a marketing medium among budget accommodations ($\beta=0.290$, $t=2.31$, $p<0.05$, CI [0.045,0.314]). Findings indicated that internal factors have a significant indirect effect and insignificant direct effect on social media acceptance among budget accommodations. Thus, this study found that the technology factor has a full mediation effect on the relationship between internal factors and social media acceptance. Hence, Hypothesis 4 (P₁₃P₃₄) is accepted. Additionally, the technology factor is also found to significantly mediate the relationship between external factors and social media acceptance as a marketing medium among budget accommodations ($\beta=0.157$, $t=3.96$, $p<0.05$, CI [0.160,0.449]). Results indicated that external factors significantly affect both direct and indirect effects on social media acceptance among budget accommodations. Hence, Hypothesis 5 (P₂₃P₃₄) is accepted. Thus, this study discovered that the technology factor partially affects external factors and social media acceptance (Hair et al., 2016).

DISCUSSIONS

Undeniably, social media has become an eminent marketing medium for SMEs in the tourism industry, including budget accommodations (El-Gohary, 2011; Dalvi-Esfahani et al., 2018; Moro & Rita, 2018; Aydin, 2020; Alroushan et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Ranatunga et al., 2021). As social media is recognised as an important tool for businesses to win competitive advantage and sustain their continuity in the long run, this study examined the organisational and technological factors that influenced budget accommodation managers and owners in accepting social media as the main marketing medium for their businesses. In view of that, the research model was developed by combining the perspectives of TAM (Davis et al., 1989) and IDT (Rodgers, 1983). Research findings indicated that internal factors of budget accommodation have less effect on the decision of managers and owners of budget accommodations in adopting social media as their platform to promote their businesses. As their target market is local tourists and the local community, the managers and owners perceived that it is unnecessary to promote their businesses widely through online platforms. This is the main reason for their reliance on conventional marketing. Several studies by Christian (2001), Aydin (2020), and Alroushan et al. (2021) found that the main reason SMEs in tourism do not involve social media in their marketing strategy is the lack of knowledge of technology.

Furthermore, Sa and Chai (2018) identified the main constraints for budget accommodations as lack of management skills, lack of experienced and competent employees and lack of financial means, which affect their marketing activities. Meanwhile, Dalvi-Esfahani et al. (2018) stated that it is essential for SMEs' managers to have a positive attitude in utilising social media as a business marketing medium to further enhance their performance. If SMEs' managers trust that social media acceptance will increase their business' capability and provide huge opportunities, they are willing to learn and improve their skills in technology. Previous literature that also supports the notion that internal factors of organisation do not affect social media acceptance is Wang and Qualls (2007), Tan et al. (2007), El-Gohary (2011), Peltier et al. (2012), Wamba and Carter (2012), Aydin (2020), and Notta and Kitta (2021).

However, this study revealed that external factors of budget accommodation that consist of competition, government influences, trends, technology infrastructure and cultural orientation do have a stronger effect on owners/managers' decision making in accepting social media as their marketing medium. This finding corroborates with the previous studies highlighting the influence of external factors of the organisation towards technology acceptance among business firms in the tourism industry (Kurnia et al., 2009; Scupola, 2009; El-Gohary, 2011; Chakraborty & Biswal, 2020; Ezzaouia & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2020; Jung et al., 2021). This result clarifies that the decision to accept social media as a business marketing medium is driven by the market's need and support from external parties. To sustain SMEs' growth, the government has urged SMEs to explore new technology and contribute to the digital economy to maintain their sustainability and increase competitive advantages in the global chain. The Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (MEDAC), SME Corporation Malaysia and other relevant agencies, such as TEKUN and Perbadanan Usahawan Nasional Berhad (PUNB), are actively aiding SMEs to accelerate their growth besides providing good training programs and financial support (Bernama, 2019).

The mediation analysis explains that the characteristics of social media in terms of perceived ease of use, relative advantage and compatibility strengthened the relationship between internal factors and social media acceptance. Based on the direct analysis, the internal factors alone are insufficient to convince the budget accommodation's owners and managers to accept social media as their marketing tool. Instead, this acceptance is supported by the characteristics of social media itself, whether it is easy to use, offers relative advantages and is compatible with businesses. Thus, the technology factor found has a full mediation effect in the relationship between internal factors and social media acceptance. However, the technology factor has a partial mediation effect in the relationship between external factors and social media acceptance. Since external factors have a positive and significant direct effect on social media acceptance, the presence of technology with the three dimensions as a mediator partially strengthened the effect.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the research findings of the current study provide numerous impacts. From a theoretical perspective, this study has extended the function of TAM and IDT. This study also expands the literature on social media acceptance and contributes to understanding social media as a SMEs' marketing medium. The authorities encourage budget accommodation to accept social media as their marketing medium by providing appropriate training. The management of budget accommodations should also provide the facilities needed and relevant courses for employees to acquire skills related to social media marketing. To ensure the survival of budget accommodation, this study suggests that the authorities have to relook their current strategies and identify areas in which support and assistance are needed. This may include financial and motivational support as well as training and infrastructure. There are some limitations recorded in this study. Firstly, this study only explored a few factors. There may be other potential organisational and technological factors that can explain social media acceptance, as suggested by previous studies (Dalvi-Esfahani et al., 2018; Aydin, 2020; Chakraborty & Biswal, 2020; Ezzaouia & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2020; Alrousan et al., 2021; Salah et al., 2021). Thus, future research can consider venturing into this possibility. Secondly, this study applied a cross-sectional design and the PLS-SEM analysis technique. Future studies can apply a longitudinal design to assess respondents in different time frames, allowing the assessment of social media acceptance in several phases. Consequently, future research can also adopt Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling (MSEM) technique analysis as it is expected to produce more robust and detailed findings. Finally, since the research data were collected from budget accommodation, mainly budget hotels, these results may not apply to other groups of SMEs. Therefore, future research can apply the same research model with different SME categories.

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