

The influence of purchase goal and personality variables, on customers' preference to online information sources / Alon Abramovitz

Abstract

The recent development of the Internet and its becoming an interactive tool enables surfers to be more active and express their views about various aspects. The various sites in the web enable whoever logs in to respond, write and be active. An example for that are the news sites, where those interested are able to express their opinions about published article as part of this revolution, it is also possible to transfer information among surfers, which was not possible at the beginning of the Internet (Web 1). Another example is transferring information among consumers via the Internet about various products and services. In the past the consumers transferred information by word of mouth, which helped in reaching a decision about purchasing some product or service. Nowadays the consumers can reach greater information with no geographical limit and even receive information from people with whom they have no connection, beside the fact that they are interested in the same product. Consumers can check information and recommendations in the Internet and then purchase the products online or in the stores. It is possible to find a lot of information in the web about various products and services, such as books, music, movies, food and restaurants, computers, medicine, hotels etc.

Research differentiates two kinds of purchases: Purchase for pleasure, i.e. enjoyment (enjoying the product and the process of purchasing), and purchase for utilitarian purpose (need for the product in order to perform a mission and the purchasing process as the mission to be performed). There are products with a more hedonistic value, such as purchasing movies and some more utilitarian, like purchasing food. One product can contain both possibilities, utilitarian and hedonistic. A book, for example, can be with a utilitarian purpose, such as various manuals, and can be for hedonistic purpose, such as stories.

This paper is composed of a quantitative and qualitative research and examines consumers' behavior and their relying on information about tourism. The level of relying on Internet information before purchasing some product or service may differ from one person to another and per the type of product or service. The quantitative research in this paper examines the level of hedonism and decision making process of

information seekers. The type of information was also examined, information given by experts in the field (positive and negative) as compared to information given by surfers (positive and negative) about the product and presented as having an hedonistic purpose as compared to a product with a utilitarian purpose.

The qualitative research is used as a tool for deeper understanding of the quantitative research. This part of the paper examines why consumers do what they are doing. That is, why do they choose to use certain information and what is their need to determine the validity of information they receive. In addition, there is an attempt to understand the importance of the goal of purchase and the decision-making process before purchase.

The quantitative research assumption is that there is a connection between the consumer's hedonistic level and decision-making process and the information he will rely on when deciding to make a purchase. There will also be a difference between the decision-making process when the purpose is utilitarian and when it is hedonistic.

The qualitative research assumption was that the consumers will choose to rely on a certain source of information according to its reliability and previous acquaintance with the source of information.

As part of the quantitative research, four websites were formed. Each site contained questionnaires examining the subjects' hedonistic level and his decision-making process.

They also supplied the possibility to purchase hotel services. Each of the four websites included a hotel, when the purpose of purchasing was different from one site to another. Two sites were with utilitarian goal and the difference was the order of responses. In the first questionnaire, the surfers' responses were positive and in the second questionnaire the tourism critics' responses were positive. In the two other sites the purpose was hedonistic and the difference also was in the order of responses. The subjects answered the questionnaires and decided if to purchase service from the hotel based on the information presented (positive and negative information by experts, tourism critics as opposed to surfers' positive and negative information).

Links to sites were divided between 260 subjects, adult women and males over the age of 21. Link to the sites was distributed in forums dealing with tourism, Facebook tourism groups and students.

