A Review of Literature on Online Consumer's Confusion in Travel Industry

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Abstract: *Today, people use online resources to conduct a lot of research to find out information, rather than face-to-face resources. Consumers use the internet to access and process travel-related information, buy a variety of tourism products and services, and express their ideas and preferences in online product and service development projects. Some people may become confused as a result of information overload as the use of information search increases, a problem that is more likely to occur in the context of online information search. g. As a result, since the amount of information on a topic can be enormous while the user's capacity to process it is limited, the risk of online information confusion is extremely high. The aim of this study is to develop a conceptual model that demonstrates the causes and implications of consumers' confusion about online tourism. The model proposes that too many, too similar, and too ambiguous tourism details are three major causes of online consumer confusion, based on a combination of information provider and receiver perspectives.*

Key Words: *Consumer Confusion, Online Travel Industry, Information Overload*

INTRODUCTION:

There are more goods and services available in the B2C industry, and this number is growing at an exponential rate. As a result, when customers are exposed to a vast amount of knowledge on goods and services that are identical and marketed across different outlets, they are more likely to become confused. A major issue of confusion has been documented and is gaining prominence in items such as telecommunications, washing powder, veal products, apparel, and watches. Confusion among consumers is also evident in the tourism industry. Nowadays, online information search is becoming a more and more prevalent mode of information search. Consumers use the internet to access and process travel-related information, to purchase various tourism products and services, and to express their ideas and preferences in online product and service creation projects. In addition to a wealth of tourism information available from online reservation systems and online travel agencies, most travel destinations and local businesses have created their own official websites. Because of rapid technological advancement, the online tourism domain has become more information-intensive and competitive. Although consumers may benefit from gathering vast amounts of information from various online sources such as industry suppliers (e.g., hotels, airlines, restaurants), intermediaries (e.g., travel agents), controllers (e.g., governments and administrative sectors), online social networks, and several non-profit organisations (e.g., destination marketing organisations) (Xiang & Gretzel, 2001).

Tourism services' distinguishing characteristics from manufactured goods and non-tourism services compel customers to gather more information before making purchasing decisions. Consumers, for example, typically use a tourism service in a location other than where they live (Sirakaya, McLellan, & Uysal, 1996). Consumption of a tourism service (for example, a trip to another state or country) typically takes longer and costs more than consumption of

many other types of services. It is also difficult to standardise tourism items due to their special characteristics (i.e., intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity). Because of these distinguishing characteristics, customers appear to associate higher financial and emotional risks with many tourism service decisions (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). As a result, customers typically need to perform more knowledge searches in order to reduce the perceived risk associated with tourism purchasing decisions (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). However, as the use of information search grows, some people may become confused as a result of information overload, a problem that is more likely to occur in the context of online information search. A number of studies (Ahuja & Webster, 2001; Eveland & Dunwoody, 2001; Tremayne & Dunwoody, 2001) have shown that the Internet can trigger information overload and disorientation among its users, especially those who are unfamiliar with the medium. The significant amount of knowledge available on the Internet is one important explanation for such information overload (Chen, 1999; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006). The low cost of online search often encourages people to seek knowledge to a greater extent than conventional media (Biswas, 2004). According to studies in psychology (e.g., Miller, 1956) and marketing (e.g., Jacoby, Speller, & Kohn, 1974), humans have a limited capacity to interpret information, so an abundance of information will adversely affect decision-making. As a result, given that the amount of information on a subject can be very large while the user's ability to process that information is restricted (Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Owen, 1992), the possibility of online information misunderstanding is very strong.

The preceding discussion specifically implies that online uncertainty is primarily caused by either the stimulation provided by message senders or the inability of information recipients to process incoming messages. Significant research attention has been paid to the online information provider perspective in marketing and advertising literature (Abernethy & Franke, 1996), as various factors such as information quality, quantity, structure, content, and presentation approach, among others, are critically correlated with how information could be perceived and comprehended by information receivers. There is also a body of research focusing on the perspective of online information receivers, as individual variations such as demographic factors, personality characteristics, learning styles, motivations, and so on have been investigated as significant determinants of one's information search and processing approaches (Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Roedder, 1981). However, there has been a small number of studies that seek to explore the misunderstanding problem through the combination of the two separate perspectives mentioned above. In particular, research on the topic of customer information uncertainty is severely lacking in the tourism literature. Given that confusion has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes, including negative word-of-mouth (Turnbull et al., 2000), dissatisfaction (Foxman, Muehling, & Berger, 1990; Zaichkowsky, 1995), cognitive dissonance (Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1999), decision postponement (e.g. Huffman & Kahn, 1998; Jacoby & Morrin, 1998), shopping exhaustion (Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1997), reactance (Settle & Alreck, 1988), reduced loyalty, confidence, and confusion of many other consumers (Foxman, Berger, & Cote, 1992; Foxman et al., 1990), there is a specific need for tourism businesses to understand how consumers' online confusion may occur and also what actions consumers will undertake to deal with this problem.

To that end, the aim of this research is to create a conceptual model that demonstrates the causes and consequences of consumers' online tourism knowledge uncertainty. The model proposes, based on the combination of information provider and receiver perspectives, that too many, too similar, and too vague tourism information are three major causes of online customer uncertainty. Five individual difference variables are suggested as essential traits that could predispose consumers to confusion: Internet experience, learning orientation, tolerance to uncertainty, price consciousness, and the need for cognition. Individuals' inclination to interpret ambiguous situations as attractive is referred to as uncertainty tolerance (Conchar, Zinkhan, Peters, & Olavarrieta, 2004), whereas learning orientation reflects people's desire to develop their abilities and master the tasks they perform (Magnini & Honeycutt, 2003). Though price consciousness is solely concerned with consumers' desire to pay the lowest possible price (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993), need for cognition refers to the proclivity to participate in and enjoy thought (Cacioppo and Petty ,1982). Internet experience is described as a person's length and frequency of Internet use (Fras, Rodrguez, & Castaeda, 2008). The underlying mechanisms by which these variables may lead to consumers' uncertainty about online tourism information are elaborated on in the following discussion.

This report, which is based on a review of published studies on confusion issues, also suggests five confusion mitigation techniques that users often use as essential outcomes of consumers' online confusion. What are the five strategies: clarify the purchase objective, and share/delegate the purchase, abandon the purchase, pursue additional information, and depend on trusted sources of information The proposed model is made up of 13 propositions in total.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Consumer confusion

Confusion was described by Turnbull et al. (2000, p.144) as "consumer failure to establish a correct understanding of various aspects of a product/service during the information processing procedure." Mitchell and Papavassiliou (1999) define uncertainty as an unpleasant state of mind that occurs mainly during the pre-purchase period and has a negative impact on consumers' information processing and decision-making abilities, as well as causing them to make less-than-ideal decisions. They also showed that customer uncertainty can lead to a variety of negative outcomes. To begin with, when confronted with numerous options, a potential customer could find it extremely difficult to make a final decision. Second, consumers will make suboptimal decisions as a result of their uncertainty, meaning that they are more likely to make a decision that does not meet their particular needs. Third, a perplexed customer is more likely to pass on inaccurate or unclear information to others. Confusion is clearly detrimental not only to customers, but also to product and service providers. According to the literature, there are three types of market confusion: similarity confusion, overload confusion, and vague confusion (Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1999; Walsh & Hennig-Thurau, 2002).

"A lack of comprehension and possible modification of a consumer's preference or an inaccurate brand assessment induced by the perceived physical resemblance of goods or services," according to the definition of similarity confusion (Mitchell, Walsh, & Yamin, 2004, p. 4). When competitors mimic the brand or when the quality or product attributes of different alternatives are quite similar, similarity confusion may occur (Walsh & Hennig-Thurau, 2002). Furthermore, since separate ads and commercials contain similar details and messages, similarity misunderstanding is likely to occur (Kent & Allen, 1994; Poiesz & Verhallen, 1989). The fact that customers are confronted with an overabundance of details leads to overload uncertainty. Consumers' ability to interpret information correctly may be harmed as a result of this information overload, and they may be less secure in their buying decision (Mitchell et al., 2004). The proliferation of alternatives, as well as the proliferation of decision-relevant information about these alternatives, leads to information overload.

When consumers are "forced to re-evaluate and update existing views or expectations about the product or buying environment," ambiguity uncertainty occurs (Mitchell et al., 2004, p. 8). When consumers review fresh, true, or false information that is inconsistent or does not coincide with established knowledge, ambiguity uncertainty arises. This implies that the quality of knowledge, rather than the quantity, is what causes customers to be perplexed (Wiedmann, Walsh, & Klee, 2001). Typically, ambiguity confusion is the result of unclear and contradictory information about the products (Mitchell et al., 2004; Turnbull et al., 2000) or too many complex functions and attributes of the products (Mitchell et al., 2004; Turnbull et al., 2000). (M. Cohen, 1999). In the online tourism domain, there is much too much similar and ambiguous material. Market uncertainty is a phenomenon that is particularly applicable in industries that are characterised by rapid technological change and evolving competition. (Turnbull et al, 2000). As a result, it's reasonable to conclude that this phenomenon is also significant in the tourism industry, which is becoming a more dynamic foreign industry as a result of rapid technological advancements (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Although customers can be confused about goods, services, their features, costs, and advertising in offline markets (Turnbull et al., 2000), too much information and too many hits while searching on the internet may also cause confusion (Walsh, Mitchell, & Frenze, 2004).

Consumers can now easily access travel-related information from a variety of sources, including reservation systems and online travel agencies (e.g., Expedia), search engines and meta-search engines (e.g., Google and Kayak), destination management systems (e.g., visitbritain.com), social networks and web 2.0 portals (e.g., wayn and tripadvise), and social networks and web 2.0 portals (e.g., wayn and tripadvise) (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The information exchange between online consumers and the "online tourism domain," which can be described as all information entities related to travel (Zheng Xiang, Wöber, & Fesenmaier, 2008), has been facilitated by this convenience. There's no denying that online information search has empowered potential customers by allowing them to use a variety of online tools to gather necessary tourism information for planning their trips. However, such convenience has the unintended consequence of requiring consumers to spend more time and effort searching and comparing various websites for alternative products and services in order to save money and improve the quality of their trips. Internet users are more likely to become confused about details during the online search process in this situation.

Walsh et al., (2004) coined the word "e-confusion on the internet," proposing that, like the three conventional confusion dimensions, e-confusion on the internet can be divided into three categories: similarity e-confusion, clarity e-confusion, and overload e-confusion. According to them, similarity e-confusion can occur as a result of visiting too

many similar websites. Uncertainty e-confusion on the internet can occur when customers are unsure of the legitimacy of a particular online company. Another source of e-confusion is flash technology, which causes texts and images to move and disappear rapidly, making consumers doubt the quality and reliability of the information. Since the absence or inclusion of tax can be ambiguous, price can also be a source of this form of ambiguity. "An unprecedented growth in blogs, unsolicited mail, the vast arrays of e-retailers, and disproportionate online advertising are all contributing to e-confusion overload" (Walsh et al., 2004). The design of websites, according to Walsh, Mitchell, and Frenze (2004), may also be a source of overload confusion: "Some websites intentionally place too much information into limited space to confuse surfers" (Walsh et al., 2004, p. 18).

The three forms of e-confusion described above also refer to online tourism websites. Expedia, Orbitz, Travelocity, Priceline, CheapTickets, and other popular online travel agencies, for example, present nearly identical information about flights, hotels, cars, activities, cruises, and a variety of package tours with minor price differences. Except for the names of these travel websites, the architecture, style, and layout of these websites are all quite similar. When consumers look at too many of them, they can experience similarity e-confusion, and overload e-confusion may occur when consumers are overwhelmed by too much information and advertising from these websites. Furthermore, the frequently updated information of numerous websites can cause e-confusion among consumers, as consumers are unable to keep up with the frequently changing prices as well as the rapidly shifting and disappearing available itineraries from these various websites. Consumers who have a low level of trust in some of these websites may experience e-confusion. Overall, no matter which particular factors account for consumers' online tourism information uncertainty, all of these causes can be categorised into three broad categories from the perspective of information providers: too much, too similar, or too ambiguous online information. These three main dimensions can thus be thought of as the major causes of market overload, similarity, and vague uncertainty, respectively. As a result, the three propositions that follow have been developed.

P1: As more online tourism information becomes available, consumers' confusion is likely to grow.

P2: As online tourism knowledge becomes more similar, consumers' similarity confusion is likely to grow.

P3: As more unclear online tourism information becomes available, consumers' confusion is likely to grow.

The preceding discussion has largely focused on the negative impact of online tourism marketers producing too much, similar, or ambiguous details. Regardless of the stimuli's characteristics, different individual characteristics may increase or decrease the likelihood of experiencing information confusion from the perspective of the information receiver (Foxman et al., 1992). The level of information search and processing carried out by different consumers can differ significantly (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). In general, the more effort and time a person devotes to gathering and analysing information, the less likely he or she will be perplexed by it. As a result, identifying individual characteristics that may influence one's motivation and effort to participate in information processing can assist online tourism marketers in better understanding the root causes of consumers' online information uncertainty.

Information processing theory:

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Petty and Cacioppo (1986) is a useful conceptual framework for this study because it shows how various individual-based variables can be important antecedents of consumers' three online uncertainty dimensions. Elaboration refers to how deeply an individual considers issue-relevant points in a letter, and it is affected by two factors: motivation and capacity. The probability of elaboration is high when people's interest and willingness to participate in issue-related thought are also high. This means that people are more likely to recall specific memories, images, and experiences; carefully analyse and expand on external information in light of the associations available from memory; and, as a result, shape an overall assessment of, or attitude toward, the external information. This method of information processing follows the so-called "central path," in which a person's follow-up attitude toward a product, brand, or service is the outcome of a careful review of the information he or she has gathered. The attitude formed along the central route will be more long-lasting and predictive of future action. If people have low motivation and skill, on the other hand, information processing may take the "peripheral path," in which the follow-up attitude is focused on basic prompts or intuitive inferences. The attitude formed along the periphery becomes less durable and less predictive of future action (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In conclusion, the ELM model indicates that a person's motivation and abilities are important factors in determining whether or not they are processing external knowledge thoroughly and methodically (i.e., central route). This reasoning has a significant impact on the study's key concern, since information uncertainty typically occurs when information recipients are reluctant or unable to process the incoming messages.

Individual personality traits that can affect a person's motivation and ability to process online data include:

Researchers can now investigate the ways in which information is processed and the discrepancies between processing information from online outlets and conventional media thanks to the Internet (Fras, Rodriguez, & Castaeda, 2008). To date, studies have come up with conflicting results. For example, several studies (e.g., Cho, 1999; Cho & Leckenby, 1999; Dijkstra & Van Raaij, 2001) show that information control, which is common on the Internet, causes people to do more intense and elaborate processing, while Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci (1998) argue that information control is more of an impediment to information processing. Yu and Roh (2002), on the other hand, say that the Internet needs more computational energy than print media. The majority of research emphasis was based on information suppliers and did not take information receivers into account, which may explain the inconsistencies in the findings and claims. Individual variations in gender, attitude, motivation, and success (Humphreys & Revelle, 1984; Sanjay Putrevu, 2001) have been shown to contribute to people performing different levels of information processing. Individuals with high motivation and ability may be less likely to be confused than those with low motivation and ability if they perform different levels of online information processing. That is, the more effort and time a person devotes to online information processing, the less likely he or she will be perplexed. As a result, the present analysis proposes five distinct characteristic variables: Internet knowledge, learning orientation, uncertainty tolerance, price sensitivity, and the need for cognition all have a significant impact on a person's effort to process online information, and thus could be considered important antecedents of consumers' online tourism information confusion.

Internet experience:

Individuals' familiarity and awareness of the internet may have a major impact on recipients' use and processing of online tourism information, as the current study addresses consumers' uncertainty in the context of online tourism. According to several reports, consumers with ample Internet experience should feel more at ease using the online channel, while others might be hesitant to use the online channel due to perceived danger and uncertainty (Montoya-Weiss, Voss, & Grewal, 2003; Murray & Schlacter, 1990). Internet experience, according to researchers (Fras et al., 2008), can be viewed as a variable representing a person's ability to process online information. As a result, Internet familiarity is a key factor in deciding whether a potential customer is comfortable using the Internet to perform information searches and whether he or she has basic or adequate web experience or expertise to process online tourism information.

Individuals with a high degree of internet experience (i.e., ability) are more likely to process online information via a "core path," in which incoming messages may undergo an explicit and thorough review, according to ELM theory. Those with little to no Internet knowledge, on the other hand, are less likely to perform rigorous and scrutinised information processing due to their limited capacity to conduct web searches, and may instead rely on basic cues or personal inferences to process incoming messages (i.e., peripheral route). According to this logic, customers with more Internet experience should be less likely to be confused during the online knowledge search process than those with less Internet experience. As a result, the following proposition emerges.

P4: The higher a consumer's Internet experience, the less likely they are to be confused by online (a) similarity, (b) uncertainty, and (c) overload.

Learning orientation:

Individuals with a high learning orientation aspire to learn new things and develop their abilities in a particular task (DeShon & Gillespie, 2005). When confronted with difficult circumstances, people with a strong learning orientation will respond with adaptive and mastery-oriented behaviours that encourage perseverance in the face of challenges, encourage the quest for new strategies, and lead to sustained or improved success (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). Furthermore, when confronted with difficult circumstances, people with a high learning orientation will see mistakes as valuable input and opportunities to learn, and will therefore put in more effort to acquire new skills and information (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). People with a poor learning orientation, on the other hand, often exhibit maladaptive patterns of behaviour in order to preserve their self-image. This type of person is prone to being overwhelmed by various obstacles, deteriorating results, and avoiding new challenges at work (Magnini & Honeycutt, 2003). Furthermore, individuals with a poor learning orientation are more likely to withdraw mentally from circumstances that are too difficult (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

Learning orientation is an internal mind-set that motivates people to actively develop themselves in order to achieve mastery, as seen in the preceding discussion (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). This personality trait can be linked to a person's motivation to process and comprehend the knowledge they are given. When confronted with a problem, high learning orientated people are more likely to put in more effort and time than low learning orientated people to seek

more knowledge and process information with greater effort. People with a high learning orientation should prefer "central route" information processing, according to the ELM model's logic, since they prefer to perform a scrutinised and structured information search and processing to prevent and solve any potential uncertainty and difficulties. As a result, in the online tourism domain, consumers with a strong learning orientation are more likely to spend more time and effort gathering, processing, and comprehending all available knowledge, potentially reducing the risk of being confused. As a result of the preceding debate, the following proposition is made:

P5: The higher a consumer's learning orientation, the lower the likelihood of (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty misunderstanding during online tourism.

Tolerance of Ambiguity:

When faced with a plethora of new, nuanced, or incongruent cues, an individual's (or a group's) tolerance for ambiguity refers to how they interpret and process knowledge about ambiguous circumstances (Furnham, 1994). Completely new situations, complex situations with a large number of cues, and inconsistent situations are examples of ambiguous situations (Gurel, Altinay, & Daniele, 2010). According to the literature, if consumers try to explain the option environment and make a more considered purchase (Walsh & Yamin, 2005), they will experience ambiguity; this situation is very likely to occur in the context of consumers' online knowledge quest. People who are less tolerant of uncertainty are more likely to gather more information during risk processing, perceive uncertain circumstances as more dangerous, and be less willing to take risks, according to researchers (e.g., Money & Crotts, 2003; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010). In any case, this type of individual is more likely to be motivated to look for and process information, as well as to be able to improve their ability to process information in order to minimise or eliminate uncertain feelings. Tolerance to uncertainty can thus be a key personality trait linked to online knowledge confusion among consumers. People with a low tolerance for uncertainty should prefer "central route" information processing, according to the ELM model's logic, since they require scrutinised and structured information processing to avoid unclear and ambiguous circumstances. As a result, in the online tourism domain, consumers with low ambiguity tolerance are more likely to spend more time and effort gathering, processing, and comprehending all available information in order to reduce the risk of being confused, as opposed to those with high ambiguity tolerance. As a result of the preceding debate, the following proposition is made:

P6: The lower a consumer's tolerance for uncertainty, the lower the likelihood of (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) ambiguity misunderstanding during online tourism.

Price Consciousness:

Higher prices have a negative effect on purchasing probability because price reflects the amount of money that must be sacrificed in order to participate in a given purchase transaction (Lichtenstein et al., 1993; Raab, Mayer, Kim, & Shoemaker, 2009). Price consciousness, according to Lichtenstein et al. (1993), is "the degree to which the customer is solely concerned with paying a low price" (p. 235). Price consciousness, according to most research (e.g., Heo & Lee, 2011), is an attitude-like persistent predisposition (a cross-situational, evaluative tendency) that differs in severity across individuals. Individuals may differ in their attitude toward saving money due to differences in their upbringing and socialisation, resulting in differences in the value put on thriftiness and the presence/absence of related cognitive beliefs about the value of saving money (Inglehart, 1989). Price-value conscious consumers, according to Jin, He, and Song (2012), strive to get the best value for their money, so they appear to have simple buying criteria and a systematic, comprehensive, and productive shopping approach.

The price of a particular tourism product or service may differ dramatically from one website to the next in the online tourism domain. Individuals who want to pay a low price for tourism goods and services should be more motivated to gather and process all available online information, as well as make numerous comparisons on that information from various sources. Consumers who are price-conscious should be more likely to do so, because seeking the best deal or making the best buying decision for a tourism product normally necessitates multiple comparisons and thorough review of all available data. As a result, according to ELM theory, price-value aware consumers should choose to process information through the "central path," through which incoming data is scrutinised for comparison and analysis. In this context, people who are price aware are less likely to get confused when searching for information online. As a result, the following proposition is formulated:

P7: The higher a consumer's price awareness, the lower the likelihood of (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty misunderstanding during online tourism.

Need for cognition:

Cohen, Stotland, and Wolfe (1955) coined the phrase "a need to organise relevant circumstances in meaningful, integrated ways" to describe the need for cognition. It is essential to comprehend and rationalise the experiential world" (p. 291). They claim that the frustration of this need causes "tension and deprivation," which leads to "active attempts to organise the situation and improve understanding" (Cohen et al., 1955, p. 291).

Need for cognition, on the other hand, is described by Cacioppo and Petty (1982) as people's intrinsic motivation and enjoyment to engage in effortful information processing. There's a lot of evidence that NFC variations lead to behavioural differences in how people approach cognitive tasks. Individuals with a higher NFC, for example, are better at recalling previously presented knowledge and are more likely to engage in issue-relevant reasoning than those with a lower NFC (Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983). (Axsom, Yates, & Chaiken, 1987). High NFC people often enjoy challenging tasks more than low NFC people, have a stronger proclivity to seek out new information (Cacioppo et al., 1996), and process information more intensively and reliably before making decisions (Putrevu, Tan, & Lord, 2004). Furthermore, empirical studies revealed that people's need for cognition is positively linked to their propensity to devote all of their attention to a continuous cognitively demanding task (Lord & Putrevu, 2006) and negatively related to their tendency to disregard, avoid, or misinterpret new knowledge (Lord & Putrevu, 2006). (Venkatraman, Marlino, Kardes, & Sklar, 1990). In general, previous research has shown that people with high NFC enjoy effortful thought and reasoning, while people with low NFC are less likely to put forth much effort in processing information. According to ELM theory, high NFC individuals enjoy information processing through the "core path," as they are highly motivated to think and reason in a systematic and comprehensive manner. When searching for tourism information online, people with high NFC should be less confused than those with low NFC.

As a result, the current research hypothesises that NFC is a vital characteristic that is negatively correlated with consumers' proclivity for online perplexity. As a result, the following proposition emerges:

P8: The lower the likelihood of consumers' online tourism (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty misunderstanding, the higher their need for cognition.

Consumers' confusion reduction tactics as a result of online tourism confusion:

Customers can use a variety of techniques to reduce uncertainty, whether it is intentional or unconscious (Matzler, Waiguny, & Fuller, 2007). Understanding how to reduce uncertainty is the first step in bettering the marketing efforts (Drummond & Rule, 2005). Several generic uncertainty mitigation techniques have been suggested in previous research, including (1) do nothing and ignore confusion; (2) delay the purchase; (3) abandon the purchase; (4) share/ assign the purchase decision; (5) explain the purchasing goals; (6) obtain additional information; and (7) narrow down the collection of alternatives (Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1997). "Do nothing and ignore uncertainty" is not one of these techniques that can be called a reduction strategy because a person will do nothing only when the degree of confusion becomes intolerable (Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1997). Furthermore, customers do little and dismiss uncertainty because it is an unplanned reaction (Drummond, 2004), which has no sense for online tourism marketers in terms of developing suitable solutions. As a result, this technique is not included in the current study as a proper strategy that online users can use to resolve uncertainty.

The term "postpone" refers to a pause in order to better cope with the purchase's misunderstanding circumstances, and it normally contributes to the deployment and execution of the other five confusion-reduction techniques. Consumers may compare more options, seek more needed details, involve more people in the purchasing decision, explain the purchase goals again, or simply abandon the purchase altogether with such deliberate pause. Since the abandonment of one purchase may be due to the consumer's realisation or reevaluation of their actual needs, the abandonment of another purchase may lead to another purchase.

Share/delegate the purchase means that perplexed customers enlist the help of others (spouses, colleagues, and family members) in making a purchase decision, or even fully delegate the decision to them. When certain shopping partners have issue-related knowledge or skills, they can offer helpful advice or make accurate buying decisions for the buyer, this approach can greatly assist a confused buyer. Shared or delegated decisions, on the other hand, do not always guarantee the elimination of uncertainty, as interested parties may often confuse the buyer and stymie the decision-making process by offering opposing viewpoints or conveying misleading or vague details about the transaction.

As a result, for those perplexed customers who wish to implement this approach, having the appropriate people in the decision-making process is critical. Clarifying the purchasing target is simply a subjective calculation of whether the purchase can meet the needs, and it is normally done in conjunction with gathering further details. For example, an online shopper could look for more details and compare more tourism websites to determine which vacation destination is the best.

One of the most common techniques for reducing uncertainty is to seek additional information (Drummond, 2004). However, the content of the information collected has a significant impact on the reduction of uncertainty. When newly acquired information is contradictory and ambiguous, it can backfire, leaving customers even more perplexed. This has a significant implication for online tourism marketers and advertisers in that providing high-quality information not only helps to minimise the likelihood of tourists being confused in the first place, but also plays a critical role in allowing those already confused tourists who seek additional information to explain their uncertainty. The most common method for reducing information overload is to narrow down the option collection (Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1999). By defining a qualifying criterion and discarding options that do not meet the criteria, this approach simplifies the decision-making process. Experienced consumers are better at shaping option sets, according to research (Jacoby, 1977), and their knowledge aids in providing more selective perspectives (Neisser, 1976). The preceding tactics are also likely to be used by customers who are confused during the online search process in the online tourism domain. The current study suggests that these confusion-reduction strategies are important outcomes of three types of e-confusion, and that any of these strategies may result from each of the three types of e-confusion. The term "narrowing down the option range" is used in the literature to describe how consumers depend on well-known brands (Rudolph & Schweizer, 2003). Consumers' dependence on familiar websites and sources for purchasing decisions can be interpreted as this technique in the context of online tourism knowledge hunting. As a result, to better suit the context of this research, this study revises the reduction strategy to "rely on common online knowledge sources." As a result, the following five propositions are formed.

P9: As the (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty confusion associated with online tourism develop, consumers are more likely to explain their purchasing objectives.

P10: As the (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty misunderstanding of online tourism increases, customers are more likely to share/delegate the purchase.

P11: As the (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty misunderstanding of online tourism increases, customers are more likely to abandon the purchase.

P12: As the (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty misunderstanding of online tourism increases, consumers are more likely to seek additional details.

P13: As the (a) similarity, (b) overload, and (c) uncertainty misunderstanding of online tourism increases, consumers are more likely to rely on trusted online information sources.

Overall 13 propositions were formulated and used to create a comprehensive model of antecedents and outcomes of consumers' online tourism knowledge uncertainty based on the literature review. The model divides the antecedents of online tourism information confusion into two broad categories, with the information provider's perspective containing too many, similar, and ambiguous online tourism information and the information recipient's perspective containing five individual difference variables: internet experience, learning orientation, tolerance of ambiguity, and price congruence. Furthermore, the model groups the results of online tourism information uncertainty into five categories: clarifying purchasing targets, sharing/delegating the purchase, abandoning the purchase, seeking additional information, and relying on well-known online information sources. Each of these constructs allows online tourism marketers to gain a deeper understanding of the causes of online tourism knowledge uncertainty, as well as how consumers react to such issues.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

A better understanding of online knowledge confusion would aid in the clarification of its relationship to similar constructs, potentially increasing synergy among the various research streams investigating information processing approaches. The model proposed in this study is likely to aid tourism marketers, administrators, and researchers in identifying a range of factors that may contribute to consumers' online tourism search uncertainty, as well as potential solutions. This will give tourism marketers a greater understanding of how to handle the quality and quantity of online tourism information for various market segments, as well as create more efficient online target-marketing communications.

The proposed model combines two viewpoints of the customer misunderstanding literature: knowledge provider and receiver perspectives, which is one of the study's main theoretical contributions. From a more holistic perspective, this allows researchers to recognise the main factors that contribute to more or less online uncertainty. The model also allows tourism researchers to empirically investigate the degree to which each of the three confusion dimensions can

contribute to which of the consumers' confusion-reduction strategies.

The model has many managerial consequences for online tourism marketers who want to fix customer uncertainty. First and foremost, the value of the quantity of online information should be noted. Information overload is caused by a rise in the amount of decision-relevant information on a given tourist commodity, not just by the proliferation of websites. Consumers' bounded-rationality (Decrop & Snelders, 2005) in relation to the volume and diversity of information provided by a large number of tourism websites should be taken into account by online tourism marketers. Although the low cost of online marketing and increasing competition among tourism businesses can make an exponential increase in tourism websites inevitable, online marketers should be more careful about managing and designing their own websites to monitor and allocate the amount of information contained in limited web space. This would not only help to minimise the likelihood of visitors being confused by their websites, but it would also help to distinguish their succinct websites from other information-heavy ones.

However, the above information quantity control should be carried out in tandem with information quality management, since a lack of straightforward, understandable online information is also likely to lead to another type of online confusion: ambiguous confusion. Consumers who are perplexed by vague stimuli or suffer from partial misinterpretation are more likely to seek information elsewhere (i.e., visit other tourism websites) to help them better understand their preferred setting. As a result, online tourism marketers and advertisers should avoid using any deceptive or vague phrases, expressions, sentences, or explanations in their material, while also providing valuable links that can easily guide customers to additional details they need to make purchasing decisions. It's also important for online tourism marketers to keep their websites up to date. It should be noted, however, that either a too fast or too slow information update might easily cause customers to doubt the website's accuracy and reliability. In order to improve the website's creditability and reduce the ambiguity, the price and any clauses relating to a product or service should be clearly defined. Overall, an online tourism website should have high-quality content that is appropriate, precise, timely, and up-to-date, as well as search engines that are both effective and accessible. However, as previously said, pursuing good information quality is pointless if the amount of information available exceeds a person's ability to ingest it. As a result, tourism website managers and advertisers should aspire to strike a balance between quantity and consistency in their online postings in all situations. It should also be noted that a lack of distinct placement of one tourism website from others can lead to identical perceptions and consumers believing those websites are unremarkable. There is already evidence that consumers are unable to narrow down the number of products to choose from due to the high similarity of content, resulting in an option overload (Jacoby et al., 1974; Leek & Kun, 2006). As a result, it will be critical for online tourism marketers and website designers to create websites that stand out from those that provide similar products and services.

A number of human traits, according to the model, are essential antecedents of online uncertainty, as they may have a significant impact on one's motivation to rationalise and process stimuli. On the basis of those established propositions, online tourism marketers and advertisers should suggest tailoring their communication strategies to different segments. Since online users with low learning orientation, price consciousness, cognition need, and Internet experience but high ambiguity tolerance are more likely to be confused due to their lower motivation/ability to process external stimuli, they may need a different communication strategy than their peers. If online tourism marketers provide quick, easy-to-understand information with affective cues, online communication strategies designed for these types of consumers may be more successful. People who are either unmotivated or unable to process issue-relevant information are more likely to rely on basic cues or personal inferences derived from the post, according to ELM theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). As a result, online communication materials aimed at this demographic may need to provide one or more peripheral clues to help draw their attention and pique their interest. Furthermore, information content should be conveyed and illustrated in a more clear, detailed, and understandable context for individuals with low motivation and/or ability to process information, while communication materials developed for individuals with high motivation and/or ability to process information.

To summarise, if online tourism marketers want to achieve a competitive advantage by addressing online users' uncertainty, they must first recognise the causes of confusion. According to this report, online tourism marketers should review their online presence and messages in relation to the elements that can cause confusion, such as too much, too similar, and too ambiguous details. Furthermore, the individual characteristics addressed in this study that may cause consumers to become confused can be used by online tourism marketers to create more personalised communication strategies for those different segments. The current analysis, like all other studies, has its limitations. One of the study's shortcomings is that it introduced a theoretical model based on prior literature and hypotheses but did not test it. The current research cannot affirm or disprove the validity of those propositions without an empirical test on the model. This proposed model only serves as a starting point for further study. To confirm the empirical

value of this proposed model, further research is needed. Another drawback is that this study only looks at five individual characteristics that could lead to confusion among online shoppers. It's likely that there is a slew of other individual differences that affect people's proclivity to be confused, so those factors, as well as their relationships with all three online confusion dimensions, should be investigated.

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